

Newly Elected MDC-Endorsed Members of the Montpelier Foundation Board

May 16, 2022

1. Leslie Alexander, PhD

Scholar



Dr. Leslie M. Alexander is Associate Professor in the School of Historical, Philosophical, and Religious Studies and the School of Social Transformation at Arizona State University. She is also currently a Fellow in the Society for the Humanities at Cornell University, and as of July 2022 she will become the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Professor of History at Rutgers University.

A specialist in early African American and African Diaspora history, she is the author of *African or American?: Black Identity and Political Activism in New York City, 1784-1861* (University of Illinois Press, 2011) and the co-editor of three additional volumes. Her forthcoming book, *Fear of a Black Republic: Haiti and the Birth of Black Internationalism in the United States* (University of Illinois Press, forthcoming Fall 2022), examines how the Haitian Revolution and the emergence of Haiti as a sovereign Black nation inspired the birth of Black internationalist consciousness in the United States.

Her newest project, “How We Got Here: Slavery and the Making of the Modern Police State,” examines how surveillance of free and enslaved Black communities in the colonial and antebellum eras laid the foundation for modern-day policing. A portion of that research appears in *The 1619 Project: A New Origin Story*. A recipient of several prestigious fellowships, including the Ford Foundation Senior Fellowship, Alexander is the Immediate Past President of the Association for the Study of the Worldwide African Diaspora (ASWAD), and is an Executive Council member of the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS). She also serves on the Advisory Councils for the *Journal of African American History* and *The Black Scholar*. During her career, she has won several significant awards, including the coveted University Alumni Award for Distinguished Teaching at The Ohio State University.

2. Daina Ramey Berry, PhD

Scholar / Consultant



Daina Ramey Berry (pronounced DIE-NAH like Dinah Washington) is the Chair of the Department of History at The University of Texas at Austin. She holds the Oliver H. Radkey Regents Professorship of History and is a Fellow of Walter Prescott Webb Chair in History, and the George W. Littlefield Professorship in American History at the University of Texas at Austin. Formerly the Associate Dean of The Graduate School, Dr. Berry led a campus-wide initiative to transform funding, student outcomes, and career pathways at the university.

In addition to her work at the university as an administrator and an internationally recognized scholar of slavery, Berry is one of the most sought-after consultants for public-facing projects offered by museums, historical sites, K-12 educational initiatives, syndicated radio programs, online podcasts, and public television.

Berry is “a scholar of the enslaved” and a specialist on gender and slavery and Black women’s history in the United States. Berry is the award-winning author and editor of six books and several scholarly articles. One of her recent books, *The Price for their Pound of Flesh: The Value of the Enslaved, from Womb to the Grave, in the Building of a Nation* (Beacon Press, 2017), received the Phyllis Wheatley Award for Scholarly Research from the Sons and Daughters of the US Middle Passage; the 2018 Best Book Prize from the Society for the History of the Early American Republic (SHEAR); and the 2018 Hamilton Book Prize from the University Co-op for the best book among UT Austin faculty. Berry has received prestigious fellowships for her research from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, the American Association of University Women, and the Ford Foundation.

Berry has appeared on several syndicated radio and television networks, including NBC/ TLC (“Who Do You Think You Are?”), CNN, C-SPAN, National Geographic Explorer, and NPR. In 2016, she served as a historical consultant and technical advisor for the remake of *ROOTS* by Alex Haley (HISTORY/ A+E). She currently serves as a consultant for museums and historical societies throughout the United States, including the restoration and interpretation at historical sites such as the Owens-Thomas House (Savannah, GA), Phillipsburg Manor (Sleepy Hollow, NY), and the Neill-Cochran House (Austin, TX).

3. Reverend Cornell William Brooks, JD

Attorney / Public Servant / Social Justice Activist / Scholar



Cornell William Brooks is Hauser Professor of the Practice of Nonprofit Organizations and Professor of the Practice of Public Leadership and Social Justice at Harvard Kennedy School. Brooks leads as Director of The William Monroe Trotter Collaborative for Social Justice at the School's Center for Public Leadership and serves as Visiting Professor of the Practice of Prophetic Religion and Public Leadership at Harvard Divinity School. Brooks is the former president and CEO of the NAACP, a civil rights attorney, ordained minister, orator, writer, and the executive producer of two films.

