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## MEDIA ADVISORY

For Immediate Release

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### **Work Group to Shed Light on History of Lynching in Virginia**

**Richmond, VA** - The Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission is undertaking an effort to uncover the long and painful history of lynching in the Commonwealth of Virginia. A work group of the Commission, consisting of legislative members, educators, historians, and community leaders and led by the Commission's chair, Senator Jennifer L. McClellan, is working to compile the names and stories of victims of lynching in Virginia and to create programmatic outreach that will bring awareness of this history to communities across the state. Existing sources document more than 100 lynchings that have taken place in Virginia, carried out in the decades following Reconstruction to perpetuate racial inequality and white supremacy and to terrorize African American communities.

Among its first efforts, the History of Lynching in Virginia Work Group is putting forth a resolution in the General Assembly's 2019 session to acknowledge with profound regret the existence and acceptance of lynching within the Commonwealth of Virginia. In the coming year, the group will focus on shedding light on the history of lynching, with programming to take place in communities around the state where lynchings have occurred. Programming will expand on existing efforts of the Equal Justice Initiative, which, through its Community Remembrance Project, has collected soil from lynching sites around the country and erected historical markers and monuments to commemorate and recognize victims of lynching. In building on these efforts, the work group will work with the Department of Historic Resources to identify sites for historic markers to recognize documented lynchings in Virginia.

The work group brings together experts on Virginia's history of lynching to build upon and expand existing research in the area. Members of the group include:

- Dr. Edward Ayers, historian, author, and President Emeritus of the University of Richmond;
- Hannah Ayers, co-director of the documentary *An Outrage*;
- Betsy Barton, History and Social Science Specialist at the Virginia Department of Education;
- Dr. Gianluca De Fazio, Assistant Professor of Justice Studies at James Madison University and creator of the research project *Racial Terror: Lynching in Virginia, 1877-1927*;
- Dr. Andrea Douglas, Director of the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center;
- Brenda Edwards, retired Senior Research Associate at the Virginia Division of Legislative Services and staff for the Virginia Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission;
- Kamille Gardner, Program Coordinator at Learning Tours Policy and Advocacy and relative of Culpeper lynching victim Allie Thompson;

- Dr. Matthew Gibson, Executive Director of Virginia Humanities;
- Dr. Gregg Kimball, Director of Educational and Outreach Services at the Library of Virginia;
- Dr. Luranett Lee, historian, Visiting Lecturer at the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, and Adjunct Assistant Professor in the School of Professional and Continuing Studies at the University of Richmond;
- Senator Mamie Locke, 2nd District (Hampton, Newport News, Portsmouth, and York);
- Delegate Delores McQuinn, 70th District (Chesterfield, Henrico, and Richmond);
- Zann Nelson, researcher, writer, public speaker specializing in African American history, and creator of the site *History Investigator*;
- Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, Professor of History, and Director of the Joseph Jenkins Roberts Center for African Diaspora Studies at Norfolk State University; and
- Lance Warren, co-director of the documentary *An Outrage*.

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Commission, a statutory and bipartisan agency of the Virginia General Assembly, was created in 1992 by the General Assembly to honor the legacy of Dr. King through educational, historical and cultural programs, public policy analysis, and public discourse on contemporary issues. Among the Commission's other projects are the King in Virginia project, dedicated to researching and documenting Dr. King's time in the Commonwealth and hosting panel discussions in each of the 13 Virginia localities that he visited, and the Emancipation Proclamation and Freedom Monument, to be constructed on Brown's Island in Richmond, dedicated to the contributions of African American Virginians in the ongoing fight for freedom and civil rights. For more on the Commission's work visit [mlkcommission.dls.virginia.gov](http://mlkcommission.dls.virginia.gov).