



**SOCIETY for
HISTORICAL
ARCHAEOLOGY**

April 4, 2022

Mr. Eugene Hickok, Board Chair
Mr. Roy Young, CEO
The Montpelier Foundation
James Madison's Montpelier
13384 Laundry Road
Montpelier Station, VA 22960

Dear Mr. Hickok and Mr. Young,

The Society for Historical Archaeology, an international organization of archaeologists focused on the study of the modern world, is deeply concerned with the Montpelier Foundation's decision to limit participation and decision-making by the Montpelier Descendant Community (MDC). The SHA is an anti-racist, anti-discriminatory society and encourages its members to proactively protect and promote the rights of all. The research of many of our members focuses on African American history, enslavement, and structural racism across time, and, as a professional organization, we must speak up for descendant communities and support our members, who fight against decisions that contradict this mission. We are, therefore, profoundly concerned that the Montpelier Foundation may be making decisions that are limited in perspective and not in the best interest of the descendant community or the legacy of the Madisons. Indeed, to redress Montpelier's traumatic past, it is imperative that those in positions of authority today share power equally with the MDC.

We are further concerned by the Montpelier Foundation's lack of support for, and insensitivity to, the Montpelier staff, who have spoken out in support of the descendants. Our members and your employees hold a passion for their discipline and a deep-felt connection to Montpelier. Their compassion for those whose stories they resurrect from the soil is palpable to all of us. Montpelier, home to James and Dolly Madison as well as generations of enslaved people of African descent, has long been a center of progressive archaeological research. Its programs, driven by archaeology, have been a model for the collaborative study and interpretation of the past. I encourage the Montpelier Foundation to recognize how its decision will continue to disenfranchise the descendants of those who labored on the Madison estate. We urge the board to reconsider its position and honor its commitment to the MDC by engaging in meaningful consultation to arrive at a decision that is agreeable to all.

Sincerely

Julie Schablitsky
President

cc: Paul Edmundson, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Katherine Malone-France, National Trust for Historic Preservation
Tom Mayes, National Trust for Historic Preservation