

January 15, 2025

President W. Taylor Reveley IV
Longwood University
201 High Street
Farmville, VA 23909

Dear Del. McQuinn,

Thank you for your letter of Dec. 23 on behalf of the Commission to Study the History of the Uprooting of Black Communities by Public Institutions of Higher Education in the Commonwealth. We have, in the following responses to the Commission's questions, tried to be as thorough as possible at this point in time. Work continues through Longwood's Bicentennial Initiative to research specific activities and decisions made in the University's history that affected these communities.

Longwood University and Farmville have a rich and complex history of race relations. On the one hand, our local community was at the center of action for progress during the civil rights movement—particularly regarding educational access—and there were countless heroes whose lives should be, and increasingly are, celebrated. Among them are Barbara Johns and John Stokes, who led a historic walkout of Moton High School in 1951 and then with many families and classmates worked with civil rights lawyers Oliver Hill and Spottswood Robinson to file suit over conditions at the school. That case, *Davis v. Prince Edward*, ultimately became part of *Brown v. Board of Education*, with more than 70 percent of the plaintiffs in the combined case coming from Prince Edward County. Rev. L. Francis Griffin, pastor of First Baptist Church in Farmville and president of the Virginia State Conference of the NAACP in 1963 organized a direct-action protest campaign over segregation that included picketing, sit-ins, kneel-ins, and economic boycotts. Countless others in those momentous years, including Longwood history professor and dean Dr. C. G. Gordon Moss, took up the struggle for civil rights and suffered greatly in the name of progress.

On the other hand, a generation of schoolchildren saw their educations interrupted or stopped during public school closures in the county during Massive Resistance after the *Brown* decision from 1959 to 1964, which affected not only them but successive generations. Longwood's actions as an institution, whether directly or by omission, often had the effect of impeding progress. The University used eminent domain less than a dozen times over an 80 year period, though as recently as 1991, whether directly or by suggestion of its use, to acquire property that allowed campus expansion, and was silent on the issue of educational access for Black children.

Over the last three decades, those decisions have been viewed with regret, and effort has been made to not only celebrate the heroic actions of Farmville-area civil rights leaders, but to ensure that these actions will not happen again. Successive presidents and Boards of Visitors have taken concrete steps to repair the relationship with the community that was affected by the use of eminent domain and to capture, preserve, and study the history that we share so that we may work more effectively for the betterment and progress of the entire Farmville community.

Please if you have any further questions feel free to reach out to us and we will provide further detail in addition to the answers below.

Has the institution acquired property through eminent domain or requested the use of eminent domain to acquire property? Explain.

Longwood's history includes regrettable chapters that included the use or threat of eminent domain law to purchase properties bordering its campus, impacting most predominantly the communities living in "the triangle" made up of High Street to the north, Ely Street (now Griffin Boulevard) to the west, and Main Street to the east. That area encompasses about 14 blocks, some of which held between 5-7 properties, and some of which were single lots.

Beginning in the 1910s, Longwood began to acquire lots in the triangle, both through purchases when property owners listed their lots for sale and through the threat of or use of eminent domain.

Two notable early acquisitions using eminent domain were the High Street property in 1926, which belonged to Farmville Baptist Church, a historically white congregation, and a property at the intersection of Chambers and Ely streets in 1958, which was the parsonage for First Baptist Church, a historically black congregation.

Historical research has determined that these actions accelerated in the 1950s and 1960s with the commission of Longwood's first campus master plan. Research has shown that there are few instances where the College resorted to condemnation proceedings, but that most properties were acquired through real-estate transactions with the prospect of eminent domain usage overshadowing the negotiations. Deed research reveals that from 1966-71, approximately 60 properties or lots were acquired in the triangle, particularly along Race and Pine Streets, which run through the triangle footprint.

There is further evidence that during the same time period, landowners along that western and southern corridor agreed not to purchase property elsewhere in the "triangle" that was proposed as Longwood's planned expansion in the College's master plan.

One of the more significant acquisitions was the use of eminent domain in condemnation proceedings involving Race Street Baptist Church, a historically Black congregation, which was in 1967 acquired by Longwood for the purposes of expansion. The original church structure was demolished, and the church moved to nearby Hill Street (across Griffin Boulevard) and was re-named Jericho Baptist Church in 2017.

Henry Willett became Longwood's president in 1968, and during his tenure there were no condemnation proceedings related to eminent domain and Longwood integrated while shifting to co-education.

