

**Commonwealth Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Law Subcommittee**

Meeting Minutes

Conference Call
Monday, October 30, 2017
3 p.m. – 4 p.m.

Subcommittee Members Present

Hassan Ahmad (Subcommittee Chair), Dr. Jenny Alexander, Delegate Jason Miyares, Mona Siddiqui

Agenda

- Call to Order and Introductions
- Review of Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation Framework
- Subcommittee Vision and Objectives
- Subcommittee Scope and Areas of Focus
- Adjournment

Call to Order and Introductions

- Hassan Ahmad, Subcommittee Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.
- Mr. Ahmad asked subcommittee members, as well as staff present on the call, to introduce themselves. Each subcommittee member briefly discussed their background, experience, and interest in serving on the Commission.

Review of Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Framework

- Dr. Gail Christopher and Mike Wenger, advisors to the Commission, reviewed the purpose and structure of the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) program, which the Commission is using as a framework for its efforts.

Subcommittee Vision and Objectives

- Jae K. Davenport, Deputy Counsel to the Governor and staff liaison to the Subcommittee, suggested that the Subcommittee consider criminal and civil laws, as well as relevant public policies.

- Mr. Ahmad recommended consideration of the degree to which state law enforcement officials work with federal immigration officials for purposes of enforcing deportations as one area of focus for the Subcommittee. He discussed the case of Rosamaria Hernandez, a young undocumented child who faces deportation after receiving emergency surgery in Texas. Mr. Ahmad also suggested that racial disparities in arrests could provide another area of focus for the Subcommittee. Mr. Ahmad described his vision for Virginia as a “welcoming state.”
- Dr. Gail Christopher, advisor to the Commission, noted that agreement on a central, shared vision for the future would help guide the Subcommittee’s subsequent work, including its efforts to establish specific objectives. She stated that the concept of creating a welcoming state could serve as such a vision.
- Mr. Ahmad asked members to share their opinion on the following question: What are the characteristics of a “welcoming state?”
- Dr. Jenny Alexander said that a welcoming state is one that is open to other beliefs, cultures, and values. In such a state, citizens have a desire to learn from each other and engage in dialogue to learn about the experiences of other groups.
- Delegate Jason Miyares shared his belief that the creation of a welcoming state requires addressing root causes of poverty that create barriers to entry. He noted that immigrants drive small business growth and entrepreneurship. Delegate Miyares encouraged members to focus on developing ways to lower barriers to entry and equalize educational and economic opportunities for all citizens.
- Mr. Ahmad spoke about the need to make people aware of the role that prejudices play in a society. He encouraged members to think about strategies for raising awareness of and combatting prejudice and bigotry.
- Ms. Davenport said that one effective strategy could involve teaching different professions how implicit biases affect decision-making, and then helping people address them.
- Dr. Christopher then shared five foundational questions to guide the structure of the Subcommittee’s efforts.
 1. What is the Subcommittee’s vision?
 2. Where is the Commonwealth now and how did it get here?
 3. What are the key leverage points?
 4. Who are the key stakeholders?
 5. What recommendations, if implemented, will advance the vision?

Dr. Christopher acknowledged that fully completing this process will require the Commission’s entire term. The Subcommittee also has a short-term directive to develop interim recommendations to submit to Governor McAuliffe. Fulfilling this objective will be the primary focus of the Commission’s November 15 meeting.

Subcommittee Scope and Areas of Focus

- Upon request, Ms. Davenport initiated further discussion by providing examples of potentially relevant policies for the Subcommittee to consider:
 - Classrooms not Courtrooms initiative (disciplinary reforms in schools)
 - Hate crime statutes
 - Felony larceny threshold
 - Police and community relations
- Dr. Christopher recommended that the Subcommittee focus on one-to-two specific policy recommendations for inclusion in the Commission's interim report. She encouraged members to consider feasibility when developing recommendations for this report. Additionally, Dr. Christopher suggested the interim report could include a status report on the Subcommittee's early progress.
- Ms. Davenport then introduced the elimination of cash bail as a potential area of focus for the Subcommittee, noting that some jurisdictions have begun to move away from cash bail practices. She also mentioned the suspension of driver's licenses for failure to pay court costs and fines.
- Delegate Miyares explained that pending litigation prevented the General Assembly from fully considering legislation involving driver's license suspension during the 2017 session. He stated that the General Assembly may revisit the issue during the upcoming 2018 session.
- Mr. Ahmad asked members and staff to share their opinions on the proper scope of the Subcommittee's efforts.
- Dr. Christopher suggested that, when considering the Subcommittee's scope, members should focus on identifying policies and laws necessary to create the welcoming environment that frames the subcommittee's vision.
- Members and staff then began to discuss specific policies and issues to potentially include in the Subcommittee's interim recommendations to the Governor.
 - Ms. Davenport discussed policies that focus on treatment rather than punishment for crimes related to addiction.
 - Mr. Ahmad recommended studying the resettlement of refugees and emphasized the need to support resettlement and ensure that refugee populations are not treated as a monolith.
 - Dr. Alexander noted that the Subcommittee could study drug courts in Virginia, with a specific focus on ensuring that communities with drug courts ensure that they are offered and accessible to all citizens, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or other characteristics.

