

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission
October 19, 2015, Richmond**

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission (the Commission) met jointly with its Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument Subcommittee on October 19, 2015, to consider requests for collaborations and partnerships, receive status and final reports, and review and select a model for the monument.

Collaborations Requested

Silas Musgrove, president of the Northside High School Museum (the Museum) in Pittsylvania County, requested that the Commission partner with the Museum to convert eight-millimeter and 16-millimeter films in the Museum's collection to discs and develop an audiovisual presentation of the history of African Americans in Pittsylvania County from 1903 through the desegregation of public schools in 1969. This effort will facilitate the preservation of a part of the history of desegregation in the Commonwealth, particularly in Southside and Southwest Virginia. The Commission collaborated with the Museum's alumni committee in 2007 to begin the first phase of the Museum, which was dedicated in June 2010. The Museum's alumni committee plans to complete phase two of its work in September 2016. The Commission requested Mr. Musgrove to provide an itemized budget for phase two at its next meeting to help the Commission determine the nature and extent of its participation in the project.

Patrick Farris, subcommittee member and Warren County Historical Society executive director, revisited the Commission's work on the closing of public schools in Virginia and introduced Zach Logan, a history teacher at Warren County High School, who briefed the Commission on efforts between Warren County Public Schools and the Front Royal NAACP to write the history of desegregation in Warren County in order that it may be included in the Desegregation of Virginia Education (DOVE) project preserved at Old Dominion University. Mr. Farris or Mr. Logan will notify the Commission whether its assistance will be requested in this endeavor.

Report: "Remembering Slavery, Resistance, and Freedom"

Autumn Barrett, Ph.D., co-director of the Department of Anthropology's Institute for Historical Biology at the College of William and Mary, presented the findings and recommendations of the "Remembering Slavery, Resistance, and Freedom" project, a partnership of the College of William and Mary and the Commission. The project, funded in part by the Virginia Foundation for Humanities and Public Policy, the College of William and Mary, the National Endowment for Humanities, and the Commission, began in December 2010 as a part of the Commission's sesquicentennial commemoration of the Emancipation Proclamation. Twelve expert advisors specializing in aspects of African American life, history, memory, and memorialization created a database of Virginia cemeteries where former enslaved persons are interred and a pilot program to solicit eight community conversations in Northern, Central, Coastal, Valley, and Southwest Virginia to identify the themes and modes of commemoration most resonant for African Americans in Virginia. Demographically, the 172 community participants were roughly two-thirds female, one-third male; 60 percent identified as African American, one-third as European descendants, five percent as descendants of Africans and/or Native Americans, and the remainder as Europeans. A few of the participants were born and reared outside of the United States but currently reside in Virginia. Sixty-two percent of participants grew up or were educated in Virginia. Over 80 percent were educated beyond high school, 18.4 percent were active or retired educators, and 8.2 percent worked in historical or cultural organizations.

Dr. Barrett summarized the project findings as follows:

- Storytelling in historic spaces is a powerful tool for transformational learning by connecting past and present spaces, places, lives, and histories. Storytelling also is a good way of engaging younger generations.
- Multiple forms of commemoration should be ongoing, extending beyond the sesquicentennial.
- African American history is not bounded by the histories of slavery and emancipation.
- The Emancipation Proclamation is most generally viewed by all participants as a “strategic and limited document.”
- African Americans achieved their freedoms through multiple modes of resistance and self-liberation.
- Freedom was not “given.”
- African American participants emphasized the role of enslaved and free men and women in creating their own freedom before the Emancipation Proclamation was issued and in “forcing Lincoln’s hand.”
- African Americans are still fighting for full freedom and social justice.
- For some participants, slavery still exists “in different forms.”

Dr. Barrett stated that African American participants’ discussions of struggles for full freedom were related to their definitions of freedom as including full access to citizenship and full membership in U.S. society. Several questions arose among the participants regarding rights and citizenship in the context of the Emancipation Proclamation 150 years ago and in contemporary civic life. She noted that Salamishah Tillet’s “Sites of Slavery: Citizenship, Racial Democracy, and the Post-Civil Rights Imagination” (2012), refers to this sensibility among African Americans as “civic estrangement.” Chairwoman Jennifer McClellan directed that the College of William and Mary report be posted to the Commission’s website for public access.

Status Report

Brian Grogan, executive director of Mercy Seat Films, Inc., reported on the status of the trailer for the film *They Closed Our Schools* and the publication of the book of the same title by the University of Virginia Press. The film, a collaborative effort with the Commission, will be featured in the film series at the Virginia Historical Society on October 22, 2015. The film and book document the history of the public school closings of 1959–1964 and its aftermath in Prince Edward County. Materials amassed for the film and book will be housed in the special collection at Virginia Commonwealth University Library. It is anticipated that the book will be released in September 2016 and that publicity for the film will generate additional funds for the film's completion.

Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument Models

At its May 19, 2015, meeting, the Commission narrowed its selection of artists for the Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument to four finalists and asked each finalist to present a model at the October 19, 2015, meeting for review and consideration. All finalists are members of the National Sculpture Society. Each artist presented his model in private before the Commission, was asked a series of questions, and agreed, if selected, to make changes as may be requested by the Commission. Presenting models were the following artists:

Richard Blake of Blake Sculptor & Mata Design in Kinzers, Pennsylvania, presented a bronze model that as constructed will stand approximately 7'5" in height above the base and nearly 6'6" in diameter from edge to edge. The base of the monument will be a polished black granite stone on all sides. The base will measure approximately 7' by 7' by 18" deep. Five granite plinths surrounding the central sculpture will be about 18" x 15" x 15". Carved into the face of the five granite plinths will be highlights of the lives of certain historical figures that will make up the grand composition. Everdur Bronze will be used as a patina to create a medium golden brown color on the bronzes. This model, if chosen for the monument, would chronicle the lives of the central figures composing the grand composition and would implement an Augmented Reality (AR) system, providing an enhanced live experience through discovery-based learning and enabling visitors to experience a guided auditory and visual tour of the Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument.

