



**Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission (VA250)  
African American Advisory Council**

Fort Monroe Visitor & Education Center  
30 Ingalls Road, Fort Monroe, VA 23651  
Friday, March 29, 2024  
10:00 am - Noon

**AGENDA**

**Call to Order**

*The Honorable Mamie Locke, Chair*

**Chair's Remarks and Introductions**

**Welcome Remarks from Fort Monroe**

*G. Glenn Oder, Executive Director, Fort Monroe Authority*

**Remarks from VA250 National Honorary Chair**

*Carly Fiorina*

**VA250: Overview of Planning and Programming**

**Future Meeting Schedule**

Possible dates: May 21 or 22

***Discussion and Questions for Reflection:***

What lessons can we learn from previous commemorations?

How do we make the semiquincentennial meaningful to all Virginians?

What programs should be planned?

What would you like to see occur during this commemoration to highlight African American history and culture? How do we get there?

What are the under-told and under-known stories that should be highlighted statewide?

What should be our next steps?

## **Advisory Council Members and Invited Participants**

**The Honorable Mamie E. Locke**, *Chair, Senate of Virginia*  
**Dr. Edward L. Ayers**, *President Emeritus, University of Richmond*  
**Dr. Nathaniel L. (NL) Bishop**, *SVP and Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer, Carillion Clinic*  
**The Honorable Martin D. Brown**, *Chief Diversity Officer, Commonwealth of Virginia*  
**The Honorable Winsome Earle-Sears**, *Lt. Governor of Virginia*  
**The Honorable S. Bernard Goodwyn**, *Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Virginia*  
**Connie Matthews Harshaw**, *Board President, Let Freedom Ring Foundation, First Baptist Church*  
**Professor Ervin Jordan**, *Associate Professor and Research Archivist, University of Virginia*  
**Dr. Maureen Elgersman Lee**, *Bray School Lab Director, William & Mary*  
**Rev. William Lee**, *Pastor, Loudoun Ave. Christian Church (LACC) (ret.)*  
**Patrice Lewis**, *Government Affairs Manager, Gentry Locke Attorneys*  
**The Honorable L. Louise Lucas**, *President pro tempore, Senate of Virginia*  
**Rita McClenny**, *President and CEO, Virginia Tourism Corporation*  
**The Honorable Delores McQuinn**, *Virginia House of Delegates*  
**Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander**, *Professor of Virginia Black History and Culture, Norfolk State University*  
**Rohulamin Quander**, *Administrative Judge (Ret.), District of Columbia*  
**Felix Sarfo-Kantanka, Jr.**, *External Affairs Manager, Dominion Energy*  
**Phyllis Terrell**, *Director of Communications, Fort Monroe*  
**Dr. Vanessa Thaxton-Ward**, *Director, Hampton University Museum*  
**The Honorable Luke Torian**, *Virginia House of Delegates*  
**Cainan Townsend**, *Executive Director, Robert Russa Moton Museum*  
**James Warren**, *Founder and CEO, Share More Stories*  
**Dr. Gregory Washington**, *President, George Mason University*  
**Major General Cedric T. Wins**, *Superintendent, Virginia Military Institute*

## **VA250 Leadership and Staff**

**Carly Fiorina**, *VA250 National Honorary Chair*  
**The Honorable Terry Austin**, *VA250 Chair, Virginia House of Delegates*  
**Cheryl Wilson**, *Executive Director*  
**Kate Egner Gruber**, *Director of Engagement, Public Programming, & Interpretation*  
**John Hennessey**, *Interpretive Planner*  
**Katherine Dabney**, *Development & Engagement Associate*  
**Frank Sadler**, *Chief of Staff to Carly Fiorina*  
**Korin Taddei**, *Executive Assistant*

**Virginia American Revolution 250 (VA250) Commission**  
**African American Leadership Advisory Council**  
Fort Monroe Visitor & Education Center  
Friday, March 29, 2024  
10AM