Under his leadership, the NAACP secured 12 significant legal victories, including laying the groundwork for the first statewide legal challenge to prison-based gerrymandering. He also reinvigorated the activist social justice heritage of the NAACP, dramatically increasing membership. He conceived and led "America's Journey for Justice" march from Selma, Alabama to Washington, D.C., over 40 days and 1000 miles, among many other demonstrations. Prior to leading the NAACP, Brooks was president and CEO of the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. He previously served as senior counsel and acting director of the Office of Communications Business Opportunities at the Federal Communications Commission, executive director of the Fair Housing Council of Greater Washington, and a trial attorney at both the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the U.S. Department of Justice. He was the executive producer of the CNN docuseries *The People v. the Klan*. Brooks holds a J.D. from Yale Law School, where he was a senior editor of the *Yale Law Journal* and member of the *Yale Law & Policy Review*, and a Master of Divinity from Boston University's School of Theology, where he was a Martin Luther King, Jr. Scholar. He also holds a B.A. from Jackson State University. He is a fourth-generation ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Brooks and his family have made Virginia their home for more than 25 years.

4. DeAnna Dodds Cummings, MPA

Foundation Leader / Advocate for the Arts



DeAnna Cummings joined the McKnight Foundation in June 2020 as Arts program director. Founded on the belief that Minnesota thrives when its artists thrive, McKnight invests in the arts and other sectors to support the state's working artists and culture bearers and advocate for the value of their work as leaders in the state.

Before coming to McKnight, Cummings was the co-founding CEO of Juxtaposition Arts (JXTA), a social enterprise business in north Minneapolis that trains and employs historically underestimated youth as a springboard to higher education and careers in art and design. Established in 1995 as an after-school program in the North Side's Sumner-Glenwood neighborhood, JXTA has become one of the most important cultural institutions in the Twin Cities.

Cummings has served on the Bush Foundation's board of trustees since 2013. She is a 2016 *Minneapolis/St. Paul Business Journal* Women in Business awardee and a Minnesota Public Radio 2013 Arts Hero. From 2016 to 2018, she was a DeVos Institute Fellow in the selective fellowship program in arts management at the University of Maryland, College Park. She holds a master's in public administration from Harvard University and studied sociology and psychology at the University of Minnesota.

5. F. Michael Higginbotham, JD, LL.M.

Professor of Law / Author / Advocate



Michael Higginbotham is a law professor, author, and international political consultant. As an expert on civil rights, human rights, and constitutional law, Higginbotham has taught and written extensively on racial equality issues for over thirty years. He is the author of the books *Race Law: Cases, Commentary, and Questions* and *Ghosts of Jim Crow: Ending Racism in Post-Racial America* (NYU Press, 2013). In its fifth edition, *Race Law* is widely used in colleges and law schools throughout the United States and several foreign countries.

Higginbotham worked for the Public Justice Center, one of Maryland's largest public interest firms beginning in the 1990s, the group fought cases on behalf of homeless students, detainees at the Baltimore City Detention Center on their right to medical care, and on behalf of Eastern Shore poultry workers denied extra pay for working overtime. Higginbotham has also worked to diversify the region's law professionals. In 2011, Higginbotham co-founded the Fannie Angelos Scholarship program, a program that identifies students at Maryland's historically black colleges and universities in their sophomore and junior years as future attorneys. The program helps them apply to law school and throughout their legal studies and was recognized by the American Bar Association in 2017.

Higginbotham has published numerous articles and editorials in journals and newspapers throughout the United States. Appearing regularly on CNN Tonight hosted by Don Lemon, Higginbotham has frequently provided commentary to media worldwide. Additionally, he currently serves as a legal advisor to Senator Ben Cardin. Before joining the University of Baltimore law faculty in 1988, Higginbotham was a Law Clerk to United States Court of Appeals Judge Cecil Poole, an Associate with Davis Polk, and a Lecturer in Law at the University of Pennsylvania. Higginbotham also served as former to Chairman of the Board of the Public Justice Center.

