

## Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission (Commission) and its subcommittees met in Richmond on March 13, May 22, June 4 and 25, July 25, and October 22, 2013, to plan the Commission's signature events for the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, which included a concert with the Richmond Symphony on April 13 at CenterStage in Richmond; a statewide student artwork contest; the exhibition "Revolutions: Songs of Social Change, 1865 to 1965" with the Virginia Historical Society; research for and development of the African American Legislators' Database and their descendants; the Unveiling of the Commemorative Plaques Honoring African American Members of the 1867-1868 Virginia Constitutional Convention and the Virginia House of Delegates and Senate of Virginia from 1869 to 1890; the establishment of the state Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument; collaboration with the Library of Virginia on the exhibit, "Remaking Virginia: Transformation through Emancipation"; and preliminary planning for the Reconstruction Amendments Teachers Institute and Symposium. The Commission also continued its work pertaining to Massive Resistance Oral Histories and Public School Closings in Virginia; collaborated with the King Center in Atlanta and Living the Dream, Inc. of Richmond; and began a preliminary work plan for the 2014 interim.

### Emancipation Proclamation Concert: A Musical Tribute

Senator Henry Marsh, chair, appointed a work group composed of Commission members, state and local leaders, and representatives of business and the fine arts, chaired by vice chair Jennifer L. McClellan, to plan the Commission's first signature event, a concert with the Richmond Symphony, to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. Led by the Richmond Symphony's Music Director, Steven Smith, with Erin R. Freeman, Associate Conductor and James Erb Choral Chair, the choral and orchestral production told the story of Emancipation in historical context. Featuring national and state luminaries and music written during and after the Civil War period by nationally acclaimed Virginia composers and artists, which reflected a turbulent time during the nation's history, the concert illuminated the

perseverance of the human spirit and celebrated freedom and liberation. Highlighting the performance was a 200-strong mass choir assembled especially for the occasion from among college and university choral groups across the Commonwealth, together with members of Richmond's One Voice Chorus and the Richmond Symphony Chorus. Participating choral groups included: Bridgewater College, College of William & Mary, George Mason University, Hampden-Sydney College, Hampton University, Hollins University, James Madison University, Longwood University, Mary Baldwin College, Norfolk State University, Old Dominion University, Randolph-Macon College, Regent University, Shenandoah University, Sweet Briar College, Union Presbyterian Seminary, University of Mary Washington, University of Richmond, University of Virginia, Virginia Commonwealth University, Virginia State University, and Virginia Union University. The event also featured accomplished sopranos Dr. Lisa Edwards-Burrs and Charmaine Sims McGilvary as soloists, performers from Richmond's Elegba Folklore Society, and Moses Braxton, Jr., a renowned baritone of national and international fame, who narrated Aaron Copland's Lincoln Portrait and the Emancipation Overture composed by Richmond composer Dr. Willis L. Barnett, which was performed for the first time at the concert. Visual and language arts contributions by Virginia's schoolchildren were exhibited and the concert was recorded for rebroadcast by WCVE television and radio. The concert was free to the public and underwriting for the event was generously provided through private donations.

### "Revolutions: Songs of Social Change, 1865 to 1965" Exhibition

On September 2, 2013, the exhibit, "Revolutions: Songs of Social Change, 1865 to 1965," opened at the Virginia Historical Society. The exhibition is one of the Commission's several signature events to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation and is a collaboration between the Commission and the Society and is open to the public without charge. Included in the exhibition are more than 30 objects from the American Civil War and Civil Rights eras, patriotic, sentimental, spirituals, freedom, dixie, and ballad music, an array of Civil War sheet music from the Society's "extensive 4,629 piece Virginia-themed sheet music collection," the original copy of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic" by Julia Ward Howe, a handwritten version of "Dixie's Land" (known

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today as “Dixie”) by composer Daniel Decatur Emmett, a 160-year-old banjo, and interactive units for visitors. Dr. Laurant Lee, a member of the Commission’s Lincoln Subcommittee and Virginia Historical Society curator of African American History, commented that “although separated by one hundred years, music defined both the American Civil War and the Civil Rights eras, it continues to shape our own memory of those dramatic periods, and every song has a history.”

