



Council of Virginia Archaeologists

March 30, 2022

Roy F. Young, II  
President, Chief Executive Officer  
The Montpelier Foundation  
11350 Constitution Highway  
Montpelier Station, VA

Dear Mr. Young,

On behalf of the Council of Virginia Archaeologists (COVA), I am writing to express our profound disappointment with the recent decision by The Montpelier Foundation Board of Directors to deny the Montpelier Descendant Committee the ability to fulfil its role as sole representative of descendants of the enslaved people at Montpelier, reverse its progress towards structural parity, and intimidate The Montpelier Foundation's dedicated staff.

COVA is the Commonwealth's professional archaeology organization dedicated to the preservation and study of Virginia's archaeological resources. Since 1975, our mission has been to: 1) promote the preservation and study of Virginia's archaeological resources; 2) foster public awareness, knowledge, and support for the preservation of Virginia's archaeological resources; 3) facilitate interaction between the communities of professional and avocational archaeologists; and 4) act as an independent professional advisory group for Virginia's Department of Historic Resources (DHR). Under this mission, COVA strives to amplify the voices of historically marginalized groups when public or private undertakings have the potential to impact historic resources important to their communities.

Our mission compels us to speak out against the actions of The Montpelier Foundation Board of Directors. Montpelier is among the most culturally significant archaeological landscapes in the Commonwealth. Montpelier museum staffs' extensive and highly respected research, publications, and public programs is the result of decades of scientifically rigorous investigation, consistent public engagement, and *especially* the dedicated involvement and collaboration with Montpelier's Descendant Community.

Montpelier is visited by thousands of people each year not only because it is listed on our state's and nation's registers of historic places, its National Historic Landmark status, and its association with the National Trust for Historic Places, but because of the Foundation's pioneering work with the permanent exhibit "The Mere Distinction of Colour", its creation of the groundbreaking document "Engaging Descendant Communities in the Interpretation of Slavery at Museums and Historic Sites; A Rubric of Best Practices Established by the National Summit on Teaching Slavery (aka the "Rubric"), and role as a model for non-profits, educators, and advocates of freedom and democracy. COVA commends the dedicated team of educators, curators, historians,

archaeologists, museum professionals, and descendants who helped build this organizational reputation and advocated for systemic change throughout The Montpelier Foundation.

COVA stands in full support of the Montpelier Descendant Committee who have honorably represented their ancestors, fought for equal representation, and sacrificed much despite personal and historical traumas to help The Montpelier Foundation thoughtfully and honestly engage with its past and inspire national efforts to maintain its representation on Montpelier's Board of Directors.

The recent decisions of the Board of Directors represent a dramatic turn, but there are still opportunities to change course. We request that you trust your staff, and the professional ethics that guide them, and re-engage with the Montpelier Descendant Committee and community who are vital to Montpelier's past, present, and future. By doing these things you can make a real difference in the lives of every visitor by embracing the complex and complicated history that is embodied by Montpelier.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David A. Brown", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David A. Brown, PhD  
COVA President  
Dabro3@email.wm.edu