

HB1980 Committee Meeting

Minutes

Date: February 9, 2023

Duration: 4:30 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Platform: Zoom

Attendees: Rhonda Keyes Pleasants, Dr. Clifton Peay, Sheryl Garland, Dr. Nakeina Douglas-Glenn, Dr. Kevin Harris, Dr. Faye Belgrave, Matt Conrad, Dr. Ed Ayers, Tobi Ojo, Dr. Leonard Edloe

Discussion/Updates

- **Approval of [Jan. 26 meeting minutes](#) (Chairs)**
- **Welcome for new members (Charis)**
 - Dr. Belgrave, Dr. K. Harris, Tobi, Rhonda Pleasants
 - M. Conrad- Provided legislative overview and commented on public engagement and alignment with EMSWP; Verenda Cobbs will work alongside commission to host two public forums
 - Multiple modes of outreach will be used—including soliciting online feedback
- **Dr. Peay opened for feedback on community forums**
 - (R. Pleasants)- Educate on how legislation evolved, then report, because many are unaware
 - (T. Ojo)- Hold forum in a VCU building near Hibbs; commission should develop ideas, be purposeful
 - (Dr. Peay)—*Is town-gown an issue?*—barrier between university community and general community
 - Embed into curriculum; close connection with students and community
 - (Dr. Glenn)— Open forums, come in with a small group of ideas and get reaction; must give consideration to those who thought long and hard; reparations & resources owed; what will be in the outer layer of narrative
 - (Dr. Peay)—*How many forums?*
 - Identify communities most impacted and work done/not done; after first one, reflect and report out and see where it leads us to next

- (S. Garland)–In addition to education, including an intro. which includes the acknowledgment of past actions, history and part of what led us to the legislation and hosting of forums
- (Dr. Ayers)–People will want to know history of legislation, so needs to be acknowledged–where it came from and how other institutions are dealing with this
 - *M. Conrad provided history on bill*
 - UVA and William & Mary have been in work for some time and erected memorials for enslaved laborers
 - Should point out that it was bi-partisan, but also an act of good faith and responsibility
- (Dr. Harris)- Be specific about what we would really need; do not talk outside of our lane; note where public can lend their voice to help advance the work; be thoughtful and respectful of their time and be targeted. Relay that we can't advance without their perspective
- (S. Garland)- Be open and transparent around commission's charge
- (T. Ojo)- Give as much opportunity to provide input; hold two forums
- (Dr. Peay)–*What's the university's success with forums?*
 - (Dr. Belgrave)–not very successful, but commission can do the best we can; cognizant of short time period and the need to be intentional about goals/objectives of the community forum. It will take a lot of work to get the full level of engagement but can still be somewhat flexible
 - (Dr. Glenn)- Think about how we can get students involved–real and action-learning experience; observational methodology, arts school, have a parallel narrative in how we engage students
 - (Dr. Ayers)-UR took two years to design its memorial, and he co-chaired the committee. They held 15 meetings, including going to churches
 - Burt Pinnock (Baskerville) designed memorial and may be willing to consult on what's involved. We don't want to underestimate the amount of thought that has to go into this process
 - Must know what questions are; UVA took 15 years and \$5 million
- (S. Garland)–Given the timeline, we should consider how we get recommendations on paper, and the second phase can spell out implementation of the recommendations

- (Dr. Ayers)–UR held open charrettes; determine what is a feasible goal to secure the support of the university and community; any memorial would have to fulfill certain purposes–ie: be a sacred space and can't merely be about regret, but hope and determination for families who've survived; have concrete accomplishments, goals for memorial
 - *What do its guiding principles for a memorial have to be?*
 - *What form of reparation might there be? Do people have a preference?*
 - It would help to get a sense of what people want; set expectations on timeline for memorial and what's involved
 - (Dr. Edloe)- *Are we considering locations other than the campus? VCU can be overwhelming to some people.*
 - (Dr. Belgrave)–It all goes back to the target; *what do we want to impart? When do we want to host?*
 - **Possible goals: Educate on historical context, start gathering recommendations, input on commission's goals**
- M. Conrad noted that he met with Dr. Shawn Glover and inquired on how they arrived at their memorial–held a competition on design criteria and purpose
 - (Dr. Edloe)–*How do we involve faith-based communities?*–proximity to school, VUU, First Baptist, First African
 - (K. Harris)–*Can we leverage existing groups, ie. the group Dr. Wynn has put together?*
 - There are conversations already ongoing, and we can use those to get public feedback and be more efficient in getting a broad range of perspectives
- **Defined charge & commission goals (Chairs)**
 - *Based on the findings of the December 17, 2022, report on Slavery and the Medical College of Virginia, this Commission is charged with recommending to the Administration and Board of Visitors of VCU specific ways in which the institution should:*
 - *(i) memorialize all enslaved individuals who labored on MCV grounds and property; and*
 - *(ii) provide a tangible benefit such as a college scholarship or community-based economic development program for individuals or specific communities with a demonstrated historic connection to slavery.*
- **Reviewed draft work plan & timeline (S. Garland)**
 - Yellow coded items represent when commission is meeting–9 meetings
 - (Dr. Belgrave)–*Any flexibility on timeline?*
 - No delineation between preliminary recommendations and action plan, but must present a deliverable in May

- Project Gabriel: President's Special Commission on Slavery and Justice was selected as the commission's name

Next steps

- Meet with VCU development teams on capacity, needs, support (Chairs)
- Send email to members to gauge future resources needed, invitees (Jonsette)
- Send email to members to determine community groups to target (Jonsette)
- Proceed with website launch following Dr. Rao's approval (Jonsette)
- Begin logistics planning for upcoming forums—facilitation, locations, strategy, transcribing (Project team)
- Provide 1-pager on exemplar universities (Project team)

Meeting adjourned at 6 p.m.