



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

### Work Group 3: History of Lynching in Virginia

April 30, 2021, at 2:00 p.m.

Electronic Meeting

[mlkcommission.dls.virginia.gov](http://mlkcommission.dls.virginia.gov)

The History of Lynching in Virginia Work Group (the Work Group) of the Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission (the Commission) met electronically with Senator Jennifer L. McClellan, chair, presiding.<sup>1</sup> The meeting began with introductions and opening remarks followed by discussion. Materials presented at the meeting are accessible through the [Commission's meetings webpage](#). Video of the meeting is archived on the [Senate of Virginia's Video Stream](#) page.

### 2021 Programming to Recognize Virginia's Lynching History

The Work Group has tentative plans for several events across the state to recognize and address Virginia's history of lynching. Members provided updates and information on five events:

- **Richmond, summer event:** Lance Warren is developing a professional development session for teachers to be held in late summer. Mr. Warren will plan the event in collaboration with teachers, with a focus on methods to approach the history of racial violence, and specifically lynching in Virginia, in the classroom. Dr. Edward Ayers noted that Virginia's curriculum framework for History and Social Sciences now includes the history of lynching for the first time.
- **Danville, August event:** Hannah Ayers is working with Karice Luck of History United, in association with Virginia Humanities, to incorporate a session on teaching Virginia's lynching history into History United's existing Teacher Content Academy, which serves Danville-area teachers. Ms. Luck is working with the local school board to find a date for an in-person event in August.
- **Hampton Roads, September event:** Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander is planning an event in Hampton Roads in September, to include a panel discussion addressing what the community can do to recognize the history of lynching. The event is planned as a virtual panel discussion, but it may also have an in-person component.

---

<sup>1</sup> **Work Group Members Present:** Senator Jennifer L. McClellan (chair), Senator Mamie E. Locke, Delegate Delores L. McQuinn, Rabbi Bruce Aft, Dr. Edward Ayers, Hannah Ayers, Dr. Gianluca De Fazio, Brenda Edwards, Dr. Matthew S. Gibson, Dr. Gregg Kimball, Dr. Laurant L. Lee, Zann Nelson, Jalane Schmidt, and Lance Warren

- **Culpeper, October or November event:** Zann Nelson is planning an event in Culpeper in October or November, tied to the November anniversary of the 1918 lynching of Allie Thompson in Culpeper. Ms. Nelson plans to involve surrounding counties in the program in order to recognize the broader history of lynching in the area and to discuss how members of these communities would like to address this history. The program will have a workshop format.
- **Northern Virginia (George Mason University), October or November event:** Rabbi Bruce Aft proposed new plans to the Work Group for an educational program on lynching at George Mason University for students, faculty, and the wider public in the fall. Rabbi Aft is working with Dr. Charles Chavis, Jr., professor at George Mason University's School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution and member of the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, to organize the event. The Work Group agreed to add this event to its schedule for 2021.

Dr. Matthew Gibson, executive director of Virginia Humanities, asked whether the Work Group members who are planning events have access to the necessary resources to host programming. Virginia Humanities may be able to offer financial assistance for programming that meets criteria for receipt of American Rescue Plan funds. Senator McClellan noted that the Commission also has access to funds that can be used toward certain approved programming expenses.

### **History of Lynching in Virginia Work Group Website**

Ms. Nelson asked members for direction regarding development of the Work Group's website, which is part of the Commission's website and which currently includes only a basic outline of the Work Group's activities. Senator McClellan noted that the current website is developed by a separate agency. The Division of Legislative Automated Systems, in consultation with the Division of Legislative Services, maintains the website, and the site is, by design, a mostly static page. The Work Group could consider contracting with a separate web developer if it wanted to create a more interactive page.

Members discussed resources that are already available online relating to Virginia's lynching history, such as the *Racial Terror: Lynching in Virginia* database that Dr. Gianluca De Fazio has created in collaboration with students and colleagues at James Madison University. The Work Group agreed to draft new content to add to the Work Group's website in order to make the site more comprehensive, but, recognizing that there are already comprehensive resources online, to focus primarily on using the website to promote existing resources. Senator McClellan appointed a subgroup of Zann Nelson, Lance Warren, and Dr. Lauranett Lee to work with staff to draft new content for the Work Group's website, and the Work Group agreed to delegate authority to the subgroup to undertake this work.

### **Student Art and Essay Contest**

At its previous meeting on December 8, 2020, the Work Group agreed to tentative plans to host an essay contest for students in the 2021–2022 school year. Members agreed to host this project in the spring term and to work with the Department of Education to promote the contest to teachers and students.



## Next Meeting

The Senate Clerk's Office will poll members for a meeting to be held in summer 2021.

---

For more information, see the [Commission's website](#) or contact the Division of Legislative Services staff:

Lily Jones, Reference Center Director, DLS  
ljones@dls.virginia.gov  
804-698-1888

Amigo Wade, Acting Director, DLS  
awade@dls.virginia.gov  
804-698-1862

---