Higginbotham is the chairman of the Board of the Public Justice Center, a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and the former chairperson of the Association of American Law Schools Committee on Recruitment and Retention of Minority Faculty. He is a member of the District of Columbia Bar. Higginbotham graduated from Beverly Hills High School in 1975, received a Bachelor of Arts degree magna cum laude from Brown University in 1979, a Juris Doctor degree from Yale University in 1982, and a Master of Laws degree with honors from Cambridge University in 1985 where he was a Rotary Scholar.

6. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, PhD

Scholar / Public Historian



Hasan Kwame Jeffries is Associate Professor of History at The Ohio State University, where he teaches courses on the Civil Rights and Black Power Movement.

In addition to his academic work, Dr. Jeffries has participated in several major public history projects. From 2010 to 2014, he was the lead historian and primary scriptwriter for the \$27 million renovation of the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Hotel in Memphis, Tennessee, the site where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated. He hosts the podcast “Teaching Hard History,”

a production of the Southern Poverty Law Center’s educational division, Teaching Tolerance. He also regularly shares his knowledge of African American history and contemporary Black politics with the public through lectures, workshops, op-eds, and radio and television interviews. He has also contributed to several documentary film projects as a featured on-camera scholar, including the Emmy nominated, four-hour, PBS documentary *Black America Since MLK*.

Jeffries consults regularly with school districts on developing anti-racism programming. This work includes conducting professional development workshops for teachers, speaking to student assemblies, and developing inclusive curricular centered on social studies. In the classroom, Jeffries takes great pride in opening students’ minds to new ways of understanding the past and the present. This has led him to push the very boundaries of what we think of as a classroom, including taking small groups of undergraduates to Montpelier. For his pedagogical creativity and effectiveness, he has received Ohio State’s Alumni Award for Distinguished Teaching, the university’s highest award to teaching, and the Ohio State University College of Arts and Sciences Outstanding Teaching Award.

Jeffries is the author of *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama’s Black Belt* (New York University Press, 2009), which tells the remarkable story of the African American freedom movement in Lowndes County, Alabama, the birthplace of Black Power. He is also the editor of *Understanding and Teaching the Civil Rights Movement* (University of Wisconsin Press, 2021), a collection of essays by leading civil rights scholars and teachers that explores how to teach the Civil Rights Movement accurately and effectively. Jeffries’ current book project, *In the Shadow of Civil Rights*, examines the Black experience in New York City from 1977 to 1993.

Jeffries graduated *summa cum laude* from Morehouse College with a B.A. in History (1994) and earned a Ph.D. in American History, with a specialization in African American History, from Duke University (2002). He taught for a year at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, before joining the faculty at The Ohio State University in 2003.

7. Dean Nicole Thorne Jenkins, PhD, CPA

Financial Expert / University Administrator



Dean Nicole Thorne Jenkins is the John A. Griffin Dean of the McIntire School of Commerce at the University of Virginia. An award-winning educator and researcher, she is an expert in the areas of financial reporting, organizational strategy, and valuation. Throughout her career, Jenkins has built a reputation for integrating the academic, financial, and strategic plans of higher education institutions to foster alignment from which strategy is executed. As an accounting and finance professional with over 30 years of experience, Dean Jenkins brings a deep appreciation for integrity, transparency, and the common good to all that she does.

Jenkins joined the McIntire School in July of 2020 following her tenure as the Von Allmen Chaired Professor of Accountancy and Vice Dean of the Gatton College of Business and Economics at the University of Kentucky. As Vice Dean, she led all internal operations for the college including strategic planning; development and implementation of the College's first diversity, equity, and inclusion programmatic plan; budget and finance; and collaborations with faculty to design and launch both standalone and interdisciplinary academic programs across varying modalities.