- Mr. Ahmad suggested that identifying methods for improving reporting for certain metrics could strengthen the Commonwealth's ability to take action on relevant issues.
 - Ms. Siddiqui encouraged members to identify laws that may perpetuate hostility and division in the Commonwealth. She also introduced the issue of school bullying based on religion, race, and sexual orientation. Ms. Siddiqui explained that schools often lack clear and consistent complaint and investigation procedures for these bullying incidents, and that existing procedures are not adequately communicated to parents. She referenced a recent incident at Short Pump Middle School and stated that the tension caused by the lack of clarity in the investigation procedures was apparent during a school meeting with the parents of the students.
 - Mr. Ahmad discussed inconsistency in punishment in different jurisdictions regarding driving on suspended licenses and noted that these laws have a disproportionate impact on certain groups.
 - Dr. Alexander remarked that disproportionate effects also arise from mandatory sentencing policies generally.
 - Dr. Christopher suggested that the Subcommittee should begin to narrow its focus as it prepares to develop policy recommendations for the interim report. She identified a general consensus among members present to study the following two issues further:
 - Standardizing investigation and notice procedures to more effectively address school bullying based on religion, race, and sexual orientation.
 - Reforming laws involving license suspension for unpaid court costs and fines.
 - Finally, Mr. Ahmad recommended an additional issue for consideration. He explained that Virginia lacks information for obtaining U Visas, which are available to non-citizen victims of certain crimes who agree to cooperate with law enforcement in the prosecution of offenders. Trained law enforcement officials must certify the offenses as part of the U Visa application. Mr. Ahmad shared his belief that a centralized and uniform procedure to provide information to non-citizen victims, including a list of all Virginia law enforcement officers that are able to certify the offenses, would improve barriers for these victims to get the protections they need and make the process more efficient.
- Prior to adjourning the meeting, Mr. Ahmad concluded by asking members to think about other potential areas of focus for the Subcommittee, including issues that can be addressed in the short-term.
 - Meeting adjourned.

**Commonwealth Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Racial Healing Subcommittee**

Meeting Minutes

Conference Call
Monday, November 6, 2017
1 p.m. – 2 p.m.

Subcommittee Members Present

Jonathan Zur (Subcommittee Chair), Dovid Asher, Ram Bhagat, Cynthia Hudson, Robert Jamison, Adeola Ogunkeyede, Delegate Luke Torian

Agenda

- Call to Order and Introductions
- Opening Remarks
- Facilitated Discussion
- Objectives of Conference Call
- Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Call to Order and Introductions

- Traci DeShazor, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth and staff liaison to the Subcommittee, called the meeting to order at 1:00pm.
- Jonathan Zur, Subcommittee Chair, began the meeting by offering brief introductory remarks. Mr. Zur expressed his excitement to work with Subcommittee members on the important task of racial healing. He noted that, through his role as President & CEO of the Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities, he has recently noticed a significant increase in requests for programs that promote inclusion and racial healing, as well as an increase in the number of people interested in becoming part of the solution to intolerance and bigotry.
- Subcommittee members then introduced themselves and their professional affiliations.

Opening Remarks

- Dr. Gail Christopher, advisor to the Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, explained the role that racial healing plays in the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) framework. This framework is guiding the structure of the Commission's efforts.

