

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission

September 17, 2012

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission (MLK Commission) met at the Amelia County Administration Office. Interviews scheduled for the Virginia Commonwealth University/MLK Commission Massive Resistance Oral History Project were held throughout the day at the same location.

Emancipation Proclamation Music Work Group

Led by Delegate Jennifer McClellan, vice chair, the Emancipation Proclamation Music Work Group (Work Group) received and discussed reports from its several subcommittees concerning the concert with the Richmond Symphony on April 13, 2013. Work Group members reviewed the feedback received by staff regarding the program, format, participants, publicity, educational components, and budget template by representatives of the Richmond Symphony. A preliminary list of potential narrators, artists, and sponsors was discussed and developed. The suggested program format was agreed upon as well as the decision to request a review of the Civil War music collection of the Virginia Historical Society for possible exhibit purposes. The Work Group recommended to the MLK Commission that the participation of the choral groups of certain senior institutions of higher education be solicited for the concert. Topics for the next meeting include musical selections for the program, potential national and state narrators and artists who will be invited to participate, list of potential sponsors and level of giving with benefits, proposed budget, fundraising goal and schedule, and itemization and coordination of related matters with other subcommittees and report of recommendations to the MLK Commission.

MLK Commission and Subcommittees Meeting

The MLK Commission's staff submitted a report summarizing activities since its December 5, 2011, meeting, which included the following:

- Efforts to preserve the Lincoln Homestead in Rockingham County, Virginia.

- Support of the Lincoln Society of Virginia's annual Lincoln Cemetery Program on February 12, 2012.
- The Exhibit of the 13th Amendment, a partnership between the MLK Commission and the Virginia Historical Society, held on April 14-15, 2012.
- Representation at the August 3, 2012, meeting of the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) concerning the 150th Commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation and at the NEH Watch Party on September 17, hosted by the Virginia Historical Society.
- Launch of the MLK Commission's new website on August 31, 2012.
- Purchase of the DVDs containing the oral histories collected by the Amherst Glebe Arts Response, Inc., of students, teachers, administrators, counselors, and public officials who attended the formerly all-Black schools and/or were otherwise involved in the desegregation of the schools.
- Coordination and planning meeting with the House and Senate Clerks regarding the unveiling ceremony for African American Legislators commemorative plaques in the State Capitol.
- Determination and scheduling of sesquicentennial of the Emancipation Proclamation signature events.

The staff reviewed the MLK Commission's new website, walking members through the content and highlighted its crowning achievement, the beginning of the African American Legislators database that the MLK Commission began in 2004. The database will be housed on the MLK Commission's website. Although the database will include all African Americans ever elected to the Virginia General Assembly, in deference to the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation in 2013, legislation was enacted by the 2012 Session (SJR 13 and HJ 65), to honor and recognize the African American men who served in the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1867-1868 and who were elected to the Virginia General Assembly during Reconstruction.

Staff also notified the MLK Commission of three new assignments that have been added to its work plan.

- During the 2012 Session, the House Committee on Rules directed the MLK Commission to address the issues in HB 527 (2012), which was not reported, pertaining to the contemporary political, economic, educational, and societal issues and public policies

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission reviewed its new website, which will contain the database of Virginia's African American legislators.

The Abraham Lincoln Subcommittee continues to work with the Richmond Symphony on the Emancipation Proclamation concert.

whose roots lie in the transatlantic slave trade. This study has been assigned to the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Subcommittee.

- With recent concerns about the resegregation of public schools around the nation, and the potential effect of *Fisher v. University of Texas*, an affirmative action case before the Supreme Court of the United States, the MLK Commission was asked to examine the issue of resegregation of public schools in view of Virginia's past. This work has been assigned to the Special Subcommittee on Public School Closings (Massive Resistance) in Virginia.
- As a part of the state's commemoration of the sesquicentennial of the Emancipation Proclamation in 2013, the General Assembly, in C-1.30 of the 2012-2014 Appropriation Act, has directed the MLK Commission, in cooperation with the Department of General Services, to conduct a feasibility study for the construction of a permanent monument celebrating the emancipation of slaves and freedom in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Funds have been appropriated for this purpose. The MLK Commission and the Department of General Services must report quarterly to the General Assembly on the progress made on site selection, project design, projected costs, fund raising, and project finances. This new initiative has been assigned to the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Subcommittee. Staff will develop an outline of the proposed feasibility study, in cooperation with Department of General Services, for the establishment of the monument in Virginia.