Joseph H. and Anna Koh Varilla of Koh-Varilla Guild in Chicago, Illinois, a married sculpture team, offered a small clay model of a bronze monument that would be an in-the-round high and low bas-relief life size sculpture of major figures in the Abolitionist Movement. The bas-relief concept depicts a scene in Washington, D.C., with President Abraham Lincoln, holding a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, seated near the center of the composition. William Lloyd Garrison, a leading abolitionist, stands behind Lincoln and an African American Union soldier kneels at the far right of the composition. On the opposite side of the panel is Frederick Douglass, a proud abolitionist who is determined to debate his cause, and Sojourner Truth, who gestures toward President Lincoln, expressing her belief in the righteousness of the Emancipation Proclamation. The background of the panel in low bas-relief illustrates the dome of the United States Capitol Building under construction, built with African American labor during the American Civil War. The construction of the dome during the American Civil War is a symbolic and auspicious reminder of the nation in the process of creating a more perfect union. Along the bottom plinth of the front panel is President Lincoln's eloquent statement "A house divided against itself cannot stand. I believe this government cannot endure permanently half-slave and half-free." In the front of the monument, government and the legal fight for emancipation are depicted, and the back panel composition illustrates the ferocity and high cost in blood and treasure required to eliminate slavery in this country. The background low bas-relief scene of the panel illustrates one of many battles fought between the Union and the Confederacy. In high relief, the back panel shows life size figures of Harriet Tubman and John Brown aiding a beaten and exhausted fugitive slave. The back panel has quotations from Lincoln and Douglass.

Thomas Jay Warren, NSS, of Warren Sculpture Studios, Inc., National Sculpture Society, and Portrait Sculptors of the Americas in Rogue River, Oregon, presented a model with two options, one scaled with 12' bronze figures and another with 8' bronze figures, both depicting a formerly enslaved African American man whose steel shackles have been broken and a woman standing on a bronze pedestal, cuddling an infant in her arms, and holding a page from the calendar, January 1, 1863, high above her head. In option 1, the monument stands 18' with 12' tall bronze figures and pedestal. In option 2, the monument is 12' tall with 8' figures. Both options include the word "Freedom" on one face of the base, an excerpt of the Emancipation Proclamation on the second face, bronze portraits of Virginia's heroes in the fight for freedom (i.e., Dredd Scott, Booker T. Washington, Maggie L. Walker, and Oliver White Hill) on the third face, and bronze portraits of Irene Morgan, Henry L. Marsh III, Barbara Johns, and L. Douglas Wilder, representing Virginia's leaders on the path to equality, on the fourth face.

Rob Firmin of Daub & Firmin Studios in Kensington, California, submitted a design focused on the monument's concepts of emancipation and freedom. The model's design goals include boldness of

commemoration of the critically important events and principles; and clean, contemporary aesthetics, incorporating a monumental S-curved scroll in granite, a 36-foot-tall stainless steel and CorTen signing pen, with an engraved image of President Lincoln, from which rays of colored light emanate at night, a circular plaza with “Freedom” in 18' script engraved by the pen, and granite paving with a carnelian granite border. The monument will provide high visibility for Richmond and Virginia on Brown’s Island as a permanent reminder to visitors, including large island-event crowds, of the centrality of emancipation and freedom to America. The model is designed to attract civil rights and general tourism. The high visibility of the monument from many angles, including from the top of South 5th Street, the Tredegar Ironworks, and the many buildings that overlook Brown’s Island would provide the opportunity to celebrate holidays and announce events, even weather forecasts, from the monument. With the inclusion of JOJO CMS Interactive Technology, a type of e-learning technology, visitors could interact with the monument to learn about various historical figures and other important events throughout the year. The monument would be constructed of materials requiring minimal maintenance. Mr. Firmin presented three options—scroll, pen, and script; scroll only; and pen and script only—with the cost for each option.

Executive Session

The Commission agreed to go into executive session to discuss the models. At the close of the executive session, the Commission resumed its meeting in open session and informed the artists that they would be notified of the Commission’s decision(s) in writing. Chairwoman McClellan asked all Commission and subcommittee members to notify staff of any changes they would like requested of the artists and asked that consideration be given to the costs of changes. It was noted that a meeting with Richmond City and state officials would be arranged as soon as possible concerning next steps that need to be taken regarding the monument.

Other Commemorations and Guidelines for Collaborations

In discussing future commemorations, collaborations, and partnerships, Chairwoman McClellan noted that the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified on December 6, 1865, and its adoption was proclaimed by Secretary of State William H. Seward on December 18, 1865. She asked staff to research significant events that should be commemorated in 2016 and obtained the Commission’s approval to introduce legislation on its behalf in the 2016 Session, as appropriate. The Commission agreed that staff would develop and present guidelines for collaborations and partnerships for consideration at the next meeting.

Next Meeting

The Commission agreed to meet again on December 2, 2015, to receive an update from the MLK Board of Trustees, consider other business, and act on any unfinished matters pertaining to the Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument. Chairwoman McClellan announced that this will be the last meeting before the 2016 Session.

Jennifer L. McClellan, *Chairwoman*
Brenda Edwards, *DLS Staff*
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