

DELEGATE DELORES L. MCQUINN
CHAIR
SEVENTIETH HOUSE DISTRICT



SENATOR MAMIE E. LOCKE
VICE-CHAIR
SECOND SENATE DISTRICT

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MEMORIAL COMMISSION

2024 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, led by Delegate Delores L. McQuinn (chair) and Senator Mamie E. Locke (vice chair) met three times in 2024.

June 5, 2024, Meeting

Update on Library of Virginia Black Delegate Book Project: 'Justice for Ourselves'

Catherine Fitzgerald Wyatt, Education and Outreach Manager at the Library of Virginia, updated the Commission on the Library of Virginia's book project, *Justice for Ourselves*, which was published by University of Virginia Press for release on June 20, 2024. The book, written by John Deal, Marianne Julienne, and Brent Tarter, is based on biographies of Virginia's 92 Black legislators who served in the nineteenth century. The book derives in large part from research that began in 2012 with the Commission's African American Legislators in Virginia project, which the Commission completed in partnership with the Library of Virginia. The Commission partnered with the Library of Virginia on the book project and funded \$2,500 of the project's costs.

Prince Edward County Schools History Report and Virginia Civil Rights History Digital Platform Concept Proposal

Brian Grogan presented to the Commission on the history of Prince Edward County and the efforts he and others have made to document and preserve this history, which include past projects supported by the Commission. Among these projects are the book *A Little Child Shall Lead Them*, an anthology documenting the struggle for school desegregation in Prince Edward County. The anthology was published in 2019 by University of Virginia Press and edited by Mr. Grogan and Brian J. Daugherty. Mr. Grogan is also continuing work on a documentary project, *They Closed Our Schools*, telling the history of the Prince Edward County school closings during Massive Resistance.

Mr. Grogan reported on the extensive Virginia civil rights history archives maintained by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in the university's Special Collections and Archives and requested the Commission's assistance in organizing his own collection, which includes extensive video footage, interviews, and transcripts, for transfer to and archival at VCU. Mr. Grogan also presented a proposal for a project to create a Virginia civil rights history digital platform, which would be statewide digital database connecting existing databases in Virginia dealing with Virginia's civil rights history.

Kirk T. Schroder noted that the Commission formerly had a subcommittee tasked with considering and awarding grants to various projects relating to the Commission's purpose. Delegate McQuinn requested staff to work with Mr. Grogan to develop a proposal that a subcommittee of the Commission might consider.

2024 Work Groups and Projects

Senator Locke reported to the Commission that the work group to plan a tribute for Senator Yvonne B. Miller would meet in the 2024 interim. Senator Locke also noted that during the 2024 session, the General Assembly passed Senate Joint Resolution No. 13, commemorating the 40th anniversary of Senator Miller's service in the General Assembly.

Delegate McQuinn reported to the Commission on work taking place statewide and nationally to recognize victims of lynching. The Commission's History of Lynching in Virginia Work Group take part in and continue this work.

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

The Commission to Study Slavery and Subsequent De Jure and De Facto Racial and Economic Discrimination Against African Americans (the Commission to Study Slavery) was established in 2020 and expired on June 30, 2024. At its conclusion, the Commission to Study Slavery planned to submit a report of its findings to the General Assembly and hold an event in September to present its findings to the community. Delegate McQuinn noted that the work of the Commission to Study Slavery is relevant to the Commission's purpose and could be continued by the Commission.

August 21, 2024, Meeting

Lynching in Virginia: Racial Terror and Its Legacy

Dr. Gianluca De Fazio, Associate Professor of Justice Studies at James Madison University, presented an overview of his newly published book, *Lynching in Virginia: Racial Terror and Its Legacy*, a volume of essays examining the more than 100 lynchings that took place in Virginia between 1866 and 1932. The volume covers the role of newspapers in either resisting or, alternatively, justifying lynching, the prevalence of lynching in Southwest Virginia, the state's response to lynching, and efforts to memorialize victims of lynching. Dr. De Fazio described several current efforts to bring the Commonwealth's history of lynching to light and remember its victims, including the recent inclusion of lynching in the Virginia Standards of Learning and installation of historical markers around the state.

Virginians for Reconciliation: Upcoming Events Commemorating Brown v. Board 70th Anniversary

Delegate McQuinn invited members of the Commission to attend two events held by Virginians for Reconciliation in September commemorating the 70th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. On September 13 at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Richmond, panelists discussed the societal impacts of the Brown decision from a theological and historical perspective. On September 14 at Virginia Union University, panelists will share their reflections on how the Brown decision shaped their lives, careers, and relationships.

2024 Work Groups and Projects

The Commission's two work groups planned to meet to the next full meeting of the Commission. The Tribute to Yvonne Miller Work Group, chaired by Senator Mamie E. Locke, planned to begin discussion and planning for a tribute to Senator Yvonne Miller to be placed in the Capitol. The History of Lynching in Virginia Work Group planned to resume its work of bringing awareness and recognition of the history of lynching in the Commonwealth.

December 16, 2024, Meeting

History of Lynching in Virginia

The History of Lynching in Virginia work group met on September 8, 2024, for its first meeting since 2021. Members heard a presentation from faculty of James Madison University, who are working with work group member Dr. Gianluca de Fazio to create lesson plans to help teach the history of lynching in Virginia schools. Members of the work group also discussed the possibility of drafting a resolution to create a day of recognition in Virginia for victims of lynching. To plan for the coming year, the work group created a subgroup that is appointed to create a work plan.

Tribute to Senator Yvonne B. Miller

The Tribute to Senator Yvonne B. Miller work group met on September 4 and December 16, 2024, to develop a recommendation for a memorial tribute to Senator Yvonne B. Miller, to be placed in the Capitol or on Capitol Square. The work group discussed possibilities for a memorial tribute in the form of a statue or portrait. Kirk T. Schroder, J.D., Ph.D., reported the work group's recommendation to pursue space inside the Capitol for a life-size portrait of Senator Miller. However, the Commission determined that it would move forward with creating both a portrait of Senator Miller to be placed in the Capitol and a statue of Senator Miller to be placed on the Women's Monument or elsewhere on Capitol Square. To ensure that the processes begins quickly, members of the Commission agreed that work on the portrait should take place first and that such work should happen within a year.

2025 King Holiday Event in Richmond

Reverend Ricardo Brown presented plans for "The Liberation Songs of the Civil Rights Movement of the 20th Century," an event to be held in Richmond on Sunday, January 19, 2025, commemorating the King Holiday. The Commission voted to provide up to \$2,500 to support the event.

Virginia Union University Community Leaders Breakfast

The Commission voted to purchase a \$2,000 community sponsorship package for Virginia Union University's Community Leaders Breakfast on Friday, January 17, 2025. The Commission annually purchases a table at the event.

Virginia Civil Rights History Digital Archives and Workshops

Mr. Grogan updated the Commission on projects previously described to the Commission at its June 5, 2024, meeting. Mr. Grogan reported on the extensive Virginia civil rights history archives maintained by Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in the university's Special Collections and Archives and requested the Commission's assistance in organizing his own collection, which includes extensive video footage, interviews, and transcripts, for transfer to and archival at VCU. Mr. Grogan also requested assistance in funding workshops at the Moton

Museum relating to Virginia's civil rights history. The Commission agreed to fund Mr. Grogan's projects in an amount up to \$5,000.

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