Special Subcommittee on Public School Closings (Massive Resistance) in Virginia

The MLK Commission has been asked to examine the resegregation of public schools in Virginia. A work group has been named to study the issue and report its findings and recommendations to the MLK Commission.

Brian Grogan, producer of Mercy Seat Films, Inc., reported the status of the film, *They Closed Our Schools*, noting that additional funds were needed for postproduction work on the documentary and for preparation of the manuscript, *A Little Child Shall Lead Them: The Struggle for Public Education in Prince Edward County, Virginia, 1959-1964*, which is designed to supplement the film. He requested that the MLK Commission support his effort to launch a Kickstarter Funding appeal as a fundraising mechanism for the documentary's postproduction work.

The status of the Massive Resistance Oral History Project (MROHP) was reported by Dr. Shawn Utsey, chair, VCU Department of Afri-

can American Studies, who summarized the oral history training that the MROHP Team received at the Sinomlando Centre of the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in South Africa. He noted the completion of Phase 1 of MROHP, which included interviews of Massive Resistance survivors, the creation of a service learning class at VCU to train future interviewers, and a closing ceremony in which each participant in Phase 1 was presented a copy of the manuscript of his interview and a tee shirt stating "I Survived Massive Resistance." Phase 2 of the Project will include interviews of other Massive Resistance survivors and civil rights activists who worked to promote school desegregation in Virginia. Dr. Utsey proposed the continuation of the partnership between VCU and the MLK Commission for Phase 2 of the MROHP.

Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Subcommittee

The Abraham Lincoln Subcommittee reported on MLK Commission partnerships underway for the commemoration of the sesquicentennial of the Emancipation Proclamation.



- *Remembering Slavery, Resistance, and Freedom*, a partnership between the MLK Commission and the College of William and Mary's Institute of Historical Biology, under the direction of Dr. Michael Blakey, chair, to identify, authenticate, and memorialize the grave sites of formerly enslaved Africans who did not live to witness emancipation. Dr. Blakey summarized the findings and recommendations of the statewide focus group meetings and the NEH grant application.
- *Emancipation Proclamation Concert*, one of the MLK Commission's signature events, is a collaboration between the Richmond Symphony and the MLK Commission. Using choral and orchestral music, narration, the visual arts, and student participation, the concert will tell the unblemished story of emancipation in historical context.
- Annual Emancipation Proclamation Day Service, a worship experience held each year by the African American faith community in Richmond, will be one of the signature events of the MLK Commission's commemoration of Emancipation.

- *Freedom to Disenfranchisement*, is a project of the Library of Virginia and the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, to use the Foundation's Encyclopedia Virginia to provide a website for the entries on the African American legislators in the Library's Dictionary of Virginia.

Annual Living the Dream, Inc. King Holiday

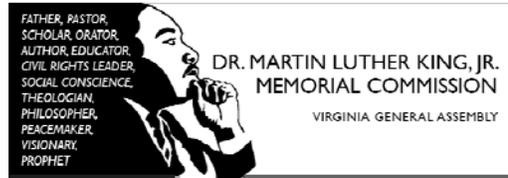
Reverend Ricardo L. Brown, MLK Commission member, reported that the annual Leaders Breakfast will be held on January 11, 2013, at 7:30 a.m., at the Marriott Hotel in Richmond. The MLK Commission agreed to support and purchase tickets for the event.

Legislative Proposals

The staff confirmed that legislation from the chair and vice chair on behalf of the MLK Commission for the 2013 Session has been requested. Other legislative proposals were deferred to the next meeting for discussion.

Next Meeting

The MLK Commission will hold daylong deliberations on October 23, 2012, at the Manassas City Hall Council Chambers. Interviews scheduled for the VCU/MLK Massive Resistance Oral History Project will be held throughout the day at the same location.



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The MLK Commission heard a report concerning its partnership with the College of William and Mary's Institute of Historical Biology to identify grave sites of formerly enslaved Africans.

1871-1872 Virginia General Assembly African American legislators are on the bottom row.

Courtesy of the Library of Virginia

