

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE



CALVERT COUNTY BRANCH
PO BOX 1865
PRINCE FREDERICK, MD 20678

July 13, 2020

Hon. Judge Mark Chandlee
Circuit Court
175 Main Street
Prince Frederick, MD 20678

Dear Judge Chandlee:

I hope you and your family are well. I just received a complaint about the portrait of Chief Justice Roger B. Taney hanging in Courtroom 1. I am embarrassed that I had not noticed or paid attention to it before.

Several years ago, I was appointed by the Governor of Maryland to the Commission for African American History and Culture. We worked with Senator Mike Miller to come to a compromise on the Taney's statue at the State House. We came up with a plan to tell the entire history by adding a statue of Dred Scott. We even had a reception in Annapolis with the Descendants of Dred Scott and Roger B. Taney. Unfortunately, the statue was taken down before the plan was approved. As I recall, this was around the time of Freddie Gray's death. Passions are even more intense now.

The African American community was extremely proud when the portrait of Harriet Elizabeth Brown was hung in the Circuit court. Her fight for equal pay still gives inspiration and hope to young people. The portrait of Roger B. Taney does the opposite. It reminds us of a time when the judicial system turned its back on Blacks. In 2019, I completed a book about the Black history of Calvert County. It was vetted and approved by the School Board and is now in all our schools, as well as all Calvert County libraries. While researching the book, "Mulatto, The Black History of Calvert County", I found that the Taney family were not only slave owners, but also slave breeders. Tobacco was an unstable crop, but since the African slave trade was outlawed in 1807, the South was always willing to buy Northern breed slaves. On top of this, Roger Taney helped his father escape justice in Calvert County. Taney's father was accused of killing a neighbor because of a dispute over a woman. Roger Taney and his brother helped their father get to friends in Virginia and supported him in Virginia until his death.

Sir, for the above reasons, and most importantly because of the pain Judge Taney's rulings have caused; the Calvert County Branch of the NAACP request the portrait of Roger B. Taney be removed from Courtroom 1 and donated to Calvert Historical Society.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Michael G. Kent
President
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cc: Hon, Andrew Rappaport
Hon. Mark W. Carmean
Calvert County Bar Association