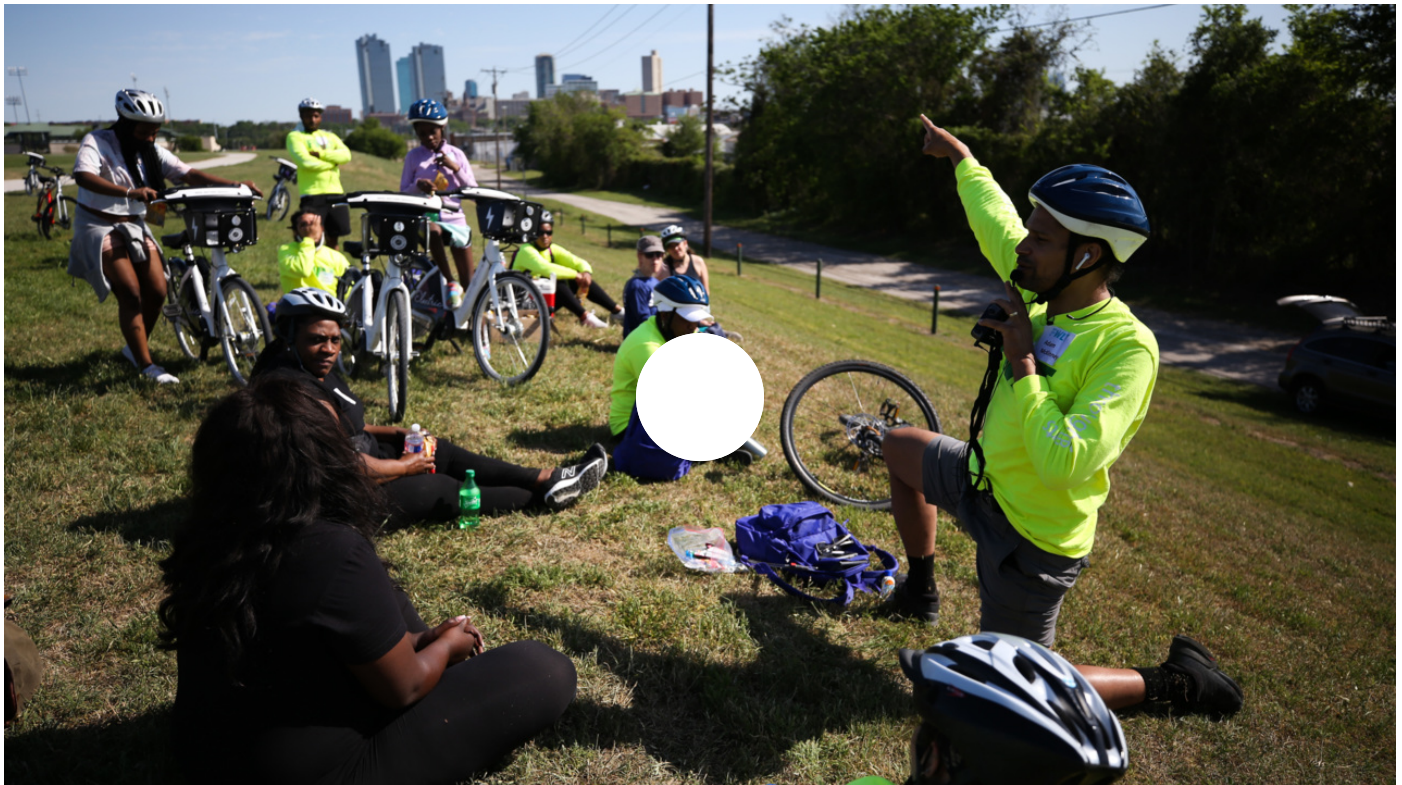


This Fort Worth lynching tour warns of the consequences of 'when we forget to remember'

[By Mark Dent](#) Updated April 16, 2021 10:17 AM



Fort Worth lynching tour rides to remember and heal

The Fort Worth Lynching bike tour remembers a Black man named Fred Rouse lynched by a white mob on Dec. 11, 1921. Hosted by the Arts and healing organization DNAWORKS, the tour uses the past to help correct present injustices. By [Yffy Yossifor](#)

On a barren patch of grass just northeast of downtown Fort Worth on Samuels Avenue, Adam W. McKinney addressed a group of people gathered in a circle as they peered at a handful of tiny berries. McKinney mentioned how Pioneers Rest Cemetery and Traders Oak Park, located just down the

road, were Fort Worth landmarks.

