



April 21, 2022

Paul Edmondson, President and CEO
Katherine Malone-France, Chief Preservation Officer
Tom Mayes, Chief Legal Officer and General Counsel
National Trust for Historic Preservation
2600 Virginia Avenue NW, Suite 1100
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Mr. Edmondson, Ms. Malone-France, and Mr. Mayes:

The Society for Historical Archaeology (SHA) has publicly voiced our extreme disappointment with the Montpelier Foundation's decision to limit participation and decision making by the Montpelier Descendant Committee (MDC). We are an antiracist society and champion for descendant community involvement in our scholarship. As such, we are extremely concerned the Montpelier Foundation is behaving in a self-destructive manner that is damaging to the descendant community, the historic site, and their staff. To redress Montpelier's traumatic past, it is imperative for those in control today to share power with the MDC using the framework for structural parity approved in 2021. These community-based collaborative programs are a form of reparations archaeologists and others can use to pay for the impacts to African Americans. Reclaiming narratives helps ground Black communities in their heritage spaces while breaking down oppressive and stereotypical stories.

The Montpelier Foundation's retaliatory action to terminate several esteemed archaeologists, including Matthew Reeves, Director of Archaeology and Landscape Restoration, and Elizabeth Chew, Executive Vice President and Chief Curator, for speaking up for Montpelier's descendants is outrageous. We are appalled that the Foundation's leadership responded to our colleague's support of equity and fairness through retribution. Truly, our colleagues' integrity and self-sacrifice for truth and righteousness for the benefit of this significant historic site are honorable.

In sum, the SHA strongly condemns the Montpelier Foundation's retaliatory response to our colleagues for actively advocating for the MDC. Furthermore, we continue to support structural parity for the MDC. If efforts to mediate a fair resolution between the Montpelier Foundation and the MDC fail to resolve this impasse, we urge the National Trust for Historic Preservation to reclaim control of Montpelier and rectify this situation. Indeed, Montpelier is now one of America's Most Endangered Historic Places, and we urge you to find a positive solution.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Julie Schablitsky'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Julie M. Schablitsky, Ph.D.
President