

HB1980 Committee Meeting

Agenda

Date: January 26, 2023

Duration: 4:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Platform: Zoom

Attendees: Dr. Edward Ayers; Dr. Laurant Lee; Dr. Kevin Allison; Matt Conrad; Dr. Leonard Edloe; Dr. Nakeina Douglas-Glenn; Dr. Clifton Peay (Chair); Sheryl Garland (Chair); Jonsette Calloway

Discussion/Updates

- **Introductions for new members were made by Dr. Peay**
- **(Dr. Peay) Meeting minutes were presented for approval**
- **S. Garland discussed the commission's timeline, key components of the work.**
 - Commission holds a May deadline; will need to develop a tight work plan; input is needed from the community to develop thoughtful recommendations to share with appropriate bodies
- **M. Conrad provided an overview of HB1980, the research process and noted that the team should consider the timeline as baselines**
- **(Dr. Ayers; Dr. Lee) Paul Pleasants' free/enslaved status was discussed following a posed question**
 - *Potential resources: the free black registers and account books of enslavers (Library of Virginia–Virginia Untold; African American History and Genealogy Association in RVA)*
 - Legally, slavery did end at 1865, but forms of injustice became more dangerous
 - There was additional discussion surrounding MCV's relation to the penitentiary in Richmond and the line between what was discovered about the well and other forms of injustice from MCV
- **S. Garland noted that the commission can define who to identify and memorialize as part of recommendations, and reviewed details of HB1980**
 - The commission can go beyond the definition as part of the work and may also wish to consider identifying and memorializing other populations to be more inclusive.
 - Dr. Allison can assist with EMSWP in ensuring recommendations align with and build upon these individuals as well because the line of separation is difficult
- **M. Conrad noted that the legislation requires reporting annually, so there is opportunity to update the research**
- **Dr. Ayers discussed University of Richmond's efforts**

- UR discovered people who labored there were often hired from enslavers versus owned by the institution itself; if the commission considered those who labored, the number would be significantly larger than those owned; UR has done research on how you trace hiring and leasing—time, categories of labor.
 - Free and enslaved persons were used on an annual basis
- Dr. Lee discussed medical experimentation and the need to explore this topic
 - There are further ways to track
 - Can we determine how many and who leased?; consider gender perspective—(ie: James Miriam Simms did medical experimentations on enslaved women without anesthesia)
 - What do we know of medical experimentation—dig into medical records; (*Resource: Birthing a Slave—2010*)
 - S. Garland noted that specific patient records are difficult to track, but work from EMSWP is a good testimony to activities that occurred—commission can acknowledge the work of the past in recommendations
 - Dr. Douglas noted the commission should consider how geography plays a role and that mapping will be important to consider, as VCU is not insular
- **Dr. Allison noted opportunities to leverage EMSWP research**
 - Geography—It was recommended by the advisory body to undertake biocultural analysis
 - Institutional history of active faculty during the time—EMSWP research agenda would include some examination to build upon the identification of faculty and understand curricular impact and connection
 - Three post-docs are working on DNA and historical analyses
 - ACLS- Engaged Lenor McQueen who has been involved with Shockoe project; assisting in implementing the public history aspect of work to transcribe records
- **Dr. Peay—What other competitive parts of the South were at the level of Richmond?**
 - Dr. Ayers noted that RVA was important and unusual—more industrial, distinguishing characteristics is that it was a major place because people were exported; enormous responsibility on a national level
 - Businesses in Richmond provided clothing, were fed well to look as healthy as possible
- **Dr. Allison recommended the commission should have a conversation with Jodi Koste who was a valuable resource for the development of MCV and the ways in which MCV advertised in relation to slavery**
- **Dr. Peay discussed the participation of experts as resources, but must consider nature of contribution**
 - Minutes from these discussions will be taken by J. Calloway
- **The need to incorporate public feedback early was discussed**
 - S. Garland noted that the commission will have forums, but want to ensure they are inclusive—*Where do we want to secure input?*

- Dr. Peay further discussed the timeline and further questions to consider:
 - *How do we gauge and target ourselves to meet milestones?*
 - (Dr. Ayers) *How/when do we engage the public and determine logistics around this?*
 - If people wait to respond, you lose the benefit of public comment; would suggest sooner rather than later
 - Learned from the Monument Avenue commission that you cannot assume people have access to web-based mechanisms
 - Commission would need to have a public meeting for people to speak unscripted and schedule as soon as possible; promote
- Dr. Allison discussed EMSWP engagement
 - Series of five community consultations—first four were for input; taped presentations, informational in nature. People proceeded to tables that weren't recorded; notes were captured in real time to document recommendations from community around research, memorialization.
 - Information was used to inform recommendations, which were presented before being made final
 - Worked with a consulting group
 - Tactics: open invitation to community—radio, newspapers
 - Participation—50 at the start and grew to 125-150 people
 - Dr. Allison noted that with the ACLS grant, they will have a series of community engagements (May) where they will update on work and use as opportunity to provide community input and there may be an opportunity to partner
- **M. Conrad noted that HB1980 is silent on public engagement, but VCU has always contemplated community engagement as part of its process**
- **Dr. Peay clarified the role/value of consultant and associated budget**
 - Dr. Allison noted that Dr. William Blakey was invaluable; helpful in organizing and putting process into place
 - M. Conrad noted the staff team can handle community engagement process
- **S. Garland noted the work plan should include constituent groups in room, timeline, community engagement, steps need to cover**
 - The communications plan will be essential
 - Dr. Ayers—*Can the EMSWP Advisory group meet with the commission and the commission utilize EMSWP community?*
 - Dr. Allison did not see issues
- **Dr. Lee-perspective on archivist work to get a professional read**
 - Experimentation on enslaved women, descendant communities (*Resources: Library of VA, "Help me Find my People", African American History and Geneology*);
 - Dr. Edloe—treatment of males (*Resources: Josh Rothman "Ledger and Chain", Mary McGinnis, Library of VA curated an exhibit*)

- **Dr. Peay posed the question of committee size and additional expertise to add as commission members**
 - Dr. Lee noted she can help on ad-hoc basis
 - School of Medicine student representatives (more than one)
 - Faculty/staff from VCU School of Medicine (MCV Campus and Monroe Park Campus)
 - Faye Belgrave

Action

- Minutes from meetings with guests will be taken by J. Calloway
- Staff team to handle engagement planning internally
- Topics to potentially explore: Medical experimentation and gender perspective; acknowledging the work of the past in recommendations; geographical landscape

Next steps

- J. Calloway-will send a name vote for the commission
- J. Calloway to draft work plan with co-chairs
- M. Conrad to work with Cindy send out all invites to committee members
- S. Garland, Dr. Peay to finalize member recommendations and distribute invites
- M. Conrad to handle student representative