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## DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MEMORIAL COMMISSION 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission (the Commission), a statutory and bipartisan agency of the Virginia General Assembly, was created in 1992 to honor the memory and legacy of Dr. King and to continue his work through educational, historical, and cultural programs, public policy analysis, and public discourse on contemporary issues.

The Commission planned, developed, carried out, and continued several projects in 2018, which included:

### **King in Virginia Project**

#### *King in Virginia Beloved Community Conversations*

The year 2018 marked the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. To remember and honor Dr. King's life and legacy, the Commission's King in Virginia Subcommittee held a series of King in Virginia Beloved Community Conversations in the communities around the state that Dr. King visited.

Eleven Beloved Community Conversations were held in 2018. Each panel discussion was moderated by the Commission's chair, Senator Jennifer McClellan.

#### **Richmond**, March 1, 2018, Virginian Union University, Perkins Living and Learning Center

Dr. King visited Richmond in Summer 1953 (Virginia Union University); on November 2, 1956 (Virginia Union University); from February 27 through March 1, 1957 (Virginia Union University); on January 1, 1960 (the Mosque and the Virginia State Capitol); and from September 24 through 27, 1963 (Virginia Union University).

The program in Richmond featured speakers and panelists:

- Jamar A. Boyd II, Virginia Union University graduate student
- Senator Henry L. Marsh III
- Delegate Delores McQuinn, 70th District
- Benjamin Ragsdale, Civil Rights Activist and Historian (present when Dr. King visited)
- Dr. Jim Somerville, First Baptist Church of Richmond
- Mayor Levar Stoney, City of Richmond
- Dr. Corey Walker, Virginia Union University Vice President
- Rev. Janie Walker, Richmond Hill

**Charlottesville**, March 13, 2018, University of Virginia, Old Cabell Hall

Dr. King visited Charlottesville on March 25, 1963, and spoke in Old Cabell Hall at the University of Virginia.

The program in Charlottesville featured speakers and panelists:

- Pastor Lehman Bates, Ebenezer Baptist Church
- Dr. Andrea Douglas, Executive Director of the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center
- Dr. Wesley Harris, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (helped arrange a visit by Dr. King to Charlottesville as a University of Virginia student in 1963)
- President Teresa Sullivan, University of Virginia
- Mayor Nikuyah J. Walker, City of Charlottesville

The program was hosted in partnership with the University of Virginia's Office of the Vice President and Chief Officer for Diversity and Equity.

**Farmville**, April 24, 2018, First Baptist Church

Dr. King visited Farmville on March 25, 1962, during his People to People Tour of Virginia to speak at First Baptist Church.

The program in Farmville featured speakers and panelists:

- Reverend James Ashton, First Baptist Church
- Megan Clark, Commonwealth's Attorney, Prince Edward County
- James Ghee, President, Prince Edward County Branch NAACP
- Skip Griffin, Civil Rights Leader and Son of Rev. L. Francis Griffin
- Dorothy Holcomb, Chair, Moton Museum Council
- Cameron Patterson, Managing Director, Moton Museum
- Senator Mark J. Peake, 22nd District
- Dr. J. Michael Utzinger, Elliott Professor of Religion, Hampden-Sydney College
- Mayor David Whitus, Town of Farmville

**Williamsburg**, June 6, 2018, First Baptist Church

Dr. King visited Williamsburg on June 26, 1962, to speak at First Baptist Church on Scotland Street.

The program in Williamsburg featured speakers and panelists:

- Reverend Reginald Davis, First Baptist Church
- Reverend Christopher Epperson, Bruton Parish Episcopal Church
- COL Lafayette Jones, James City County Historical Commission (present for Dr. King's visit)
- Senator Monty Mason, First District of Virginia
- Brian J. Smalls, York-James City-Williamsburg Branch NAACP
- Dr. Robert Vinson, Associate Professor of History & Africana Studies, William & Mary

**Danville**, July 11, 2018, High Street Baptist Church

Dr. King visited Danville on March 26, July 11, November 15, and November 21 of 1963. He spoke at High Street Baptist Church and Danville City Auditorium, preparing for a major Southern Christian Leadership Conference civil rights effort in the city, comparable to the SCLC's actions in Birmingham. The full-scale plan in Danville was never implemented.

The program in Danville featured speakers and panelists:

- Bishop Lawrence Campbell, Bible Way Cathedral (present for Dr. King's time in Danville)
- Reverend Thurman O. Echols, Moral Hill Missionary Baptist Church (present for Dr. King's time in Danville)
- Emma Edmunds, History United
- Senator Janet Howell, 32nd District of Virginia
- Reverend Avon Keen, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Virginia Chapter
- Mayor Alonzo Jones, City of Danville
- Dr. Cecilia Moore, University of Dayton
- Councilman Sherman Saunders, City of Danville
- Senator Bill Stanley, 20th District of Virginia

The program was hosted in partnership with History United.

