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**Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission Work Group #3:  
History of Lynching in Virginia**

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**Senate Committee Room A, Pocahontas Building  
Richmond, Virginia**

**Wednesday, September 19, 2018  
2:00 P.M.**

**SUMMARY**

The History of Lynching in Virginia Work Group (the Work Group) of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission (the Commission) met for its inaugural meeting. Senator McClellan, chair of the Commission, introduced the work group's members, who included researchers, historians, and legislators.

After the initial introduction of members, Zann Nelson presented information on her efforts to put forth a resolution to the General Assembly acknowledging Virginia's history of lynching. Her efforts and her work with members of the General Assembly led to the creation of the Work Group, with the initial aim of creating such a resolution. Ms. Nelson described her extensive work in Culpeper to bring awareness to the history of lynching in the area and to recognize victims of lynching, in particular Allie Thompson, who was lynched in Culpeper in 1918. Ms. Nelson expressed that there is a need for the Commonwealth to take steps toward reconciliation by recognizing this history.

Dr. Gianluca De Fazio discussed his work at James Madison University on the Racial Terror project. Dr. De Fazio and students at JMU have created a database compiling documentation of every recorded lynching in Virginia from 1877 to 1927. Dr. De Fazio described lynching as a form of state-sponsored terrorism and noted that no listing of victims will ever be complete because many lynchings were undocumented or intentionally misrecorded.

Dr. Gregg Kimball discussed resources available at the Library of Virginia. The Library of Virginia's digital newspaper archive, Virginia Chronicle, preserves and makes accessible several Virginia newspapers, including the *Richmond Planet* and the *Norfolk Journal and Guide*, both of which reported on lynchings in Virginia when they were happening. Dr. Kimball recommended these resources as a means to further research and document Virginia lynchings.

Members identified several initial undertakings for the work group: first, to put forth a resolution in the 2019 Session of the General Assembly acknowledging Virginia's history of lynching; to compile a listing and to document lynchings that took place within Virginia; and to hold programs throughout the state in communities affected by lynching. The chair noted that Virginia would be the first state to directly address its own history of

lynching. Senator Locke noted that for many Virginians, the process of addressing this history would be a difficult and painful one.

Members agreed to meet again before the end of the year, prior to the Commission's next meeting, in order to finalize text of a resolution to present to the Commission and to make initial plans for 2019 programming. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.