

Special Committee on Slavery and Justice

Report to the Board of Trustees

Presented for the Spring 2019 meeting
of the Furman University Board of Trustees



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Introduction

Over the past several years, many colleges and universities have taken steps to explore and address their institutions' past connections to slavery. Furman University's participation in this national conversation began with an editorial written by then-student Marian Baker '17, which was published in The Paladin student newspaper on October 26, 2016. Partly in response to this editorial but also other conversations that had started on campus, President Elizabeth Davis and Provost George Shields, with the support of the Board of Trustees, established the [Task Force on Slavery and Justice](#) to examine Furman's historical connections to slavery and to "make recommendations that help imagine a more just acknowledgement of that past."

At its fall 2018 meeting, the Board of Trustees received, and expressed appreciation for, the report from the Task Force on Slavery and Justice, "[Seeking Abraham](#)." During this meeting, the Board endorsed the administration's decision to act immediately on one of the recommendations to expand the scholarship fund that honors the memory of the late Joseph Vaughn, Furman's first African-American student. The trustees also endorsed the administration and faculty moving forward to consider the report's other recommendations under their purview, and appointed a Special Committee on Slavery and Justice to carefully consider the recommendations requiring Board approval. The Special Committee was directed to report back to the Board with its recommendations at the trustees' spring 2019 meeting. (See resolution that follows.)

The Special Committee on Slavery and Justice started its work in late fall 2018 by designing a process to accomplish its assigned task. The Special Committee was informed and inspired by the "Seeking Abraham" report but also, in part, by an early conversation with Fitzhugh Brundage, Chairman of the History Department at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Dr. Brundage reminded the committee that the study of history teaches us to have a sense of genuine humility and objectivity about our ancestors, and about ourselves as well.

With that mindset, we decided that we do not reject the contributions of those who came before us. At the same time, we recognize and accept that Furman's founders and early leaders were not perfect people and were not correct in everything they said and did. Some owned slaves and justified the institution of slavery. Without question, such views were profoundly and tragically wrong. In the spirit of humility, we believe that if Furman's founders were sitting where we are today, they too would view slavery as abhorrent.

The Special Committee committed itself to being honest and open in acknowledging Furman's past, while focusing on what is right and best for Furman, particularly with an eye toward the future of the university. We were motivated by the question of what message does Furman want to send to the world about who we are. (See guiding principles that follow.)

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[Introduction continued...]

The Special Committee on Slavery and Justice recognizes that the recommendations it is presenting to the Board of Trustees and the actions that the Board of Trustees takes have an important role to play, but are not an end in themselves. Enhancing diversity and inclusion at Furman and ensuring that all members of the Furman community have opportunities to thrive, will continue to be an ongoing effort involving Furman students, faculty, staff, alumni, the Board, and other university leaders. The Riley Institute and the Diversity Leaders Initiative, in particular, can play a significant role in this ongoing effort, as can various departments and offices across campus. Throughout its work, the Special Committee has viewed this endeavor as an important learning opportunity for all of Furman University's constituents.

Resolution Appointing the Special Committee

October 27, 2018

RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees of Furman University accepts the Task Force on Slavery and Justice Report (the “Report”) with due appreciation expressed for the scholarship and thoroughness of the Task Force on this important project, carried out over more than a year of careful study; and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees acknowledges the sentiment and spirit of the Report as it undertakes its review and consideration of the Report and its recommendations; and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees endorses actions already taken or about to be taken by the Furman administration and faculty on recommendations related to their purview in managing the university and directing its curriculum, respectively, as outlined to the board during its Fall 2018 meeting; and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Board of Trustees hereby desires to devote significant time and attention to the issues and recommendations as did the Task Force and thus creates a Special Committee on Slavery and Justice (the “Special Committee”) to consider the Report and its remaining recommendations, meet with members of the Task Force and other university constituencies it deems relevant and contemplates the historical, societal, precedential, financial and aesthetic considerations of adopting the Report’s recommendations; and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Special Committee will deliver its report to the Board of Trustees for its due consideration and action at its Spring 2019 meeting, responding to the Report’s recommendations; and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that at its Winter 2019 meeting the Board of Trustees will conduct a special workshop facilitated by Juan Johnson, a former trustee and national expert on diversity and inclusiveness, to engage in meaningful dialogue regarding the Report and its importance to Furman University as a national liberal arts institution; and it is

FURTHER RESOLVED, that the members of the Special Committee shall be the following Trustees:

Baxter Wynn, Chair
Kevin Bryant
Robert Blocker
Robert Hill
Rachelle Thompson
Lee Dilworth

Francie Heller
Rick Timmons
Dick Riley, Emeritus
Elizabeth Davis, ex officio
Alec Taylor, ex officio
Ed Good, ex officio

Summary of the Special Committee's Work

The Special Committee on Slavery and Justice held a series of meetings starting in fall 2018. The committee heard from the Task Force on Slavery and Justice, historians, and other experts in diversity and inclusion. Its members gathered feedback, collected information, and researched other institutions. From this work, the Special Committee created this report on its recommendations to present to the full Board for its consideration and vote at the May 16-18, 2019, meeting.

The Special Committee began its work by discussing and reaching clarity regarding the specific responsibilities of the committee and the scope of its tasks. This included agreeing on the values, tone and spirit for its work together, including fostering mutual respect and openness, hearing all voices, and acknowledging that good, moral and principled people can and will disagree when considering complex issues.

The Special Committee discussed the importance of setting aside preconceived notions, including what its final report might recommend. The committee agreed to do its best to not anticipate the journey, but to do its work and stay on track with agreed-upon principles and a process.

In addition to regular meetings through the fall and spring semesters, the Special Committee's process and activities included:

- A thorough review of the report and recommendations of The Task Force on Slavery and Justice, "Seeking Abraham," focusing on the eight overarching recommendations under the Board's purview.
- A discussion on diversity and inclusion and related issues with Furman Chief Diversity Officer Michael Jennings.
- A video conference conversation with Fitzhugh Brundage, Chair of the History Department at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Dr. Brundage has served as a consultant on this topic with multiple institutions.
- A review of similar examinations and actions by other institutions and a South Carolina city with a deep historical connection to slavery. Members of the committee researched and reported on similar work that was done or is underway at Duke University, Brown University, Washington & Lee University, the University of Alabama, the College of William & Mary, Yale University, Georgetown University, Emory University, Clemson University, and the City of Charleston.

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[*Summary of Special Committee's Work continued...*]

- Confidential interviews with all current members of Furman's Board of Trustees, conducted by governance consultant Julie Peterson.
- Confidential interviews with nine former trustees, conducted by trustees and Special Committee members Robert Hill and Francie Heller.
- A joint meeting and discussion with members of the Task Force on Slavery and Justice.
- A discussion with the full Board of Trustees, moderated by Julie Peterson and Juan Johnson, a national expert in diversity and inclusion who leads the Riley Institute's Diversity Leaders Initiative.
- A day-and-a-half-long retreat to discuss and develop the Special Committee's recommendations to the Board, facilitated by Julie Peterson.
- An extended meeting to edit and finalize its recommendations for this report to the Board of Trustees.

Guiding Principles

The Special Committee was guided by the following principles as it considered its decisions and recommendations to the Board of Trustees:

- We will honor the spirit and good intentions of the work done by the Task Force, acknowledging its members' sincere desire to make Furman a better place to live, work, and study.
- Our decisions will be student-centered and focused on Furman's mission, creating meaningful educational opportunities accessible to all students that are consistent with and further the goals of The Furman Advantage.
- Our intention is to be driven by the sole motivation of presenting a report to the Board that reflects a consensus of the committee's judgment as to what is the best course of action for Furman University, both at this particular time in its history and for its long-term well-being and success.
- Our decisions will support a vision of a diverse, inclusive, and welcoming Furman community in which students, faculty, staff, and alumni from all backgrounds have the opportunity to experience a profound sense of belonging.
- While authentically and honestly acknowledging Furman's history, our efforts will focus on the future by prioritizing actions that will have an enduring impact and by fostering inclusion and reflection as a continuous process.
- We will seek to add to the historical record, ensuring that a more complete and inclusive story is told of the people and actions that shaped the Furman we know today.
- We recognize that objects and rituals are tangible representations of Furman's collective memory and shared history, and that the university's ideals and values are communicated not just through programming, but also through the physical campus.
- In decisions involving physical structures, we will carefully consider whether the proposed changes are an accurate reflection of Furman's mission, values, and highest aspirations, understanding how our commemorative practices influence whether and how our students, faculty, staff, and alumni feel welcome at Furman.
- We acknowledge that this is not the end, but rather the beginning of a set of work yet to come, and that we are optimistic for the future.