***Meeting Notes***

**Members present:**

The Honorable Mamie E. Locke, *Chair*  
Dr. Edward L. Ayers (*Virtual*)  
Rev. Joe Ellison (*Virtual*)  
Dr. Maureen Elgersman Lee (*Virtual*)  
The Honorable S. Bernard Goodwyn  
Connie Matthews Harshaw  
The Honorable Martin D. Brown (*Virtual*)  
The Honorable L. Louise Lucas (*Virtual*)  
Professor Ervin Jordan (*Virtual*)  
Patrice Lewis  
Rita McClenny  
Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander  
Felix Sarfo-Kantanka, Jr. (*Virtual*)  
Phyllis Terrell  
Dr. Vanessa Thaxton-Ward  
Cainan Townsend (*Virtual*)  
James Warren (*Virtual*)  
Major General Cedric T. Wins (*Virtual*)

**Invited speakers and VA250 Staff:**

The Honorable G. Glenn Oder, *Executive Director, Fort Monroe Authority*  
Carly Fiorina, *VA250 National Honorary Chair*  
Cheryl Wilson, *Executive Director, VA250 Commission*  
Katherine Dabney  
John Hennessey (*Virtual*)  
Korin Taddei

**Chair's Remarks and Charge to the Advisory Council**

Senator Mamie Locke convened the second meeting of the Council, reiterating the charge of the Advisory Council in support of the VA250 Commission. She encouraged open dialogue at this meeting, leveraging the discussion questions in the agenda to inform the "next steps." These next steps will help ensure that from exhibits, to programming, and events on Juneteenth to July 4th there is greater connection and education.

**Welcome Remarks from Fort Monroe**

The Honorable G. Glenn Oder, Executive Director of the Fort Monroe Authority welcomed everyone to the Fort Monroe Visitor & Education Center. He shared a presentation about the history of Fort Monroe, overview of the partnership between the Authority, National Park Service, and the City of Hampton, and a presentation of the design and plans for the 1619 African Landing Memorial that will commemorate the landing of the first Africans in Virginia at Point Comfort.

More information on Fort Monroe can be found at [www.fortmonroe.org](http://www.fortmonroe.org), and the 1619 African Landing Memorial at [www.1619landing.org](http://www.1619landing.org)

## **Remarks from VA250 National Honorary Chair**

Carly Fiorina expressed her admiration for Senator Locke, citing her leadership as guiding us toward our principal goals to Educate, Engage, and Inspire through the 250<sup>th</sup> commemoration. She expressed that this is a generational opportunity to allow all Americans to rediscover and remember why we are a nation. In knowing who we are, we must understand and talk about our past so that we can move forward together. Discovering and telling every story that matters to this Nation is important.

Senator Locke recommended that July 4, 2025 be held at Fort Monroe in partnership with the City of Hampton. This would be the center piece of a three-year story we tell Americans. What happened here at Fort Monroe defined our Nation.

Cheryl Wilson gave a summary overview of the plans for July 4, 2024 in Richmond at Capital Square. With the theme “Towards a More Perfect Union: A Celebration of Freedom and Our Nation’s Founding” this year’s celebration will highlight human expression of all cultures of Virginia.

## **Key Points of Discussion**

July 4<sup>th</sup> Programming: What are the cultural, artistic, and musical acts that could be included in the programming? Who are the speakers? What would you like to see highlighted?

- Carly suggested BK Fulton’s idea of hosting a culturally diverse drumming performance.
- Engage with a production company to assist in planning, filtering ideas, and crafting an immersive experience for July 4<sup>th</sup> attendees. Create a story over time, with acts I, II, and III over the three years of the commemoration.
- Integrate Lumpkin’s Jail in Richmond into the itinerary and tours, alongside other significant landmarks in the area.
- Look to other established Virginia events, conferences, and places to inform or and enhance with VA250 programming. The Big Dipper Innovation Summit and Tom Tom Festival were suggested.
- Prioritize engagement with schools by creating educational materials tailored to each grade level, ensuring accessibility and relevance.
- Create a framework that delivers a shared experience for all. What is the narrative that brings history, heritage, and culture together, keeping in mind the takeaway messages?
- Continue to look to local communities for guidance and input on programming.
- Ensure telling of all stories, from the founding children of the Bray School, the enslaved, those who self-emancipated, and free blacks who had agency, such as Sam Harris, who sent his child to Harvard to study neuroscience.