- Dr. Christopher explained that the purpose of the TRHT program’s racial healing model is to create a blueprint for developing communities that are committed to seeing the equal humanity of all people. Achieving this outcome requires people to discard beliefs in a hierarchy of human value.
- Cynthia Hudson, Co-Chair of the Commission, shared her hope that the Commission can effectively promote proactive discussions on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Commonwealth. She emphasized the importance of the work while also acknowledging its challenging nature. Ms. Hudson stated that the Commission can provide a vehicle for peaceful, productive dialogue, facilitating the discussion and education that must take place before healing can occur.
- Dr. Christopher then spoke about two separate responsibilities that the Subcommittee must balance: (1) the short-term directive to submit policy recommendations to Governor McAuliffe; and (2) the need to complete a comprehensive plan to effectuate racial healing in the Commonwealth. She outlined a five-step design process, based on the Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation model, to help guide the organization of the Subcommittee’s work:
 1. What is the Subcommittee’s vision?
 2. Where is the Commonwealth now and how did it get here?
 3. What are the key leverage points?
 4. Who are the key stakeholders?
 5. What recommendations, if implemented, will advance the vision?

Dr. Christopher explained that the Subcommittee is currently beginning the first phase of this process.

- Mr. Zur remarked that the Commission’s goals involve the transformation of both hearts and laws. He noted that racial healing, the focus of this Subcommittee, lies at the intersection of these two objectives.

Facilitated Discussion

- Mr. Zur prompted discussion by posing the following two questions to members:
 1. Why is racial healing important to you?
 2. What is one experience you have had where you have seen racial healing in action?
- To help facilitate this discussion, Ms. DeShazor shared the definition of racial healing provided by the authors of the TRHT model.
 - Racial healing involves adopting methods that enable people “to heal from the wounds of the past, to build mutually respectful relationships across racial and ethnic lines that honor and value each person’s humanity, and to build trusting

intergenerational and diverse community relationships that better reflect our common humanity.” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation)

- Group Discussion: *Why is racial healing important to you?*
 - Rabbi Dovid Asher shared his belief that, because all people are created in the image of God, there is an urgent need to eliminate bias. He discussed his family’s history and past experiences with anti-Semitism and acknowledged the intolerance and bigotry that continue to exist, expressing his desire to be part of the solution to these problems.
 - Dr. Ram Bhagat said that the hierarchies of human value he has observed in the United States, as well as in other countries, motivated him to work to strengthen communities’ by improving understanding of their common humanity.
 - Adeola Ogunkeyede commented that legal change alone is insufficient to effectuate racial healing; instead, the beliefs in people’s hearts are woven into the law through its interpretation.

- Group Discussion: *What is one experience you have had where you have seen racial healing in action?*
 - Dr. Bhagat spoke about the value of creating a space where groups feel safe to share their personal stories. He provided the specific example of an initiative called “Building Resilience for Challenging Systemic Racism,” which the Richmond Peace Education Center formed in response to police officer-involved shootings of African American men. Dr. Bhagat emphasized the importance of opportunities for dialogue that provide outlets for creative expression and emotional release, both across and within groups.
 - Dr. Christopher agreed with Dr. Bhagat regarding the power of personal stories and said that the exchange of stories can serve as a particularly transformative tool at a large-scale level.
 - Rabbi Asher noted that people have begun to ask him about the Commission’s work, particularly about the specific initiatives the Commission will create and promote. Rabbi Asher mentioned the value of an effective communications strategy and an active social media presence, providing an example of a similar racial healing initiative in Denmark that involved an effective media campaign.
 - Mr. Zur discussed the need to think critically about the scope and delivery of Commission initiatives, considering whether efforts should be statewide or directed at specific regions.

