

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA



Commission to Study Slavery and Subsequent De Jure and De Facto Racial and Economic Discrimination Against African Americans

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

ENABLING AUTHORITY: CODE OF VIRGINIA - § 2.2-2555 (A.5.)

The Commission to Study Slavery and Subsequent De Jure and De Facto Racial and Economic Discrimination Against African Americans (the Commission) was established by Chapter 1043 of the 2020 Acts of Assembly, codified as §§ 2.2-2551 through 2.2-2557 of the Code of Virginia and effective July 1, 2020.

This historic Commission was established as an advisory commission in the executive branch of state government to study the current impact and long-term inequities of slavery and subsequent de jure and de facto racial and economic discrimination against African Americans.

The Commission's 2022 activities included:

Hiring and Onboarding a Project Manager

In early January of 2022, the Commission welcomed a Project Manager to their team. Working from inside the Library of Virginia, the Project Manager has been tasked with overseeing the work of the Commission and unifying efforts between them and their partner agency – The Library of Virginia. Duties have included creating efficient workflow systems, coordinating research in accordance with established timelines, upholding meeting schedules through administrative support, as well as engaging external scholars to inform commission objectives.

Approving and Implementing a Research Plan

On January 6, 2022, the Commission unanimously voted to accept the research plan as presented by the Library of Virginia staff. After receiving an extension on its enabling Legislation in April 2022, this same proposal was amended to account for a June 2024 conclusion and was re-approved on October 19, 2022.

The Commission's research plan is divided into four major phases, each with its own objectives and timelines.

1. Phase one focuses on **documenting the institution of slavery** and the role that the federal and state governments played through constitutional and statutory provisions.
2. Phase two **examines federal and state laws** that discriminated against formerly enslaved Africans and their descendants, state-sanctioned efforts to deny equal rights to African Americans, other forms of discrimination in public and private sectors; and begins an examination of the lingering effects of the institution of slavery.
3. Phase three seeks to **understand the pervasive institutional system** that has maintained inequities in housing, employment, education, economic opportunities, generational wealth, voting rights, and criminal justice.
4. Finally, Phase four looks to **recommend a plan for promoting public awareness** of the issues studied by the Commission and recommendations to end the systematic discrimination affecting the quality of life of a significant population of African American families in the Commonwealth.

Launching a Public Website

On October 19, 2022, the Commission launched the Commission to Study Slavery website, which can be found at: <http://commissiontostudyslavery.lva.virginia.gov/>. The project manager collaborated with the Library of Virginia staff to produce this product, and the website is hosted on the Library's *lva.virginia.gov* server. The website contains a landing page with information about the Commission, its objectives, and its charging legislation. Subsequent pages of the website include a listing of the Commissioners and the Project Manager, as well as a submission form for the public to submit any questions or concerns.

Organizing Subject-Specific Subcommittees

In October 2022, the Commission to Study Slavery established topical subcommittees charged with providing subject-specific guidance to the Project Manager and drafting recommendations in accordance with Code of Virginia Article 12 § 2.2-2555. The subcommittees are economics, education, healthcare, housing, justice and equity, and voting.

The roles and responsibilities of each subcommittee are to conduct research to identify specific policies, legislation, systems, and major institutions within each subcategory that created subsequent de jure and de facto racial and economic discrimination; suggest relevant bibliographical sources and subject experts aligned with each identified subcommittee's topical scope; suggest preliminary strategies to foster educational understanding and civic engagement; and identify potential opportunities for legislation that

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CHAIR

SEVENTIETH HOUSE DISTRICT

address the systematic and historical implications affecting the quality of life of a significant population of African American families in the Commonwealth.

Upcoming Projects

In 2023, the Commission to Study Slavery will continue researching and exploring the roots of racial and economic discrimination against African Americans in Virginia. To gain comprehensive knowledge on this matter, the Commission plans on engaging with subject-matter specialists for interviews. Through these conversations, the Commission aims to bring greater clarity to de jure & de facto disparities that have endured throughout time. Additionally, in 2023 the Commission will continue to hold public Commission meetings to better understand the community's stance on the complex systems of discrimination that impact many African-Americans in Virginia. Finally, the Commission will conclude 2023 by producing an executive summary detailing its research investigations and consequent suggestions. The summary aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Commission's discoveries over the course of 2021 and 2022.

Commissioners

The Honorable Delores L. McQuinn, Chair

Virginia House of Delegates, 70th District

The Honorable Mamie E. Locke, Vice Chair

Senate of Virginia, District 2

Dr. Jody Allen

Robert Francis Engs Director, The Lemon Project: A Journey of Reconciliation

William & Mary

Dr. Edward L. Ayers

Tucker-Boatwright Professor of the Humanities and President Emeritus

University of Richmond

Dr. Andrea Douglas

Executive Director

Jefferson School African American Heritage Center

Dr. John Kinney

Director, Center for African American Pentecostalism and Leadership Development

Virginia Union University

Dr. Cassandra L. Newby-Alexander

Endowed Professor of Virginia Black History and Culture

Emeritus Director of Joseph Jenkins Roberts Center for African Diaspora Studies

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