## **Next Steps**

- VA250 to add links to [1619landing.org](http://1619landing.org) and Fort Monroe events to the website.
- Continue exploring plans for hosting July 4, 2025 event at Fort Monroe.
- Send ideas for who and what should be included in VA250 programming, exhibits, and events to VA250
- Forward events and programs happening in your communities to be included on VA250 calendar
- Next meeting will be virtual only on May 21, 2024 at 10am



**Virginia American Revolution 250 Commission (VA250)  
African American Advisory Council**

General Assembly Building  
Subcommittee Room 700 South  
Friday, January 5, 2024  
Noon – 2:00 pm

**AGENDA**

**Call to Order**

*The Honorable Mamie Locke, Chair*

**Chair's Remarks and Charge to the Committee**

**Introductions**

**VA250: Vision, Goals, and Preliminary Plans**

**Discussion and Questions for Reflection:**

What lessons can we learn from previous commemorations?

How do we make the semiquincentennial meaningful to all Virginians?

What programs should be planned?

What would you like to see occur during this commemoration to highlight African American history and culture? How do we get there?

What are the under-told and under-known stories that should be highlighted statewide?

What should be our next steps?

## **Invited Participants**

**The Honorable Mamie E. Locke**, *Chair*

**Dr. Edward L. Ayers**, *President Emeritus, University of Richmond*

**Rev. Cozy Bailey**, *President, Virginia NAACP*

**Dr. Nathaniel L. (NL) Bishop**, *Senior Vice President and Chief Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer, Carillion Clinic*

**Sheila Coates**, *Founder/President, Black Women United*

**The Honorable Winsome Earle-Sears**, *Lt. Governor of Virginia*

**Chief Justice S. Bernard Goodwyn**, *Chief Justice, Supreme Court of Virginia*

**Toria Edmonds-Howell**, *Community Engagement Manager, Capitol One Michael Wassmer Innovation Center*

**Connie Matthews Harshaw**, *Board President, Let Freedom Ring Foundation, First Baptist Church*

**Professor Ervin Jordan**, *Associate Professor and Research Archivist, University of Virginia*

**Felix Sarfo-Kantanka, Jr.**, *External Affairs Manager, Dominion Energy*

**Dr. Maureen Elgersman Lee**, *Bray School Lab Director*

**Rev. William Lee**, *Pastor, Loudoun Ave. Christian Church (LACC) (ret.)*

**Patrice Lewis**, *Government Affairs Manager, Gentry Locke Attorneys*

**The Honorable Louise Lucas**, *President pro tempore, Senate of Virginia*

**Rita McClenny**, *President and CEO, Virginia Tourism Corporation*

**The Honorable Delores McQuinn**, *Virginia House of Delegates*

**Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander**, *Professor of Virginia Black History and Culture, Norfolk State University*

**Rohulamin Quander**, *Administrative Judge (Ret.), District of Columbia*

**Margot Lee Shetterly**, *Author, Hidden Figures*

**Kaylene Seigle**, *Member, Harrisonburg School Board*

**Phyllis Terrell**, *Director of Communications, Fort Monroe*

**The Honorable Luke Torian**, *Virginia House of Delegates*

**Dr. Vanessa Thaxton-Ward**, *Director, Hampton University Museum*

**Cainan Townsend**, *Executive Director, Robert Russa Moton Museum*

**James Warren**, *Founder and CEO, Share More Stories*

**Dr. Gregory Washington**, *President, George Mason University*

## **Staff**

**Cheryl Wilson**, *Executive Director*

**Korin Taddei**, *Executive Assistant*

**Virginia American Revolution 250 (VA250) Commission  
African American Advisory Council  
January 5, 2024  
Richmond, Virginia**

**Members present:**

Senator Mamie Locke, Chair  
Delegate Delores McQuinn  
Professor Ervin Jordan  
Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander (virtual)  
Dr. Edward L. Ayers  
Reverend William Lee  
Dr. Nathaniel L. (NL) Bishop  
James Warren (virtual)  
Connie Matthews Harshaw  
Felix Sarfo-Kantanka, Jr.  
Phyllis Terrell  
Rohulamin Quander  
Chief Justice Bernard Goodwyn (virtual)  
Lt. Governor Winsome Earle-Sears (virtual)

**Chair's Remarks and Charge to the Advisory Council**

Senator Mamie Locke, Chair, convened the first meeting of the VA250 African American Advisory Council. After introductions, Chair Locke noted that the nation's 250<sup>th</sup> – its semiquincentennial – holds promise for all Americans, and all Virginians, to unite, engage, and inspire, and that she and Chair Austin are committed to ensuring that all stories are told and that all communities are engaged.

