



March 29, 2022

Dear Friends,

Last week, *The Washington Post* published an [article](#) describing the decision of the Montpelier Foundation board to change its bylaws and strip an organized group of descendants of those enslaved at James Madison's home of its role in appointing new board members to the Foundation. Since then, professionals in cultural heritage and historic preservation have been engaged in intense debate about this decision. To some, this may seem like petty fighting at a historic home, but this issue cuts to the heart of how we represent the past in this remarkable country.

Will we tell the stories of all Americans at our historic places? And will we welcome all people into the process to ensure full, faithful, and fair representations? Will we have historical sites of, by, and for the people?

In the Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln resolved that the nation should have a new birth of freedom. But the path to a nation where we are all equal has been full of labor pains, as the last 157 years of struggle for racial justice bear witness. At President Lincoln's Cottage, our mission requires us to continue the fight for freedom, and that means taking a stand against injustice.

We stand with the Montpelier Descendants Committee in its efforts to seek equality in governing Montpelier. We stand with the staff and volunteers of Montpelier, many of whom have spent decades building meaningful, transformative relationships with the descendant community. And we stand with colleagues at the National Trust for Historic Preservation and around the country who have worked to find an equitable solution.

And we also bear witness to this moment of potential transformation: We urge the Montpelier Foundation Board in the strongest possible terms to revisit this decision and seek to restore racial justice and equity through its stewardship of James Madison's Montpelier. We urge the board to rise to the moment and serve as midwife in the new birth of freedom.

The struggle for freedom continues.

Sincerely,

MAM

Dr. Michael Atwood Mason
CEO and Executive Director

Support Our Mission

*President Lincoln's Cottage is a 501(c)3 Public Charity. It is the only National Monument in the country that receives no federal operating support.
Thank you for your support.*