**Suffolk**, June 24, 2018, Suffolk Center for Cultural Arts

Dr. King visited Suffolk on June 28, 1963, where he gave a press conference at Union Hall and a talk at Peanut Park during a Southern Christian Leadership Conference rally.

The program in Suffolk featured speakers and panelists:

- Delegate Cliff Hayes, 77th District
- City Attorney Helivi Holland, City of Suffolk
- Bishop James Johnson, Hill Street Worship Center, Inc. (present for Dr. King's visit)
- Mayor Linda T. Johnson, City of Suffolk
- Ruby Walden, Civic and Community Leader (present for Dr. King's visit)
- Dr. Felton Whitfield, District Superintendent and Pastor

**Lynchburg**, August 1, 2018, E.C. Glass High School Auditorium

Dr. King visited Lynchburg on March 27, 1962, during his People to People Tour of Virginia, to speak at E.C. Glass High School.

The program featured speakers and panelists:

- Dr. James Coleman, Providence Transformation Church International
- Dr. Crystal Edwards, Superintendent, Lynchburg City Schools
- Delores Fowler, civic and community leader
- Chuck Moran, Witness to Dr. King's Visit to Lynchburg
- Manan Shah, University of Virginia Student

- Dr. Aaron Smith, Diversity and Inclusion Officer, University of Lynchburg
- Mayor Treney Tweedy, City of Lynchburg

**Hampton**, September 26, 2018, Hampton University, Harvey Library Meeting Room

Dr. King visited Hampton on September 27, 1956, and again from June 26 through June 28, 1962, to speak at Hampton Institute, now Hampton University.

The program in Hampton featured speakers and panelists:

- Councilman Steve Brown, City of Hampton
- Dr. William Harvey, President, Hampton University
- Gaylene Kanoyton, President, Hampton Branch NAACP
- Senator Mamie Locke, Second District of Virginia
- Attorney Carter Phillips, Hampton Unity Commission
- Rev. Dr. Calvin Sydnor III, African Methodist Episcopal Church
- Aman Tune, Political Science Major, Hampton University
- Delegate Jeion Ward, 92nd District of Virginia
- Dr. Sharon Campbell Waters, President and CEO of Innovative Grant Concepts, Inc. (attended Dexter Avenue Baptist Church during Dr. King's tenure as pastor)
- Robert Watson, Assistant Professor of History, Hampton University

**Newport News**, October 23, 2018, First Church of Newport News Baptist

Dr. King visited Newport News on January 2, 1958, and June 28, 1962, to speak at First Baptist Church of Newport News, now First Church of Newport News.

The program in Newport News featured speakers and panelists:

- Dr. Timothy Tee Boddie, General Secretary, Progressive National Baptist Convention (son of Rev. Fred J. Boddie, Jr., pastor of First Baptist Church of Newport News during Dr. King's visits)
- Jeremiah Edwards, President, Hampton University NAACP
- Reverend Rodney Johnson, First Church of Newport News
- Amere Langley, Senior, Denbigh High School
- Senator Mamie Locke, Second District of Virginia
- Queen Esther Marrow, singer, actress, and civil rights activist
- Dr. Mario Mazarella, Professor Emeritus of History, Christopher Newport University
- Delegate Marcia Price, 95th District of Virginia
- Andrew Shannon, President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference Peninsula Chapter

**Norfolk**, October 31, 2018, New Calvary Baptist Church

Dr. King visited Norfolk on June 30, 1961, to speak at the City Arena and on October 29, 1966, to speak at New Calvary Baptist Church.

The program in Norfolk featured speakers and panelists:

- Mayor Kenneth C. Alexander, City of Norfolk
- Fr. James Curran, Basilica of Saint Mary of the Immaculate Conception
- Joe Dillard, Norfolk Branch NAACP
- Delegate Jay Jones, 89th District
- Delegate Joseph C. Lindsey, 90th District
- Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander
- Marian Reid, Witness to Dr. King's Time in Norfolk
- Rev. Dr. William Marcus Small, New Calvary Baptist Church

**Petersburg**, November 12, 2018, Gillfield Baptist Church

Dr. King visited Petersburg several times between 1956 and 1967, speaking at Gillfield Baptist Church, Mt. Olivet Baptist Church, Zion Baptist Church, and Virginia State College, now Virginia State University. During his June 1960 visit, Dr. King announced that Wyatt Tee Walker, pastor of Gillfield Baptist Church, would go with Dr. King to Atlanta to serve as executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

The program in Petersburg featured speakers and panelists:

- Delegate Lashrecse Aird, 63rd District
- Senator Rosalyn Dance, 16th District
- Lucious Edwards, Retired Virginia State University Historian and Archivist
- Juanita Epps, CEO of Pathways
- Dr. Joanne Lucas, Retired Educator and Consultant, and Daughter of Rev. Dr. Curtis West Harris
- Dr. George W.C. Lyons, Jr., Gillfield Baptist Church
- Mayor Samuel Parham, City of Petersburg
- Laneda Wright, Virginia State University

**Dinwiddie** and **Hopewell** Beloved Community Conversations will take place in 2019.

*Where do we go from here?*

In each discussion, community members and panelists, who included educators, historians, legislators, religious and community leaders, students, and civil rights leaders who knew Dr. King and experienced his time in Virginia firsthand, gave their perspectives on the Beloved Community in Virginia today. Many identified barriers that prevent communities from achieving the Beloved Community: dissatisfaction, uncertainty, and fear in the current political and cultural climate; disconnection from history; a loss of community cohesiveness; ingrained systems perpetuating racial and economic division; and changes in communication resulting from use of social media.

Community members also noted positive change that has taken place since Dr. King's visits. Public schools in Virginia were closed in five localities in Virginia in defiance of the *Brown v. Board of Education* when Dr. King led a rally at the State Capitol to urge the governor to reopen the schools. When Dr. King visited Danville in 1963, it was in the wake of police violence against African American protestors on Bloody Monday. Communities have worked toward reconciliation and made clear progress in the past 50 years.

Speakers identified several areas for action in working toward the Beloved Community:

**Education:** Students noted where their education had fallen short in teaching them the history of their own communities and emphasized schools' role in teaching local history.

**Religious communities:** Religious leaders spoke of the active role churches need to take in improving the community and of the success of programming to regularly bring together black and white churches in the community.

**Civic engagement:** Citizens renewed their commitments to vote and to hold their leaders accountable; some planned to take on leadership roles of their own.

**Personal relationships:** Panelists and community members stressed the value of personal relationships and in-person interactions and emphasized the need to lessen reliance on social media for communication.

**Dr. King's legacy:** Historians urged that we remember Dr. King not as an uncontroversial figure, but as someone who was deeply unpopular with much of the nation, who upset the status quo, and who promised and created radical change.

### *King in Virginia Archive*

The King in Virginia Subcommittee also researched and compiled information on Dr. King's visits to Virginia, documenting his travels throughout the state and archiving speeches, sermons, media coverage of his trips, memorabilia, photographs, and correspondence with Virginians with whom he worked and collaborated. Working with historians and researchers, as well as community members who witnessed Dr. King's influence in Virginia firsthand, the King in Virginia project has assembled and will continue to maintain a public online archive documenting Dr. King's time in Virginia at [mlkcommission.dls.virginia.gov/kinginvirginia/archive.html](http://mlkcommission.dls.virginia.gov/kinginvirginia/archive.html).

## **Emancipation and Freedom Monument**

Dedicated to the contributions of African American Virginians in the fight for freedom, the Emancipation and Freedom Monument (the Monument) will feature a 12-foot bronze statue representing newly freed slaves and will highlight notable African American Virginians. The monument, designed by Thomas Jay Warren of Oregon, is targeted for completion in late 2019 on Brown's Island in Richmond.

The Virginians to be featured on the Monument were selected by a work group of the Commission and approved by the Commission in 2017 after considering feedback from public hearings and written correspondence.

The following individuals will represent the time period before 1865:

**Mary Elizabeth Bowser**, a spy for the Union in the Confederate White House;

**William Harvey Carney**, a former slave who fought in the 54th Massachusetts Voluntary Infantry Regiment and, for his actions at Fort Wagner, was the first African American awarded the Medal of Honor;

**Gabriel**, who led one of the half-dozen most important insurrection plots in the history of North American slavery;

**Dred Scott**, an enslaved man whose unsuccessful lawsuit for his freedom led to the infamous Supreme Court decision that persons of African descent were not United States citizens; and

**Nat Turner**, leader of the only successful slave revolt in Virginia's history, shattering the myth of the contented slave.

The individuals below will represent the time period from 1865 to 1970:

**Rosa Dixon Bowser**, an educator, women's rights activist, and social reformer who founded the first African American teachers association and co-founded the Virginia State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs and the National Association of Colored Women;

**John Mercer Langston**, Virginia's first African American member of Congress and the first president of what is now Virginia State University;

**John Mitchell, Jr.**, a community activist, the first African American to run for Governor of Virginia, and editor of the *Richmond Planet* newspaper, which covered local, national, and worldwide news, including lynchings, segregation, and the rise of the Ku Klux Klan;

**Lucy Simms**, a prominent educator who taught three generations of African American children in the Harrisonburg area; and

**Rev. Wyatt Tee Walker**, a Petersburg minister, civil rights activist, chief of staff to Dr. King, and co-founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

In the summer, Commission and work group members drafted and finalized text for the Monument's base and voted to remove "Proclamation" from the Monument's name, renaming it the Emancipation and Freedom Monument, in light of the Monument's focus on the struggles of African American Virginians to secure their own freedom.