Objectives of Conference Call

- At Mr. Zur's request, Dr. Christopher outlined initial goals for the Subcommittee, beginning with the creation of a shared vision. Dr. Christopher encouraged members to think about what must change in order for racial healing to occur, and to consider how Virginia can institutionalize a commitment to racial healing. She reiterated the key steps in the design process she discussed earlier in the meeting and emphasized the importance of bringing individuals with different perspectives into the process. Additionally, Dr. Christopher reminded members that the Commission is responsible for developing and submitting an actionable plan by fall 2018.
- Mr. Zur stated that the Commission's November 15 meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss the Subcommittee's plan and timeline in more depth.
- Mr. Zur then posed the following question for discussion: *What would Virginia look like if racial healing were a core priority?*
 - To frame his answer to this question, Dr. Bhagat mentioned the "seven generations test," encouraging members to envision the Commonwealth seven generations into the future. He said that, if racial healing becomes a priority, Virginia's schools will be as diverse as possible, and school divisions will address racially disproportionate disciplinary practices. He noted that the "school to prison pipeline" currently contributes to a problematic hierarchy of human value. To summarize his vision, Dr. Bhagat stated that Virginia's schools should represent diversity, equity, and inclusion.
 - Ms. Hudson said that a prioritization of racial healing will result in truly diverse communities and neighborhoods, including diversity of race, ethnicity, and religion.
 - Ms. DeShazor, who is currently serving as the Co-Chair of the Governor's Millennial Civic Engagement Task Force, told members that students participating in campus forums facilitated by the Task Force have frequently identified a need for more space spaces for dialogue at colleges and universities in the Commonwealth. Students believe that it is critical to restore civility, trust, and respect to discourse.
 - Robert Jamison said that public schools in Virginia Beach, where he is the Coordinator of Counseling Services, have had discussions about creating safe spaces for student dialogue. On a smaller scale, productive conversations have occurred organically, but dialogue becomes more difficult in larger groups. Mr. Jamison commented on the potential value of creating opportunities for students, beginning at a young age, to engage in open, honest discussions.

- Dr. Christopher acknowledged the communication skills that people must possess in order to be equipped to facilitate and participate in the conversations that Mr. Jamison discussed.
- Ms. DeShazor encouraged members to identify the resources that can assist communities with these efforts, and she suggested that they support their vision by developing a “tool kit” of these resources to disseminate to communities.
- Dr. Bhagat suggested using the arts as outlets for opening critical dialogue on the issue of racial healing.
- Ms. Ogunkeyede expressed her hope that positive changes in culture will eliminate the need for safe spaces a generation from now. She agreed with Mr. Jamison’s emphasis on the value of working with children to initiate this cultural transformation.
- Rabbi Asher and Mr. Zur agreed with Ms. Ogunkeyede. Mr. Zur observed that productive dialogue can also strengthen people’s commitment to supporting policies that enhance empathy and justice.
- Reiterating an earlier point made by Dr. Bhagat, Dr. Christopher emphasized the value of the arts in racial healing efforts. She stated that art can serve as a transformative tool and should be included in the Subcommittee’s vision.

Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

- Mr. Zur reminded members to review reading materials provided by the Commission staff.
- Dr. Christopher encouraged Subcommittee members to read a book titled *Dare Not Linger*, a biography of Nelson Mandela. She explained that the book highlights the continued need for cultural transformation in South Africa, revealing that legal and institutional changes were not sufficient to fully eliminate the legacy of apartheid in the country.
- The meeting adjourned at 2:00pm.

**Commonwealth Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Separation Subcommittee**

Meeting Minutes

Conference Call
Tuesday, November 7, 2017
4 p.m. – 5 p.m.

Members Present

Beth O'Connor (Subcommittee Chair), Shirley Ginwright, Sarah Gross, Rabbi Jack Moline, Sarah Ochs, Chief Anne Richardson

Agenda

- Call to Order and Introductions
- Review of Commission Charge and Objectives
- Review of Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Framework
- Group Discussion: Subcommittee Vision and Data Gathering
- Adjournment

Call to Order and Introductions

- Erik Johnston and Rushawna Senior, staff liaisons to the Separation Subcommittee, called the meeting to order at 4:00pm. Mr. Johnston and Ms. Senior introduced themselves and outlined the objectives of the meeting.
- Members and staff then introduced themselves, and members briefly explained their interest in serving on the Separation Subcommittee.

Review of Commission Charge and Objectives

- Dr. Gail Christopher, advisor to the Commission, provided an overview of the Commission's primary mission: transforming Virginia into a welcoming Commonwealth while working to ensure that Virginians reject bigotry and intolerance.

Review of Truth, Racial Healing, and Transformation (TRHT) Framework

- Dr. Christopher then reviewed the purpose and structure of the TRHT model, which the Commission is using as a framework for its efforts. She reiterated that the goal of TRHT programs is to help communities develop the capacity to embrace the humanity of all people, which first requires the rejection of beliefs in a "hierarchy of human value" based

on race, religion, gender, or other characteristics. The TRHT model aims to replace this hierarchy with an ethos that emphasizes the equal value of all persons.

