

My name is Jordan Abramowitz. I grew up in Montgomery County and I attended Walt Whitman High School, which is just down the road from Moses African Cemetery. And yet, due to the county's ongoing efforts to erase Black history, I did not know of this cemetery's existence until just last year. I am a graduate student now.

It is shameful that I did not know the history of my own whitewashed and gentrified neighborhood. It is also shameful that this cemetery has been and is currently being desecrated by developers to build a parking lot and a storage unit facility. I know that this horrifying violation of gravesites would never occur were white people laid to rest there. I am testifying in the hopes that you will extend this bare minimum of acknowledging the value and dignity of human life to past, present, and future Black members of our community.

I support the passing of this bill on the condition that the following amendments be added:

1. Codifying the rights of the descendent community to the remains of their ancestors and the land in which they are buried;
2. Returning the burial grounds to their rightful owners – the Black community members whose ancestors are buried there – rather than benefitting those in possession of this stolen land;
3. Establishment of civil and criminal penalties for the racist crimes against humanity committed by all those who have participated in the blatant violation of Black communities and cemeteries; and
4. Exclusion of NGOs, corporations, and white preservationists from this bill, returning full decision-making power and control to the descendent Black communities.

I implore you to affirm that Black lives matter, in life and in death. Thank you for your time.