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SECOND SENATE DISTRICT

## DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MEMORIAL COMMISSION 2019 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 2019, which included:

### **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 2020 on Brown's Island in Richmond.

#### *Monument progress*

The Monument's artist, Thomas Jay Warren, completed work on life-size clay models for the Monument in early 2019. The models were 3D scanned, enlarged, and 3D printed as casting patterns for 12-foot figures. In June, the 3D-printed patterns were sent to Artworks Foundry in Berkeley, California, where bronze sections were cast for assembly.

#### *Site development*

The planned site for the Monument on Brown's Island was adjusted in 2019 due to the fact that locating the Monument at the original site would have constricted vehicular traffic on the island. The Monument's new site is set back from the pathway where the Monument would have originally been placed. New site design plans were developed by Four Winds Design and approved by the Commission to account for additional grading required due to a slight incline at the new site. The new site design includes a granite retaining wall that will partially encircle the plaza.

An amended contract with the artist was approved on December 2, 2019, reflecting changes in the budget and timeline necessitated by the relocation of the Monument site. The original contract, which went into effect on June 13, 2018, specified four payments to be made to the

artist totaling \$765,000. The amended contract adds \$96,580 to this amount and extends the timeline for completion by six months to spring 2020.

### *Fundraising*

The Commission continued to receive donations in 2019 through its fiscal agent, the Virginia Capitol Foundation, to cover expenses outside of the \$500,000 allotted for the Monument by the Commonwealth.

## **History of Lynching in Virginia**

The History of Lynching in Virginia Work Group (the Work Group) was formed in 2018 to shed light on the long and painful history of lynching in the Commonwealth of Virginia by compiling and documenting the names and stories of victims of lynching in Virginia, creating programmatic outreach that will bring awareness of this history to communities across the Commonwealth, and assisting communities in their efforts to memorialize victims of lynching. In 2019, the Commission put forth SJ 297 (McClellan) and HJ 655 (McQuinn), acknowledging with profound regret the existence and acceptance of lynching within the Commonwealth. The resolution passed unanimously, making Virginia the first state to pass such a resolution.

Members of the Commission and the Work Group were present at several events recognizing the lives of lynching victims in localities around Virginia. In Loudoun County, on March 14, a community dialogue was hosted to discuss the placement of historical markers at the sites of the lynchings of Page Wallace, Orion Anderson, and Charles Craven. On June 19, the first of these memorials was dedicated, commemorating the life of Orion Anderson, who was lynched in 1889 at age 14. In Charles City County, on April 7, the first Virginia Department of Historic Resources historic marker to memorialize the site of a lynching was unveiled, dedicated to Isaac Brandon, who was lynched on April 6, 1892. In Albemarle County, on July 12, a historic marker dedicated to John Henry James, lynched on July 12, 1898, in Charlottesville, was unveiled as part of the Equal Justice Initiative's Community Remembrance Project. These events were organized locally within each community.

On September 16, 2019, the Work Group hosted a program organized by Work Group member Dr. Gianluca De Fazio at James Madison University. The program included remarks and discussion on the history of lynching in Harrisonburg and in Virginia and focused specifically on Charlotte Harris, who was lynched on March 6, 1878, in Rockingham County. Programming by the Work Group will continue in 2020, with events tentatively planned in Culpeper, Danville, and Richmond.

## **King in Virginia Project**

### *King in Virginia Beloved Community Conversations*

In 2019 the Commission continued to host King in Virginia Beloved Community Conversations, a series of panel discussions held in the communities around the state that Dr. King visited examining where each community is today in achieving Dr. King's vision of a Beloved

Community. In 2018, to mark the 50th anniversary of the assassination of Dr. King, the Commission hosted panel discussions in Richmond, Charlottesville, Farmville, Williamsburg, Danville, Suffolk, Lynchburg, Hampton, Newport News, Norfolk, and Petersburg. Two Beloved Community Conversations were held in 2019.

**Hopewell, May 21, 2019, City Courthouse**

Dr. King visited Hopewell in March 1962 during his People to People Tour of Virginia. He visited the city's courthouse in a show of support for Rev. Curtis West Harris, who was then facing a contempt trial after refusing to give up information on individuals associated with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference to a Virginia legislative committee.

The program in Hopewell was moderated by Commission Chair Senator Jennifer L. McClellan and featured speakers and panelists:

- Senator Rosalyn Dance, 16th District
- Mayor Jasmine Gore, City of Hopewell
- Rev. Dr. Claudie Grant, President of the Baptist Ministers' Conference of Petersburg and Vicinity
- Dr. Joanne Lucas, Retired Educator and Consultant, and Daughter of Rev. Dr. Curtis West Harris

**Dinwiddie, September 30, 2019, Mt. Level Baptist Church**

Dr. King addressed audiences at two stops in Dinwiddie in March 1962 during his People to People Tour of Virginia, when he toured the state in support of a voter registration drive.

The program in Dinwiddie was moderated by Commission Chair Senator Jennifer L. McClellan and featured speakers and panelists:

- Delegate Lashrecse Aird, 63rd District
- Rev. Herbert Anderson, Pastor emeritus of Sharon Baptist Church
- Mary Benjamin, Dinwiddie School Board
- Brenda Ebron-Bonner, District 5 Supervisor
- Thomas Hooker, Community Activist
- Yvette Robinson, Virginia African American Advisory Board
- Sharon Yates, Mt. Level Baptist Church

The programs were recorded and livestreamed by WCVE PBS and are archived on the Commission's website.

### *King in Virginia Archive*

The King in Virginia Project also includes an archive of information on Dr. King's visits to Virginia, documenting his travels throughout the state and his 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 on its website a public online archive documenting Dr. King's time 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.

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