- Additionally, Dr. Christopher explained the role that separation plays as a structural pillar in the TRHT model. She stated that separation, by creating barriers between people, perpetuates the fallacy of a hierarchy in value.

Subcommittee Scope and Objectives

- Dr. Christopher challenged the Subcommittee to imagine what the Commonwealth of Virginia would look like if beliefs in hierarchies of value did not exist and influence the organization of communities.
- She then discussed the broad objective of the Separation Subcommittee; namely, to overcome certain structural barriers to realizing equal human value.
- Finally, Dr. Christopher proposed a five-step process, consistent with the TRHT model, to guide the Subcommittee's efforts to accomplish its objective:
 1. What is the Subcommittee's vision?
 2. Where is the Commonwealth now and how did it get here?
 3. What are the critical intervention points for the Subcommittee?
 4. Who are the key stakeholders, and what additional perspectives should the Subcommittee seek?
 5. What action steps should the Subcommittee implement to pursue its vision?

Group Discussion: Subcommittee Vision and Data Gathering

- Beth O'Connor, Subcommittee Chair, initiated discussion by asking members to discuss their views of the current environment in Virginia and identify potential challenges the Subcommittee may face.
- Chief Anne Richardson shared her belief that the Subcommittee needs to begin by identifying the root causes of intolerance. She suggested that one cause is perceived disenfranchisement among groups that feel, for varying reasons, excluded and pushed aside. She noted that race is not the only factor that influences these perceptions.
- Sarah Ochs agreed with Chief Richardson's comments on perceived disenfranchisement and pointed out that, in some of these cases, race does play a major role. Ms. Ochs suggested identifying areas in which race is a major factor. She offered the example of data that indicates an increasing number white Americans who feel targeted and discriminated against because of their race.
- Rabbi Jack Moline asked Subcommittee members if they know individuals who have the opinions that Ms. Ochs cited. He recommended that the Commission find people with

these beliefs and listen to their perspectives. Ms. Ochs remarked that many people who feel targeted because of their white racial identity appear to live outside of Virginia.

- Dr. Christopher mentioned a recent poll on perceptions of and experiences with discrimination, conducted by the Harvard School for Public Health in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. She suggested that this data could help provide insight into this particular issue.
- Shirley Ginwright agreed with Rabbi Moline's recommendation to seek the perspectives of white individuals who feel targeted because of their race, and added that perceived discrimination in employment also contributes to feelings of disenfranchisement. Ms. Ginwright also discussed the debate over renaming JEB Stuart High School in Fairfax, noting that the different responses to the issue were informed by individuals' different experiences.
- Ms. Ochs recommended creating opportunities to discuss the issue of separation from the perspectives of different groups, while also focusing on the institutional causes of separation. Given the large scope of the issue, such a structure could help guide the Subcommittee's discussion as it moves forward. Dr. Christopher commented that the two topics are interconnected, as people's perspectives inform the structure of institutions.
- Dr. Christopher next posed the following question to Subcommittee members: *What would a less separated Virginia look like, and what changes are necessary to achieve this outcome?*
 - Chief Anne Richardson stated that the Subcommittee needs to first identify and address the root cause of the issue, as separation preceded the establishment of the United States. Because beliefs in the hierarchy of human value are woven into the historical fabric of Virginia, efforts to reject these beliefs and create a unified community must precede attempts to address issues related to separation. Dr. Christopher agreed, remarking that hierarchies of value were used to justify the devaluation of other groups throughout Virginia's history.
 - Chief Richardson suggested that the Subcommittee could consider developing a public relations campaign to promote a unified community while highlighting the strength of different groups in the Commonwealth. Such a strategy, combined with public events such as town hall meetings, could tap into the pride of different groups and reverse the perceptions of disenfranchisement and devaluation.
- To facilitate further discussion, Ms. O'Connor encouraged members to begin articulating a vision for the Subcommittee. She suggested that the Subcommittee envision a Virginia where everyone has opportunities to engage in positive interactions with people of different backgrounds.

