



NATIONAL COUNCIL ON PUBLIC HISTORY

April 22, 2022

NCPH Statement in support of Montpelier staff

The National Council on Public History (NCPH) condemns the unjust actions taken by leadership at the Montpelier Foundation (TMF), including the termination of several staff members after they spoke out against TMF's March 25 decision to break its formal relationship with the Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC).

As NCPH noted in [a statement of support for the MDC issued April 4](#), TMF's decision "reverses years of dialogue, collaboration, and trust-building between Montpelier and the members of the descendant community to develop an equitable approach to the interpretation of slavery that prized reconciliation and repair." In asking TMF to restore its commitment to the MDC, NCPH added its voice to those of many TMF staff members, who issued a public statement asking that the relationship be maintained.

Rather than restoring its shared governance with the MDC, TMF leadership has apparently instead chosen to retaliate against staff for their dedication to this important promise. These firings represent the latest and most egregious in a series of actions taken by TMF leadership. In their statement issued last month, staff "request[ed] that TMF end the intimidation of staff with restrictions on contacting members of the MDC, including requirements to report all contacts, with implied or threatened retaliation for failing to do so."

The staff members fired by TMF represent decades of professional experience, and they are essential to the organization's work of interpreting, preserving, and adding to knowledge of history. By eliminating the expertise and body of work represented by these staff members, TMF leadership has gravely damaged the organization's ability to fulfill its public mission.

Taken together, TMF's decision last month to sever its relationship with the MDC and its actions now to retaliate against staff represent a disturbing pattern: leadership is acting to silence and/or eject from the organization those who question its positions, prerogatives, and power. NCPH recognizes that such moves can only have a chilling effect on others at the institution and in the broader world of public history. We urge TMF's leadership to reconsider these recent decisions, to remedy the damage caused by these acts, and to treat members of the MDC, as well as current and future site staff, with dignity and respect. Furthermore, we stand with [the National Trust for Historic Preservation](#) in its efforts to achieve a just resolution to this unacceptable pattern of behavior.