

Commonwealth of Virginia

**Commission to Study Slavery and Subsequent De Jure and
De Facto Racial and Economic Discrimination
Against African Americans**

Wednesday, July 19, 2023, 1:00 p.m.

Library of Virginia

Conference Rooms A & B

Members present: Delegate Delores McQuinn (Chair), Senator Mamie Locke (Vice-Chair), Dr. Jody Allen, Dr. Edward Ayers, Dr. Andrea Douglas (virtual), Dr. John W. Kinney, Dr. Newby-Alexander (virtual), Mr. Xavier Richardson (virtual), and Dr. Karen Sherry.

Call to Order & Commission Business

Commission Chair Delegate McQuinn called the meeting to order at 1:04 p.m. and confirmed a quorum of Commission members present in person. Commission Vice-Chair Senator Mamie Locke greeted all attendees to the meeting, and each Commissioner in attendance cordially introduced themselves. Delegate McQuinn shared the retirement of Dr. Sandra Treadway, the State Librarian, and expresses deep gratitude for her dedicated service. Delegate McQuinn requested the approval of the minutes and agenda, which was so moved by Dr. Ayers and seconded by Senator Locke.

Reports

In the Chair's Update, Delegate McQuinn provided an overview of the upcoming meetings for the rest of 2023. The Chair emphasizes the importance of publicizing one of the meetings. After a brief discussion, the Commissioners suggest holding a larger, publicized meeting on November 1, 2023, at a local public library. The meeting on December 13 will take place at William & Mary. McQuinn requested the subcommittees convene to finalize their recommendations before the August 23rd meeting.

In the Project Manager's report, Ms. Luster provided an updated bibliography based on the Commissioners' feedback from the previous submission. Dr. Ayers requested that the resources for each section be categorized according to the subcommittee topics. The Project Manager reminded the Commissioners that the annual report to the General Assembly is due on January 10, 2024. Additionally, the subcommittee recommendations should be submitted to the Project Manager by December 1, 2023.

Discussion

The Commissioners then engaged in a discussion regarding the report's length, style, and tone. Dr. Ayers recommended leveraging the Mapping Inequality research conducted by the Digital Scholarship Lab at

the University of Richmond. Dr. Kinney reminded the Commissioners that Virginia was the first state to offer an apology for slavery in 2007, with a unanimous vote by the General Assembly. Dr. Sherry inquired about the level of attention the Commission should give to criticisms concerning the report. Delegate McQuinn acknowledged that criticism would be inevitable given the nature of the study but emphasized the need for the Commission to persevere and continue its progress.

Dr. Newby-Alexander requested the Commission consolidate the gathered resources and create a comprehensive list of data. Dr. Newby-Alexander then shared examples of dumping sites, toxic areas, and heavy industries in the Norfolk, Newport News, and Hampton Roads regions. Additionally, Dr. Newby-Alexander recommended that the Commission utilize resources like mapping inequality and shared information about a community in the Berkeley region, where a one-mile radius has been found to have 20 toxic sites, the highest rate of strokes, and other health issues. Dr. Newby-Alexander referenced *Buchanan v. Warley* (1917) and the connection between the positioning of highways and redlining maps, which led to the dissection of black communities. Dr. Newby-Alexander made a recommendation to invest in a social geographer with GIS programming to compile information, including matters related to wealth disparities, home-owning issues, loss of homes through eminent domain, tax credits, rezoning, and other methods forcing Black people to surrender their homes.

Dr. Newby-Alexander also expressed a desire for the Commission to recommend contracting with a group or entity to crowdsource data, including health information and spatial impact, which can be cross-referenced with EPA data and redlining maps to show correlations.

Dr. Kinney discussed his recent conversation with the Association of National Black Realtors, who expressed their wish for the state to allocate vacant land for sale to black developers, fostering new housing opportunities.

Senator Locke left the meeting at 1:50 p.m. Mr. Richardson left the Zoom room at 2:00 p.m.

Public Comment

Three members of the public in attendance spoke during the public comment period. The first speaker emphasized the importance of reparations, specifically in the form of monetary compensation. They highlighted the City of Evanston as an example. She voiced her apprehensions about the time-consuming nature of specific programs, like housing and education initiatives, that were discussed. The speaker urged the legislators of the Commission to ensure that H.R. 4321, proposed by Rep. Bryan Babin of Texas, does not progress further.

The second speaker strongly emphasized the significance of reparations based on lineage, advocating for monetary compensation as the preferred means of redress. Additionally, they highlighted the issue of eminent domain and the substantial amount of Black-owned space that the state has acquired.

The third speaker emphasized the importance of specifying "who" in the final report and highlighted the need for the Commission's recommendations to include direct cash payments based on lineage. The speaker shared that she is a military veteran and a college graduate. She expressed how her ancestors were deprived of fair access to military benefits, such as the G.I. Bill. Additionally, she highlighted the burden of student loans have become insurmountable. She concluded by asking the Commissioners to reflect on all the hard-earned achievements that previous generations have had taken away, preventing them from enjoying the fruits of their labor.

Motion to adjourn: Allen moved, seconded by Ayer's. The meeting concluded at 2:32 p.m.