- Ms. Ginwright discussed the importance of developing trust across communities, and she acknowledged that building trust can require varying amounts of time for different groups.
- Ms. Ochs said that the Subcommittee should take note of and capitalize on the organic sources of sincere integration that already exist, citing public parks in Richmond as examples. She also recommended focusing on interfaith initiatives, as well as efforts to cross political party lines.
- Before concluding the meeting, Ms. O'Connor asked members to think about data or other information that could be useful to the Subcommittee.
 - Ms. Ochs mentioned data that identifies the sources of partisan political changes in Virginia over the past decade. This information could help the Subcommittee better understand the cause and extent of political polarization in the Commonwealth.
 - Dr. Christopher said that segregation indices are likely available.
 - Mr. Johnston added that there is existing data on residential segregation in Richmond, as well as some statewide- level data.
 - Sarah Gross suggested the Subcommittee look at school data, which includes information on age distribution, racial demographics, and rural and urban divisions.
 - Ms. O'Connor said that mapping data for other demographic information, such as religion and LGBT individuals, may be available for study.
 - Finally, Ms. Ochs offered to share data on the Latino community, as well as undocumented persons, who are particularly affected by issues related to separation. She also recommended adding data on returning citizens who have recently been released from correctional facilities.
- The meeting adjourned at 5:00pm.

**Commonwealth Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Narrative Subcommittee**

Meeting Minutes

Conference Call
Wednesday, November 8, 2017
1:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Members Present

Delegate Delores McQuinn (Subcommittee Chair), Carlos Clanton, James Hawdon, Rabbi Jack Moline, Kathy Spangler

Agenda

- Call to Order and Opening Remarks
- Introductions
- Remarks, Dr. Gail Christopher and Rabbi Jack Moline
- Group Discussion: Vision and Subcommittee Collaboration
- Discussion of Background Data and Information
- Concluding Remarks and Adjournment

Call to Order and Opening Remarks

- Traci DeShazor, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth and staff liaison to the Narrative Subcommittee, began the call at 1:30pm.
- Delegate Delores McQuinn, Subcommittee Chair, thanked Subcommittee members and staff for their commitment to the Commission’s efforts. Delegate McQuinn prompted members to think about the Commonwealth that Virginians want to see in the future. She referenced the “Virginia is for Lovers” campaign, noting that some people in Virginia may not feel like this campaign—or the Commonwealth—fully includes them. To move the narrative of Virginia forward, Delegate McQuinn challenged the Subcommittee to work to ensure that everyone feels like they are a meaningful part of the larger story of the Commonwealth.

Introductions

- Members of the Subcommittee, as well as staff, introduced themselves and briefly discussed their professions and relevant experiences.

Remarks, Dr. Gail Christopher and Rabbi Jack Moline

- Dr. Gail Christopher, advisor to the Commission, discussed the significance of narrative change, noting that the human brain is wired to respond to stories. She then outlined the two major objectives associated with narrative change: first, to identify the narrative(s) that contribute to perceptions of a hierarchy of value; and then to develop a new narrative that recognizes the common humanity of all. Dr. Christopher explained that the Subcommittee should begin by identifying a vision for a narrative change in Virginia, and then develop a plan for implementing it.
- Rabbi Jack Moline, Co-Chair of the Commission, emphasized the critical nature of the Subcommittee's work and acknowledged that the objective is challenging. Rabbi Moline expressed his uncertainty that Virginia currently has any shared narrative, and he underscored the importance of listening to all perspectives as the Subcommittee begins to develop a vision.

Group Discussion: Vision and Subcommittee Collaboration

- Delegate McQuinn posed two questions to facilitate discussion:
 1. How can we engage other subcommittees as we create a vision for Virginia's new narrative?
 2. How can the work of other subcommittees drive the narrative?
- Rabbi Moline acknowledged that the four subcommittees have essentially overlapping roles.
- Dr. Christopher agreed and noted that the Commission's final report, as well as initiatives that originate with the Commission, will integrate the four subcommittee topics to some degree. She also said that the four subcommittees will likely collaborate throughout the process.
- Dr. Christopher then proposed a process for the Subcommittee to follow as it works to develop a new narrative for Virginia. This is consistent with the structure proposed to guide the efforts of the other three subcommittees.
 1. Develop a unifying vision for the people of Virginia.
 2. Identify Virginia's current environment, using baseline data.
 3. Identify critical leverage points and opportunities for intervention.
 4. Seek additional partners who can assist the Subcommittee and provide critical perspectives.
 5. Develop an action plan to promote a unifying narrative for the Commonwealth.