## Commemorative Plaques Unveiling

One of the many results of the Commission’s statewide recognition of the 50th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* was the creation of the African American Legislators’ Database Project, an ambitious undertaking to identify, research, and publish the biographies of all persons of African descent who have served in the Virginia General Assembly from its founding to the present. To commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, the Commission introduced legislation in 2011 to recognize African American members of the 1867-1868 Virginia Constitutional Convention and the Virginia House of Delegates and Senate of Virginia from 1869 to 1890. Commemorative plaques honoring these members were unveiled at a reception for descendants on September 17, 2013, and have been hung in the visitors’ area on the first floor of the State Capitol. The biographies of all of these legislators have been posted on the Commission’s website, and with the assistance of the Library of Virginia, extended biographies are available on the website for some of them. To ensure that the database is completed and remains current, the Commission’s staff has resumed research on African American members who have served in the General Assembly during the 20th and 21st centuries. This information will be added to the database.

## Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument

In commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, the General Assembly, in C-1.30 of the 2012-2014 Appropriation Act, directed the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission, in cooperation with the Department of General Services, to plan and conduct a feasibility study and fundraising for

the construction of a permanent monument celebrating the emancipation of slaves and freedom. Funds have been appropriated for this purpose. To commence the project, the Commission Chairman appointed a work group composed of Commission members, former state legislators, historians, nonlegislative citizens, and representatives of business, education, higher education, and the legal profession. Representatives of the Senate Finance Committee staff, the City of Richmond, Venture Richmond, and the Department of General Services serve as advisors and provide technical assistance to the work group and the Commission on the project. Since December 10, 2012, the Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument Work Group has met regularly to fulfill requirements of the appropriation act, including the filing of three quarterly reports on the progress made on site selection, project design, projected costs, fund raising, and project finances.

With the assistance and collaboration of City of Richmond officials, Venture Richmond, and the Virginia Department of General Services, the work group identified potential site locations and toured, among other historical locations, the Burial Ground for Negroes, Jackson Ward, the Lumpkins Jail Site, Monument Avenue, Tredegar and its vicinity, and Brown’s Island to determine an appropriate site for the monument. The work group agreed upon two sites on Brown’s Island, which has great significance in African American history and is near the old Tredegar Iron Works and the American Civil War Center at Historic Tredegar. Two landscape artists were retained to advise the work group regarding the advantages and disadvantages of the selected sites on the Island. The work group presented its findings and recommendations to the Commission, Venture Richmond, and City of Richmond officials and began negotiations with Richmond and the process for the request for proposal. A joint press release concerning the establishment of the monument was agreed to by Mayor Dwight Jones and the Commission. The request for proposal was released on November 6, 2013, with the assistance of the Office of the Secretary of Administration, the Department of General Services, the Senate Clerk’s Office, and the Division of Legislative Services. The deadline for the submission of proposals is December 12, 2013, and the work group will present its recommendation on a sculptor/artist to the Commission on December 18, 2013. In addition, work has begun on the creation of a 501 (c)(3) organization composed of members of the work group to begin the fundraising campaign for the monument.



## Reconstruction Amendments Teachers Institute and Symposium

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission will sponsor a Teachers Institute in the summer of 2015 followed by a symposium in fall 2015 that examines the historical, political, social, and legal context of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the United States Constitution, and the significance of these Amendments to the rule of law and the legacy of the Emancipation Proclamation in contemporary times. The purpose of the Teachers Institute is to expose and prepare K-12 educators to the historical context of the Amendments in order that they may better instruct students concerning this era in American history. The Amendments, often referred to as the Civil War or Reconstruction Amendments, were enacted after the American Civil War to protect the new rights of formerly enslaved African Americans. The Amendments abolished slavery, conveyed the right of citizenship to persons born in America and equal protection under the law, and prohibited discrimination against the right to vote on the basis on race or previous condition of servitude. Notable legal scholars, historians, educators, and other experts will be impaneled to explore, analyze, and discuss the historical, cultural, social, and political setting of the genesis of the Amendments, the effect of the Amendments on the rule of law and public policy, the relevancy of the Amendments to the quality of life for Virginians and the nation today, whether each Amendment has effectively achieved its purpose, and the necessity for the Amendments in the future. The Reconstruction Amendments Symposium is an Emancipation Proclamation signature event; therefore, the Commission is planning to collaborate with public and private schools, educational and historical associations, the Department of Education, the Library of Virginia, the Virginia Historical Society, the Black History and Cultural Museum of Virginia, institutions of higher education, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, law schools, the faith community, and relevant nonprofit and community organizations. The Teachers Institute and the Symposium will be open to the public.