Recommendations to the Board of Trustees

The Special Committee was tasked with making recommendations to the Board on eight overarching recommendations from the Task Force that were determined to be under the purview of the trustees. The recommendations follow:

From the Task Force on Slavery and Justice “Seeking Abraham” report: We recommend that a statue of Joseph Vaughn be installed at the spot of the iconic photograph in which he approaches the James B. Duke Library, capturing Vaughn’s enthusiastic commitment to education. The statue should be life-size and incorporate a material that allows onlookers to see themselves in Vaughn. January 29th, the day of his enrollment (in 1965), should be the date of the sculpture dedication and thereafter should be commemorated as Joseph Vaughn Day to celebrate and encourage active student engagement and challenging the status quo. The sculpture will mark the dedication of the first permanent representation of a person of color on Furman’s campus, marking a commitment toward more.

The Special Committee recommends the creation of a Joseph Vaughn statue commemorating his important contributions to Furman’s history. The committee further recommends engaging Perry Dean Rogers Partners Architects, the firm that led the campus’ current design, to explore ideas for a prominent and comprehensive place of celebration and reflection to honor and recognize Joseph Vaughn and other important figures in Furman’s diverse history. A Board committee, in consultation with campus and external experts, will recommend the design, wording and location for the statue and any related pieces. This recommendation will be presented to the full Board for final approval. The administration will develop a plan for funding, based on the Board’s final approval. The Special Committee further recommends that the Board consider providing the lead gift to support the project.

In addition, the committee recommends directing a student group to work with faculty and staff to create an annual Joseph Vaughn commemorative day and celebration.

From the Task Force: We recommend that two roads at Furman should be named for the university’s first female African-American undergraduate students, who started Furman in 1967. The entrance road to Furman should be named for Lillian Brock-Flemming, the university’s first African-American female trustee, and who became the university’s “Link to the Greenville Community.” Similarly, the road that connects McAlister Auditorium and the Daniel Music Building should be named for Sarah Reese, renowned opera singer.

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[Recommendations to the Board of Trustees continued...]

The Special Committee recommends including Lillian Brock-Flemming and Sarah Reese in a comprehensive place of celebration and reflection, as described above, including historical plaques that tell the story of and recognize their and others' pioneering roles in Furman's history. The committee further recommends the university name a program or programs related to Brock-Flemming and Reese's fields of study and their contributions to Furman and the Greenville community, to be determined by university leadership, faculty and staff. The administration will develop a plan for funding, based on the Board's final approval.

From the Task Force: We recommend the naming of the space near Cherrydale Alumni House for Abraham Sims, whose image inspires our work toward justice and recognition, and construction of a raised reflecting pool memorial in front of Cherrydale, honoring our shared history and all those who labored to create the university. It will be important that the fountain is slightly raised to disrupt the seamless link between the plantation and campus, with a black granite material to symbolize the individuals whose names we do not know and water symbolizing the new life in education that springs from their labor. Small plaques along the perimeter will present recovered enslaved names of founders and donors. Initial plaques will name Abraham Sims (a freed slave of James C. Furman) and Clark Murphy (beloved groundskeeper of Greenville Woman's College). In a new tradition each year, freshmen will dip their hands into the water, symbolizing their new connection to the university and its past.

The Special Committee recommends naming a space near the Bell Tower for Abraham Sims. The walkway up to the tower should be named Abraham Sims Plaza and include historical context in signage at the site that would explain the significance of the bricks and who made them. The committee believes this location would be both prominent and meaningful, given its central location and iconic nature. The reflection pool and new tradition idea could be carried out by repurposing or adding context to other fountains on campus, or incorporating it into the above comprehensive place of celebration and reflection. The administration will develop a plan for funding, based on the Board's final approval.

Separately, the Special Committee recommends that the Board of Trustees evaluate and examine the use of Cherrydale, to be decided at a later date after further reflection and consultation with university stakeholders.

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[Recommendations to the Board of Trustees continued...]

From the Task Force: We recommend raising the profile of Mary and Charles Judson to an academic building, namely the Humanities building currently named for James C. Furman; meanwhile, the central dorm currently named for them would become Clark Murphy Hall. Regarding the first choice, Mary and Charles were the central academic and administrative minds of the early universities from which the university descends, Mary in a broad range of fields at the Greenville Woman's College (GWC) and Charles in math and astronomy at Furman University. Both were also prodigious, progressive intellectuals. Mary founded and helped fund the first female literary societies in South Carolina and the first program of calisthenics for women in the American South. She taught a broad array of classes that, as a first-wave feminist, she believed women should have to function equally in society. Similarly, Charles was the only early Furman professor (and interim president) not to hold persons in slavery, and who donated privately to keep the Greenville Woman's College open through the Civil War. Clark Murphy is described elsewhere in this report, but is appropriate for the central dorm of the Lakeside Housing suite that symbolizes the Greenville Woman's College. It will be the first building on campus named for an African-American person, and is additionally important as an honor to all those who labored, both in slavery and free, for the university without fair pay or accolade.