"I'm thinking about the proximity of space and who is remembered," he said, "and not remembered."

Where our tour group stood, there was nothing — just a few parked cars and buildings that had seen better days — no physical reminder to indicate this was where a white mob lynched [a Black man named Fred Rouse from a hackberry tree on Dec. 11, 1921.](#)

McKinney was hosting the Fort Worth Lynching Tour: Honoring the Memory of Mr. Fred Rouse. It is presented by DNAWORKS, an arts and service organization that promotes healing and dialogue on issues of culture, identity, class and heritage. DNAWORKS is [giving tours each weekend through May 2.](#) Sundays are driving tours, and Saturdays are bike tours, with partner Fort Worth Bike Sharing providing free bicycles.

I joined about 15 others, plus several volunteers, on April 10. We started in the Stockyards, where Rouse worked as a meat packinghouse employee 100 years ago. He lived in south Fort Worth and [was a husband and father of three children.](#)

As reported in Star-Telegram stories from 1921, union workers were striking at the Armour & Co. and Swift & Co. plants. On Dec. 6, Rouse, a non-union worker, was leaving work when he was attacked by union workers and accused of shooting and wounding two white men, Tom and Tracey Maclin, in the assault. Rouse was seriously injured and taken to the city-county hospital downtown. On Dec. 11, a nurse let a mob of around 20 white men into the basement ward where Rouse was recovering. "Rouse was improving considerably," she told the Star-Telegram, "but was still very weak and helpless. His eyes had been beaten to where he could not see because they were so swollen."

The mob took off in three cars down Third Street. They [hanged him from a tree](#) on the east side of Samuels Avenue near 12th Street, where hundreds gathered to witness. His only clothing was a hospital night shirt. When police arrived, they counted eight bullet holes in his body. The tree was cut down a few days later.

The next October, six men [were indicted in the lynching](#) of Rouse, including police officers Henry Tiller and Bill Atherton. But reports about the men stop at the indictments. There are no records of them being tried or convicted. This was a time when the local Ku Klux Klan chapter wielded immense influence and had [members in law enforcement](#).

McKinney, co-founder and co-director of DNAWORKS and assistant professor of dance at TCU, recalls hearing about Rouse a few years ago while reading the [Ralph Ginzburg book 100 Years of Lynchings](#). "When I began asking people about this history it became clear that the history was not well known," McKinney says. "And so I felt that it was our responsibility to make known this history." By taking people to visit the sites, he believes they can "better understand the roles we can play in ending these oppressions."

The tour is centered on Rouse, but it shifts back and forth between past and present, introducing racist policies and racist groups Fort Worth and many other cities are hesitant to discuss. Outside the Allen Chapel AME church, McKinney explained how thriving Black neighborhoods were divided by the construction of Fort Worth's highways. On a hillside next to the Trinity River Trail, he told the story of [the massive KKK hall](#) near 10th and Main streets.

One of the most powerful parts of the tour — and something McKinney expounds upon throughout it — comes in seeing how the attack, kidnapping and lynching of Rouse happened in some of the most visible areas of Fort Worth. Rouse was assaulted in the Stockyards, where you could hear music

blasting on Saturday afternoon. He was taken from an old hospital building that stands in the shadow of Bass Performance Hall. He was lynched not far from some of the city's most historic houses.

Yet while Fort Worth locals and tourists celebrate these iconic sites, they typically know nothing about Rouse or old Black neighborhoods. They are historic omissions that McKinney says lead to more injustice. A tour participant, activist Trice Jones, brought up Atatiana Jefferson, the Black Fort Worth woman killed by a police officer in her home in 2019, and McKinney noted how Black and Hispanic residents are being displaced by gentrification, similar to how prior generations were displaced by highways.

"When we forget to remember," he told the tour group, "it's that much easier for similar atrocities to be reproduced."

McKinney and others have a plan for remembering Rouse. The Tarrant County Coalition for Peace and Justice, of which he is president, purchased the land where the mob lynched Rouse. The group plans to turn it into the Fred Rouse Memorial Park and break ground in December, on the 100th anniversary of his murder.

Throughout the tour, McKinney asked tour participants to reflect on what they were learning and seeing. At the end he had a bigger question: What would they do to remember Rouse and the history Fort Worth has willfully forgotten?

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1 of 5

Arts and healing organization DNAWORKS hosts a Fort Worth lynching tour with goal of using the past to help correct present injustices. Yffy Yossifor yyossifor@star-telegram.com



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