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DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MEMORIAL COMMISSION 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

The Virginia 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 did not meet in 2022, but its recent and ongoing projects included:

Emancipation and Freedom Monument

The Emancipation and Freedom Monument (the Monument), dedicated to the contributions of African American Virginians in the fight for freedom, was completed and unveiled in September 2021 on Brown's Island in Richmond. In 2022, as a new Virginia landmark, the Monument served as destination for visitors and school groups and as a site for events.

The Monument, designed by Thomas Jay Warren of Oregon, features two 12-foot bronze statues representing newly freed enslaved persons and highlights notable African American Virginians on its pedestal. The project to construct the Monument began in 2013.



Emancipation and Freedom Monument on Brown's Island | Photo by Ansel Olson

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 2022, the Work Group partnered with a local group to promote virtual programming.

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.

Upcoming Projects

The Commission plans to begin work on recognizing Senator Yvonne B. Miller with a statue, bust, or portrait in Capitol Square.

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