Recognizing that the university's ideals and values are communicated through the physical campus, and in an effort to ensure that all students, faculty, staff, alumni and visitors feel welcome at Furman University, the Special Committee recommends renaming James C. Furman Hall as Furman Hall, recognizing the broader contributions of the entire Furman family and the Furman community. A plaque providing full context at the entrance would replace the current signage. Further, the committee recommends retaining Judson Hall as the name for that building and renaming the Lakeside Housing complex as the Clark Murphy Housing Complex, adding outdoor signage and historical context commemorating the contributions of Mr. Murphy and other people of color who worked at Furman.

From the Task Force: We recommend context for unnamed labor through:

- *Bronze historical plaques added at the Janie Earle Furman Rose Garden, Bell Tower Circle, and Lakeside Circle, marking the bricks as historical objects from Furman's old campuses, some of them created and mortared by rented slave labor.*
- *A sign matching the Lake Revitalization signs to explain the history of the Furman Bell Tower with historic images and explanation of its labor and construction.*

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[Recommendations to the Board of Trustees continued...]

From the Task Force: We recommend context be added to appearances of Richard and James C. Furman to locations around campus, including:

- *A bronze sign created next to the Richard Furman statue at Benefactors' Circle, to include the relationship between current university philanthropy and Richard Furman's life.*
- *A small curatorial glass plate noting the artist and medium, applied next to the portrait of Richard Furman in Cherrydale Alumni House, noting his significance and views on slavery.*
- *Two medium-sized curatorial glass plates noting the artist and medium, applied next to the portrait of James C. Furman in Cherrydale Alumni House, noting how his substantial significance to Furman is undermined by racial fearmongering.*
- *A large curatorial glass plate (entitled "Walked With God and Served Mankind?"), applied beside the stained glass window of James C. Furman in the Administration stairwell, and also curate the historical marker that currently appears outside James C. Furman Hall (which will be moved to this stairwell for historical preservation). Similar to the plates in Cherrydale, these will also mark his substantial significance to Furman, undermined by his hypocrisy to those ideals, revealed in this report.*

For both of the above recommendations, the Special Committee recommends moving forward to provide such context, in consultation and coordination with faculty, staff and alumni, and with the final approval of the Board. This is in accordance with the Special Committee's guiding principles to authentically and honestly acknowledge Furman's history and ensure a more complete and inclusive story is told of the people and actions that shaped the Furman we know today.

From the Task Force: We recommend that the Vice President for Finance and Administration pursue an investment strategy that requires all investment managers to publish their ESG strategy and for those strategies to be made public through the Investment Office website and/or Audited Financial Statements. The Investment Committee of the Board of Trustees should adopt such language in its Core Beliefs (Part III) of the Investment Policies, amplifying its current encouragement to staff and consultants to consider options.

The Special Committee recommends continuing, with oversight by the Board of Trustees' Investment Subcommittee, the University Investment Office's practice of periodically conducting an inventory and ranking system of external money managers' use of ESG principles as part of their overall investment process.

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[Recommendations to the Board of Trustees continued...]

From the Task Force: We recommend that the university President should review the current mission, vision, and values, as well as the motto, to determine alignment of the findings and recommendations of this report, and consider re-adopting the older motto of the institution (from the Greenville Woman's College): Palma Non Sine Pulvere.

The Special Committee recommends that the Board, in concert with the president and university leadership, faculty, students and staff, review the mission, vision, values, and motto. Any recommended changes will require Board approval.

Other Considerations

- With regards to several recommendations regarding adding context and memorials, the university should consult and coordinate with its faculty history resources and include student and alumni participation.
- With regards to named people in the above recommendations, the university should make every effort to contact them or their families and receive permission before naming buildings or programs or creating memorials and other structures in their honor.
- The university should develop a comprehensive, institution-wide naming policy.
- The university should make every effort to include minority-owned businesses in carrying out the above recommendations.
- The Chief Diversity Officer should track and regularly report on the implementation of the recommendations.

References

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