- Kathy Spangler, who is currently the Executive Director of the 2019 Commemoration for the Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, discussed her experience determining how to present Virginia's history from 1619 to 2019. She emphasized the importance of a perspective that focuses on Virginia's history as a collective, shared history rather than a combination of separate stories.
- Delegate McQuinn asked if a collective history must be embraced by all groups. She mentioned that, in the past, certain elements of Virginia's history have not been embraced by everyone. As such, one potential challenge for the Subcommittee will be to provide opportunities for all people to understand and embrace a collective history, and to ensure that people feel that the collective history includes their stories.
- Ms. Spangler agreed with Delegate McQuinn and said that these efforts are essential to the authenticity of the Commission's work, and that they represent what the Subcommittee should aim to accomplish.
- James Hawdon observed that narratives are only accepted if they have a sense of truth to the people who hear them. Consequently, he stated that it will be critical for the Subcommittee to construct a narrative that is authentic and believable to as many people as possible.
- Rabbi Moline said that an effective narrative must also allow people to think beyond the groups with which they identify.
- Ms. Spangler discussed the power of storytelling and said that first-person accounts support a personal, authentic type of storytelling that resonates most with people. Dr. Christopher reiterated Ms. Spangler's comment on the sincerity of personal stories and suggested integrating historic and contemporary first-person accounts.
- Ms. Spangler outlined an effective storytelling method that begins with a contemporary entrance point that the audience finds relatable, and then draws people into history before looking forward to actions people can take in the future.
- Dr. Christopher said that a recent commemoration of the Detroit riots can provide an example of how narrative work can support healing efforts.
- Delegate McQuinn then discussed potential partnerships with entities such as the Virginia Historical Society, which can offer resources that would provide key support to efforts to create more of a balance when sharing the history of Virginia.

- To ensure that the narrative reflects the diversity of Virginia, Dr. Christopher encouraged the Subcommittee to be intentional about representing all groups.
- Delegate McQuinn suggested that creating an all-inclusive narrative for Virginia could be a key element of the Subcommittee’s vision.
- Ms. DeShazor encouraged members to develop tools and resources to help Virginians dialogue around issues of diversity and inclusion, which can support the Subcommittee’s work to create a new narrative. She noted that many students in Virginia’s colleges and universities have identified a need for more safe spaces to address current barriers to dialogue.
- Agreeing with Ms. DeShazor’s recommendation, Dr. Christopher asked members to consider potential ways to institutionalize efforts to promote narrative change across generations.
- To provide additional context, Ms. DeShazor shared a definition of narrative change used by the TRHT program. It focuses on “how to create and distribute new complex and complete narratives in entertainment, journalism, digital, and social media, school curricula, museums, monuments and parks and in the way we communicate that can influence people’s perspectives, perception and behaviors about and towards one another so that we can work more effectively and productively towards community-based change.” (W.K. Kellogg Foundation)

Discussion of Background Data and Information

- Ms. DeShazor encouraged members to review the resources compiled by staff prior to the Commission’s November 15 meeting.
- Delegate McQuinn called attention to data on racial implications in Fairfax County that staff had shared with the Subcommittee.
- Dr. Christopher reminded members to regularly consider additional perspectives that may currently be unrepresented in the Commission’s work.

- After reviewing the major themes of the discussion above, Dr. Christopher concluded the meeting by asking members to think about what it means to be a Virginian.
 - Ms. Spangler shared her view that the classification includes all people who live, work, and/or worship in Virginia, as well as those who feel a sense of connection to the Commonwealth.
 - Ms. DeShazor agreed, noting that the classification can cross state lines.
 - Carlos Clanton referenced the large military community in Virginia, particularly in the Norfolk/Hampton Roads area. He said that this community reflects the openness of the Commonwealth, as many who are no longer stationed in Virginia still feel a connection to the Commonwealth.
 - Dr. Christopher mentioned children and future generations of Virginians, and the importance of ensuring that the Subcommittee’s vision for a narrative meets their needs.
 - Mr. Clanton discussed Virginia’s status as a leading state for Millennials—the Norfolk/Hampton Roads region is currently one of the nation’s best areas for Millennials—and the need to ensure that this group stays in the Commonwealth.

Concluding Adjournment

- Delegate McQuinn and Dr. Christopher concluded the call by looking ahead to the Commission meeting on November 14. They explained that the Subcommittee will have the opportunity during the upcoming meeting to discuss specific mechanisms for creating opportunities for constructive dialogue.
- The Subcommittee adjourned at 2:30pm.