Jenkins is a certified public accountant and started her career in the audit department of PriceWaterhouse (PwC). She holds a certificate in leadership from Stanford Graduate School of Business and is a former president of the Financial Accounting and Reporting Section of the American Accounting Association. She is the recipient of a best paper award, three outstanding service awards, two outstanding faculty awards, and a dean's award. Jenkins received BAs in both Accounting and Finance from Drexel University, her PhD from the University of Iowa, and has served on the faculties of Washington University in St. Louis, Vanderbilt University, and the University of Kentucky.

She has published articles in numerous academic journals, is a sought-after speaker and business consultant, and serves as an expert witness in matters related to financial reporting, valuation, and estimation of damages. Currently, Jenkins serves on the advisory board at the Tippie School of Business at the University of Iowa and on the Board of Trustees for Strada Educational Network and Beta Gamma Sigma (Honor Society) where she is on the accounting and finance committees.

8. Soledad O'Brien

Broadcast Journalist / Philanthropist



Soledad O'Brien is an award-winning journalist, critically acclaimed author, speaker, and philanthropist who anchors and produces the Hearst Television political magazine program "Matter of Fact with Soledad O'Brien." Ms. O'Brien, Founder and CEO of Soledad O'Brien Productions, also reports for HBO Real Sports, the PBS NewsHour, and WebMD. She has appeared on networks Fox and Oxygen and anchored and reported for NBC, MSNBC, and CNN. O'Brien and her husband, Brad Raymond, have created the PowHERful Foundation (previously named Starfish Foundation, and before that the Soledad O'Brien & Brad Raymond Foundation) to help disadvantaged young women get to and through college. Ms. O'Brien created and launched an award-winning documentary film series In America that was among CNN's most successful domestic and international franchises. She has also hosted the "Black in America" and "Latino in America" series.

Ms. O'Brien has been the recipient of numerous prestigious awards for her reporting, including three Emmys, the George Foster Peabody award, an Alfred I. DuPont-Columbia University Prize honoring excellence in broadcast and digital journalism in the public service, and the Gracie Allen Award. She has also authored two books, *Latino in America* (Celebra 2009) and *The Next Big Story: My Journey Through the Land of Possibilities* (Celebra, 2010). Newsweek Magazine named her one of the "15 People Who Make America Great." Ms. O'Brien has also received the NAACP President's Award (2007) and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health's Goodermote Humanitarian Award (2008) for her humanitarian efforts and journalistic excellence. In 2009, O'Brien received the 2009 Medallion of Excellence for Leadership and Community Service from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute. In 2008, O'Brien was the first recipient of the Soledad O'Brien Freedom's Voice Award from the Morehouse School of Medicine for being a catalyst for social change.

Ms. O'Brien is a member of the National Association of Black Journalists and the National Association of Hispanic Journalists. She is a graduate of Harvard University, where she became a Distinguished Fellow in 2013. She lives in New York City with Raymond and their four children.

9. Joshua Rothman, PhD

Scholar



Dr. Joshua D. Rothman is an American historian. He is a Professor and Chair of the Department of History at the University of Alabama, where he was also formerly the Director of the Frances S. Summersell Center for the Study of the South. He co-directs a research project with colleagues at Cornell University, the University of New Orleans, and other universities titled *Freedom on the Move: A Database of Fugitives from North American Slavery*. Dr. Rothman has published three books: a history of interracial sex in Virginia before the Civil War titled *Notorious in the Neighborhood: Sex and Families Across the Color Line in Virginia, 1787-1861* (University of North Carolina Press, 2003), *Flush Times and Fever Dreams: A Story of Capitalism and Slavery in the Age of Jackson* (University of Georgia Press, 2012), and *The Ledger and the Chain: How Domestic Slave Traders Shaped America* (Basic Books, 2021).