#### *Monument progress and site preparations*

The Commission's contract with the Monument's artist, Thomas Jay Warren, was signed and became effective on June 13, 2018. In July, the Commission, in consultation with the Department of General Services, approved fabrication documents submitted by the artist and the Monument's site designer, Four Winds Design. The fabrication documents detailed structural engineering plans, pedestal text, and relief images for the Monument. Upon receipt of the documents, the Commission paid Mr. Warren a first installment of \$127,000, as outlined in the contract. Remaining installments will be paid upon receipt of deliverables in 2019. Following approval of the fabrication documents, Mr. Warren began work on life-size models of the Monument figures, which, upon approval by the Commission, will be 3D-scanned, rescaled into larger figures, and cast in bronze.

Several approvals were granted in 2018, and site work began:

- The existing artwork at the Monument site, the Mill, was moved to a new location on Brown's Island by Venture Richmond through its contractor, 3north. Expenses paid by Venture Richmond to be reimbursed by the Commission totaled \$92,887.05.
- The Art and Architectural Review Board reviewed and approved the design of the Monument.
- Richmond City Council approved papers requesting that the City convey an access easement on Brown's Island to the State of Virginia in order to allow access to the Monument site, which is encircled by City property, and requesting modification of an agreement between the City of

Richmond and Venture Richmond in order to place the Monument site under the ownership of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

### *Fundraising*

The Commission began receiving donations through its fiscal agent, the Virginia Capitol Foundation, with a tentative goal of raising \$500,000 to cover Monument expenses outside of the \$500,000 allotted to the Commission by the Commonwealth of Virginia. The Commission's Fundraising Work Group met in July to formulate a fundraising strategy, to include reaching out to clergy, churches, black professional organizations, and museums across the state, and connecting with black-owned media, assembling a donor and press package, and planning fundraising events in Richmond and regionally.

## **History of Lynching in Virginia**

The Commission created a new work group, the History of Lynching in Virginia Work Group, to uncover the long and painful history of lynching in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The work group met in September and December to begin compiling the names and stories of victims of lynching in Virginia and planning programmatic outreach to bring awareness of the history to communities across the state.

Among its first efforts, the work group created a resolution to be put forth by the Commission in the 2019 General Assembly session acknowledging with profound regret the existence and acceptance of lynching within the Commonwealth of Virginia. In the coming year, the group will focus on shedding light on the history of lynching, with programming to take place in communities around the state in locations where lynchings have occurred. Programming will expand on existing efforts of the Equal Justice Initiative, which, through its Community Remembrance Project, has collected soil from lynching sites around the country and erected historical markers and monuments to commemorate and recognize victims of lynching. In building on these efforts, the work group will work with the Department of Historic Resources to identify sites for historic markers to recognize documented lynchings in Virginia.

## **African American Legislators in Virginia**

Nearly 100 formerly enslaved African men served in the General Assembly of Virginia between 1869 and 1890 until subsequent state constitutions, the Black Codes, and Jim Crow laws stripped away the franchise for African Americans. The Commission's website is home to a comprehensive database of these legislators, detailing their lives and contributions to Virginia's history. Working in partnership with the Library of Virginia, the Commission continues to support and maintain this database.

## **2018 Legislation**

Three resolutions put forward by the Commission were agreed to by the House of Delegates and the Senate of Virginia in the 2018 legislative session:

**HJ 31 / SJ 38** *Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

**HJ 37 / SJ 81** *Commemorating the 50th anniversary of Green v. County School Board of New Kent County*



**HJ 86 / SJ 20** *Commemorating the 150th anniversary of the passage of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution*

**Additional programming**

The Commission partnered with the Richmond Symphony to host "Remembering 1968: A Tribute to MLK," on February 3 and 4, 2018, at the Dominion Arts Center in Richmond. The Commission also partnered with the Library of Virginia and the Capitol Square Preservation Council to host a series of events commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Constitutional Convention of 1867–1868.

In 2019, the Commission will complete its King in Virginia Beloved Community Conversations, carry out programming around the state related to the history of lynching in the Commonwealth, and work with the Brown v. Board Scholarship Committee to create programming to mark the 60th anniversary of the school closings that took place in Virginia in the wake of the *Brown v. Board* decision. In late 2019, the Emancipation and Freedom Monument is due to be completed.

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