### “Remaking Virginia: Transformation Through Emancipation” Exhibition

The Library of Virginia (Library) is partnering with the Commission for an exhibition on

Emancipation in Virginia in 2015. The exhibition, tentatively entitled “Remaking Virginia: Transformation Through Emancipation,” will include a variety of programs and digital projects. Some of the programs are “Family Reunion: Descendants of 19th Century African American Legislators of the Virginia General Assembly”; the scanning of historical documents across the state related to 19th-century African American legislators; a companion exhibit on Emancipation at the State Capitol; and the online exhibition of “Remaking Virginia: Transformation Through Emancipation,” which will be sponsored by the Commission in partnership with the library and the University of Virginia’s Institute for Public History. The scheduled opening of the online exhibition is July 6, 2015. In addition, a part of the library’s Virginia Memory website will consist of images, documents, didactic texts, transcriptions, and audio and video elements pertaining to Emancipation, and the information will be linked to the Commission’s website. Working together with the library’s staff, the exhibition project director, the social media coordinator, graphic designers, education department, and editorial staff of the *Dictionary of Virginia Biography*, and other members of the project team, a graduate intern of the University of Virginia’s Institute for Public History will be retained to build the online exhibition website and present a preview of the exhibition to the Anne and Ryland Brown Teacher Institute at the Library of Virginia.

### Upcoming Signature Events

Other Commission signature events commemorating the historic signing of the Emancipation Proclamation in the planning stage include: (i) ceremony at the Emancipation Oak Tree at Hampton University in April 2014; (ii) viewing of the film *Lincoln* and panel discussion by eminent historians and scholars in April 2015; (iii) Public Forum: Contemporary Relevance of Emancipation Proclamation at Fort Monroe in May 2015; (iv) “Remaking Virginia: Transformation Through Emancipation,” exhibition with the Library of Virginia, from July 6, 2015, through March 2016; (v) Teacher Institutes on the Reconstruction Amendments in Summer 2015; (vi) Reconstruction Amendments Symposium in fall 2015; (vii) dedication and unveiling of Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument in 2015; and (viii) a period ball in fall/winter 2015, which will conclude the commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.

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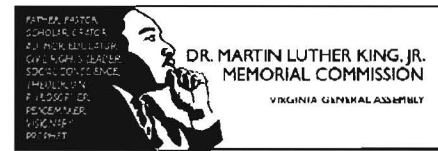
## 2014 Interim Preliminary Work Plan

The Commission's next meeting on December 18, 2013, will include a review and selection of the sculptor/artist for the Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument, reports from its subcommittees, and a review of the preliminary 2014 work plan that will outline the procedures and process that requires the Commission to, among other things, (i) monitor educational goals, programs, and objectives to encourage the recognition and inclusion of the achievements and contributions of ethnic and minority groups; (ii) conduct the biennial inventory and review of activities and events, sponsored by localities and public and private schools and institutions of higher education, that are designed to honor Dr. King's memory; (iii) facilitate the analysis of and public discourse on contemporary public policies relative to Dr. King's principles and philosophy, including his work pertaining to social and economic justice, ethics, racial equality, and appreciation of diverse cultures among the citizenry; (iv) collaborate with The King Center in Atlanta and Living the Dream, Inc. for the non-commercialized celebration and promotion of public service opportunities for the 2014 National King Holiday in Virginia; and (v) develop strategies for enhanced visibility and private fundraising to enable and assist the Commission in carrying out its statutory mandates and goals.

### Next Meeting

The Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Work Group will meet on December 18, 2013, at 10:00 a.m. and the full Commission and all subcommittees will meet on the same day at 2:00 p.m. The location will be announced by the Senate Clerk's Office.

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### DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. COMMISSION

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