

Commission on History, Race, and a Way Forward (June 13, 2022)

Minutes

Present: **Commission Members:** Co-Chair Patricia Parker, Co-Chair James Leloudis, Ronald Harris, Nick Graham, Dawna Jones, Joseph Jordan, Danita Mason-Hogans, Delores Bailey, Simona Goldin

Guests: Kirt von Daacke and Ashley Schmidt, Universities Studying Slavery, University of Virginia

YouTube Link for meeting: <https://youtu.be/GApa4HGntM0>

- I. **Welcome and Introduction:** Commission Co-Chair Pat Parker welcomed Commission members to today's meeting.

Co-Chair Jim Leloudis did a roll-call of members present. Leloudis asked if there were questions, additions, or discussion points related to the March minutes. Minutes from the April meeting were approved unanimously. Co-Chair Patricia Parker asked for our guests from UVA to introduce themselves to the group and then asked commission members to introduce themselves to our guests.

II. Universities Studying Slavery

Conference Overview

Co-chair Leloudis provided an overview of a previous conversation with Kirt von Daacke (KvD) and Ashley Schmidt about structure and planning of the conference. He also emphasized the importance of the community alongside the conference.

Q&A with USS Leadership

Co-chair Leloudis asked our guests what makes an effective conference to kickoff conversation. Kirt Von Daacke shared that things do not need to be perfectly tied up in any way. He expressed that it is important to talk about the history of your university (including the uncomfortable history) and show it to attendees. He emphasized that simply walking the landscape and talking about the history of your university is key. He explained that doing this means telling your story in creative ways. He noted that USS is not a conference just for scholars and should be inclusive. He charged the commission to work to create panels that breakdown the wall between community and the university and reach out to people in your region (historic preservationists, museums, NAACP, community groups).

Ashley Schmidt gave examples of ways to do this including having community members on the planning team and involving historic sites, student tours.

Kirt Von Daacke went on to give examples of his own experiences with this at UVA and in Greensboro during previous conferences. He challenged the Commission to think about history and the relationship with the community. He emphasized that putting participants out in the community is vital to conference success.

Co-Chair Patricia Parker invited Commission members to ask any questions they may have.

Simona Goldin asked two questions. First, she asked for suggestions on ensuring that the commission centers the community. Second, she asked about the role undergraduates could have in the conference as it relates to their experience learning about race and racism in class.

Kirt von Daake explained that UVA sponsored a panel of students that spoke at their conference so this is possible. Co-Chair Leloudis went on to mention that the Residence Hall Association at UNC has been working to survey students on campus.

Danita Mason-Hogans asked about the role structural parity should play in the development of the conference at the University level.

Kirt von Daake answered this by suggesting that the commission work with the community to determine how to center their expertise and contributions. He brought forward the idea of a local advisory board to give guidance to the commission on which communities, neighborhoods, and people we should speak to.

Kirt von Daake went on to discuss the Montpelier model of structural parity and Montpelier Foundation's work with the descendant community. He emphasized that we cannot tell a story without the community by our side. The Montpelier Rubric called for 50% community involvement, which was then abolished but is now restored as the descendant community chose people to be appointed into the Montpelier Foundation

Danita Mason-Hogans followed up on this by emphasizing that we need to consider power in our decisions and how power dynamics are at play.

Co-Chair Parker raised the issue of values and goals of the USS conference, asking, "Universities studying slavery to what end?" Co-Chair Parker explained that she hopes the conference speaks directly to the issues of why the commission was founded in the first place—to reckon with the past in order to move forward. She then spoke directly to Commissioner Mason-Hogan's point about power, asking why it is important to have community involvement and engagement with community boards and foundations.

Kirt von Daake furthered Co-Chair Parker's point by asking how community should be defined and in turn, how the community can be a partner to the university to tell a fuller story of the University and tell the story plainly. He mentioned a project done by Juan Garibay on what it means to be a student of color at a PWI.

Co-Chair Parker charged the commission with the question "what is at stake for those attending?"

Co-Chair LeLoudis followed Co-Chair Parker by questioning what it means for the commission to host this conference.

With no further discussion items, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 4:30 P.M.