Chair Locke asked members to consider the questions below to guide initial discussions, and to help develop solutions to the many problems that we will identify. The Chair called on members to join in ensuring that every Virginian sees themselves in the commemoration and that it inspires hope in our collective march toward a more perfect Union.

**Questions for Reflection:**

What lessons can we learn from previous commemorations?  
How do we make the semiquincentennial meaningful to all Virginians?  
What programs should be planned?  
What would you like to see occur during this commemoration to highlight African American history and culture? How do we get there?  
What are the under-told and under-known stories that should be highlighted statewide?  
What should be our next steps?

## **Points of Discussion**

Discussion was robust, impassioned, and productive. Three main themes emerged: (i) the importance of including all stories; (ii) freedom and independence: the inextricable link between Juneteenth and July 4; (iii) raising awareness; and (iv) equipping educators:

### **I. Including all stories**

The Commission must ensure that all Virginians understand the contributions of African Americans to American independence during this commemoration. Need to create the atmosphere and understanding of the full history of America and need to excavate those stories for our children.

Note the following important sites, events, entities and seek input from the African American Council for more:

- Hinton Rescue Squad – tell their story.
- The birthplace of Henrietta Lacks
- Battle of Yorktown – tell the whole story of black and white who fought, include James Armistead.

Fort Monroe African First Landing memorial at Old Point Comfort will be completed by 2026. The William Tucker family will be featured.

Note that Africans arrived on Virginia soil from Angola with a full complement of skills and knowledge. The full story begins here with the arrival of people from Africa and their contributions to Virginia.

It is critical that we focus on saying what we will do and doing what we say. How do we craft a narrative about who we are and where we are going? If done correctly it can be legacy building and life changing.

It is important to leverage the resources of organizations already doing this work: Colonial Williamsburg, JYF, Ft. Monroe...

Frederick Douglas, tell the bigger history.

### **II. Freedom and Independence: The inextricable link between Juneteenth and July 4**

Why is the 250th commemoration is relevant to African Americans who gained no freedom on July 4th, 1776? The answer is that it was not a moment of celebration then, but it was a starting gun. The fight for freedom began the moment African Americans touched this soil in chains, and it continues to this day.

*\*We must link Juneteenth with July 4 to make the point that African Americans were fighting for independence long before 1776 and continued long after\**

We must talk about slavery and talk about what the enslaved people did and said, not what others said about them.

Need to integrate the story of African Americans, not separate it, make it front and center. The story of the American Revolution is bigger than the easy story and needs to include:

- Why people were seeking freedom
- What they were fighting for and against
- Note that black and white loyalists were able to flee and resettle in places like Jamaica and Halifax, NS

### **III. Raising awareness**

So many events and meetings are only attended by a small group. How will average people outside of Richmond and Williamsburg know about VA250?

Get stories to Dwayne Yancey (Cardinal News 250 series) and in the media, get in front of the appropriations committees for funding, and other communities who may not be aware of VA250.

### **IV. Education**

Include educators and grassroots organizations from the ground up and get resources to them to help them prepare. The key people are Virginia school teachers. They need a voice at the table and a prepared curriculum. Stand with teachers and support them.

Use the arts and humanities to tell stories

Take the question to school-age students and ask them what they want to see in the 250<sup>th</sup>

### **Ideas for further exploration**

- *\*Designate a "Commission Sunday" to create a time for discussion within the Black faith community. Include historians.*
- Establish pop-up museums – ex. The Liberation of Richmond in Shockoe Bottom
- Develop a teacher curriculum legacy project that will inform the way people learn for the next 20 years.
- Identify the important stories of Virginia's African American colonial population.
- Use the arts and humanities to tell stories.
- Involve genealogists.

### **Next steps for Advisory Council**

- Schedule a meeting at Fort Monroe
- Plan for virtual meetings to encourage attendance.
- Get local committees engaged more fully by hosting meetings.
- Get churches more involved.