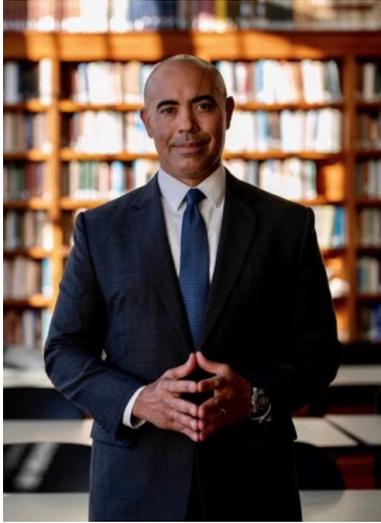
Dr. Rothman has received numerous fellowships, grants, and awards for his research. His scholarship has been funded by grants from the American Philosophical Society, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Southern Foodways Alliance. He has received fellowships from the American Council for Learned Societies, the American Antiquarian Society, the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at Yale University, the Huntington Library, the Virginia Historical Society, and Virginia Humanities. He has also won awards for his books, including (for *Notorious in the Neighborhood*) the 2004 Outstanding Book Award from the Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender, and (for *Flush Times and Fever Dreams*) the Gulf South Historical Association's Michael V.R. Thomason Book Award for the best book on the history of the Gulf South and Southern Historical Association's Frank L. and Harriet C. Owsley Award for the best book in southern history.

He has also served as a consultant for numerous museums and historic sites, including the Freedom House Museum in Alexandria, Virginia, and the Forks of the Road site in Natchez, Mississippi.

Dr. Rothman received his BA from Cornell University in 1994 and his PhD in History from the University of Virginia in 2000. He is currently editing and introducing a new critical edition of *Life of Elisha Tyson, the Philanthropist*, a biography of an early antislavery activist, and working on a history of the Ku Klux Klan hearings of 1871.

10. Ian H. Solomon, JD

Higher Education Leader / Attorney / Public Servant



Ian H. Solomon is Dean of the Frank Batten School of Leadership and Public Policy at the University of Virginia. For four years, Solomon served in the U.S. Senate as legislative counsel to then-Senator Barack Obama. Later, under the Obama administration, he was confirmed unanimously by Congress as the U.S. executive director for the World Bank Group, where he championed private-sector development in Africa and negotiated a range of multi-stakeholder agreements.

Solomon has also been a consultant with McKinsey & Company, an associate dean and visiting lecturer at Yale Law School, and a vice president and lecturer in law at the University of Chicago. Before joining the Batten School, he led his own international consulting practice focused on conflict and collaboration.

Solomon earned his A.B. from Harvard University and his J.D. from Yale Law School. He is a member of the Council on Foreign Relations and has traveled and worked extensively in Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

11. Reverend Lawrence “Larry” E. Walker, Sr.

Pastor / Administrator



Reverend Lawrence “Larry” E. Walker is a church pastor and administrator in Columbia, Maryland, particularly focused on youth education and community empowerment. He currently serves as the Deputy Pastor and Chief-of Staff at Celebration Church at Columbia, the largest Black congregation in Howard County, Maryland. He has served in his current role since 2005.

Rev. Walker’s career has focused on improving the lives of African American residents. Under Rev. Walker’s leadership, Celebration Church has made a tremendous impact on the community. He set up a partnership with the local school system which provided students with greater access to the extensive programs and support services offered by the church. As the President of the African American Community Roundtable of Howard County, Rev. Walker established the organization as a leading voice in the community. For decades he’s been a leader addressing racial inequalities in education, health, diversity, equity and inclusion, economic opportunities, policing and transportation. He served on the Board of the Community Foundation of Howard County, and on the county Board of Education in 2014. Service to others is at his core, volunteering in several capacities within the community and school system, including President of Parents of African American Students, Co-chair Operating Budget Review Committee, Redistricting Committee and Community Advisory Council.

Rev. Walker has received several awards for his public service and civic involvement, such as the statewide Parent Involvement Matters Award (2008) awarded by a collaboration between Comcast and the Maryland State Department of Education. Larry is a Life Member of Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. and served as the National Director of Sigma Beta Clubs. He received his B.S. in Business, Management, Marketing and Related Support Services from Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College at Baton Rouge in 1981. He is a proud descendant of Benjamin McDaniel of Montpelier (1790-1875) and serves on the Montpelier Descendants Committee Board of Directors.