

Harriet Elizabeth Brown Commemoration Task Force

To Honor Calvert County's Own Civil Rights Hero

Chair: Margaret Dunkle, Chair of the Calvert County Commission for Women

Dan Curry, Superintendent of Calvert County Public Schools

Joyce Freeland, President of the Calvert County NAACP

Malcolm Funn, Designee of the Maryland Senate

Michael Jackson, Member of the Maryland House of Delegates

Pat Nutter, Member of the Calvert County Board of County Commissioners

Guffrie Smith, President of the Calvert County Historical Society

Task Force Recommends Community Center, Roadway, and Portrait to Honor Harriet Elizabeth Brown

For immediate release

February 10, 2016

After six months of meetings, public hearings, and research, the Harriet Elizabeth Brown Commemoration Task Force has made three powerful recommendations to honor Calvert County's own civil rights hero. According to Task Force Chair Margaret Dunkle: "We are already working with our County and State representatives to name the soon-to-open community center in Prince Frederick the *Harriet Elizabeth Brown Community Center*, dedicate a section of Route 2 as the *Harriet Elizabeth Brown Memorial Highway*, and commission a portrait of Ms. Brown to hang in the Court House. Too few people know of Ms. Brown's landmark contributions that changed so many lives. Implementing our recommendations will ensure that her impact is widely known and appreciated."

In 1937, as a 30-year-old teacher, Ms. Brown and her 29-year-old NAACP attorney, Thurgood Marshall, successfully used the 14th Amendment to challenge Calvert County Public Schools for paying African-American teachers about half of what equally qualified white teachers earned. She earned \$600 a year, compared to \$1,100 for her white counterparts. Two days after Christmas, on December 27, 1937, the Calvert County Board of Education settled Ms. Brown's case, agreeing to equalize salaries. Thurgood Marshall went on to become the first African-American Supreme Court Justice. Harriet Elizabeth Brown remained in Calvert County as a respected educator through her retirement more than 30 years later and her death, at age 101, in 2009.

Ms. Brown's case was a turning point to equalize pay for African-American teachers, not just in Calvert County, but across Maryland and the South. The day after Calvert County Public Schools settled the case, Maryland Governor Harry W. Nice publicly pledged to support state legislation and budget increases to equalize teacher salaries. With the Governor's support, a subsequent victory in federal court, and continued pressure from NAACP teacher pay cases, the Maryland General Assembly passed a 1941 law to equalize pay for African-American and white teachers. Buoyed by these successes, the NAACP challenged unequal teacher salaries, based on race, in school districts across the South.

The Harriet Elizabeth Brown Commemoration Task Force was created by

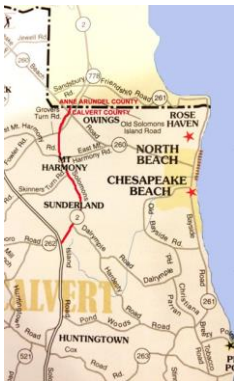


SB 354, Bill Signing, May 12, 2015

Standing: Delegate Anthony O'Donnell, Delegate Michael Jackson, Calvert County Commission for Women Chair Margaret Dunkle, Legislative Aide Andrew Fulginiti, Delegate Mark Fisher, Senator Steve Waugh
Seated: Senate President Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr., Governor Larry Hogan, House of Delegates Speaker Michael E. Busch

unanimous votes in the Maryland Legislature and signed into law last May by Governor Larry Hogan, with the mission to make recommendations to the Governor, Maryland General Assembly, and Calvert County Board of County Commissioners.

The Calvert County Commissioners adopted the Task Force's first recommendation last September, naming the soon-to-be-opened community center in Prince Frederick the *Harriet Elizabeth Brown Community Center*. The Task Force is also recommending that the community center have a display or small museum about Ms. Brown's impact.



The Task Force's second recommendation is that the State dedicate a section of Maryland Route 2 (from the intersection with Maryland Route 4 to the Anne Arundel County line) as the *Harriet Elizabeth Brown Memorial Highway*. This approximately 4.6 mile stretch of highway runs past the location of the former Mt. Hope School, where Ms. Brown was an educator for 40 years.

The final recommendation is to commission a portrait of Harriet Elizabeth Brown, with the original prominently displayed in the Court House and high-quality copies at other appropriate locations. The Task Force is requesting financial support from the County, State and private donors to cover these costs.



The Task Force report also includes ideas for community initiatives to honor Ms. Brown. Some – such as strengthening the historical record and developing a children's book – are already underway. Others include celebrating her birthday, establishing a scholarship program in her name, developing a public TV documentary, and writing and disseminating educational materials.

The seven members of the Harriet Elizabeth Brown Commemoration Task Force are:

- Margaret Dunkle, Chair of the Calvert County Commission for Women, who also chairs the Task Force
- Commissioner Pat Nutter, representing the County Commissioners of Calvert County
- Daniel Curry, Superintendent of the Calvert County Public School System
- Joyce Freeland, President of the Calvert County Branch of the NAACP
- Guffrie Smith, President of the Calvert County Historical Society
- Delegate Michael Jackson, representing the Calvert County members of the House of Delegates
- Malcolm Funn, designee of the state Senators who represent Calvert County

The Task Force submitted its Final Report at year end, and is working to have its three recommendations implemented without delay. As Task Force Chair Dunkle says: "Harriet Elizabeth Brown changed history. She showed incredible personal courage to be the named plaintiff in this case. That is something for all Calvert Countians, indeed all Marylanders, to celebrate."

The *Final Report of the Task Force to Study the Commemoration of Harriet Elizabeth Brown* can be found at:

[http://misd.ent.sirsi.net/client/default/search/detailnonmodal/ent:\\$002f\\$002fSD_ILS\\$002f0\\$002fSD_ILS:50220/email?qu=Task+Force+to+Study+the+Commemoration+of+Harriet+Elizabeth+Brown&d=ent%3A%2F%2FSD_ILS%2F0%2FSD_ILS%3A50220%7E%7E0%7E1](http://misd.ent.sirsi.net/client/default/search/detailnonmodal/ent:$002f$002fSD_ILS$002f0$002fSD_ILS:50220/email?qu=Task+Force+to+Study+the+Commemoration+of+Harriet+Elizabeth+Brown&d=ent%3A%2F%2FSD_ILS%2F0%2FSD_ILS%3A50220%7E%7E0%7E1)

#####