While the bulk of eminent domain proceedings ended in 1967, two properties were acquired in 1990 and 1991 that require contextual explanation. In 1990, the property owners of 311 Franklin Street were heirs, some of whom lived out of state and others who were unknown, according to a legal notice in the June 28, 1989 issue of the *Farmville Herald*. More research is required into what prompted eminent domain proceedings on the Andrews property, which was owned by a white family, in 1991.

Between 1911 and 1991, historical research has revealed that condemnation proceedings were pursued in 11 properties. Those properties are listed in the table below:

Date	Owner	Property Description	Purchase Price
Feb. 15, 1911	Burger, et al., Mary E.	Spruce St. (Part of Lot No. 97)	\$2,300
Oct. 20, 1926	The Farmville Baptist Church	High St. (Lot No. 119)	\$15,000
May 3, 1958	Brown, et als., Daniel E.	Intersection of Chambers & Ely St.	\$17,500
Marcy 19, 1958	Fallwell, et als., Lucie Davis	Ely St.	\$4,000
Feb. 27, 1964	Branche, Merwin Edward, et al.	Intersection of Ely & Madison St.	\$17,500
Aug. 8, 1966	Bruce, Jr., William B.	Madison & Spruce	\$2,000
Oct. 31, 1966	Town of Farmville, City Manager R.W. Catlin Re: Elda Branch	Race St.	\$5,500
Sept. 7, 1967	Race Baptist Church, TTEE	Race St.	\$18,000
Oct. 31, 1967	Morton, Thelma	Pine St.	\$13,500
March 16, 1990	Carroll, et als.	311 Franklin St.	\$20,000
Dec. 31, 1991	Andrews, Lester E. Jr.	Griffin Blvd, Redford St. and South St.: Lot No 1, 2, 3, 5, & 6	\$98,000

If the answer to number 1 is yes, is there any indication that the properties acquired were from a community in which the majority of residents were Black?

The neighborhoods around campus and in the triangle were not strictly segregated. White and Black families lived in houses around the intersection of High and Ely streets to the northwest side of the triangle, and also along Main Street to the south. The neighborhood became predominantly Black and more segregated on the southern sides of the triangle, where both the elementary school for Black children (Mary E. Branch Elementary) and the segregated high school (Moton High School) were located. There is a need for more research into the racial composition of the neighborhoods, but we know that Longwood used the threat of eminent domain to negotiate property acquisitions with both white and Black citizens.

We do know that one of the first properties acquired through eminent domain in 1926 was owned by Farmville Baptist Church, a predominantly white congregation, and the last acquisition, was owned by Lester E. Andrews Jr., who was also white.

There is evidence that the Black community organized to question and resist the expansion of campus. In August 1966, a committee of citizens attended the Longwood Board of Visitors meeting and questioned Board members about campus expansion. This prompted community meetings led by President James Newman to discuss questions around expansion. In May 1967, Gov. Mills Godwin and his budget advisory group visited Longwood. During that visit, Godwin asked President James Newman why Longwood was slow to construct buildings for which it had received state funding and Newman replied that the community was a potential “powder keg”¹ if Longwood expanded too quickly. There is some

¹ “President Told To Take Leave At Longwood,” Richmond Times Dispatch, July 1, 1967.

suggestive evidence that Longwood changed architectural plans and built high-rise residence halls with more occupancy during this time in response to push-back from the community.

When Longwood again considered expansion in the 1980s, Black community members organized again to question the nature of the growth, and Longwood administrators formed a community advisory group to open dialogue about the issue.

Following Longwood's 1985 interim master plan that pushed campus expansion southward toward the point of the triangle and the community organizing that followed, Longwood's Board of Visitors created a citizens committee to make recommendations on expansion that informed campus expansion and the next master planning process in 1991. President Bill Dorrill, in those meetings and in public statements, pledged to negotiate with property owners in good faith and to "do whatever we can to ease the inevitable problems of relocation and make it as easy a transition as we can."² In that same article, Vera Allen, a member of the citizens committee whose family had been relocated previously because of campus expansion, said that "We are aware the college means a lot to us economically. We can't lose sight of that...we want jobs but we want houses too. We don't want it to be one-sided...I'm feeling better about the committee process. They are explaining these things a little better than they did before." She added that Dorrill "seems to have a little bit more compassion for us than we've ever had." Vera Allen's daughter, Edna, went on to become Longwood's first tenured Black faculty member and Allen Hall was named for her and her family.

Has the institution or an affiliated foundation purchased property without the use of eminent domain in a community in which the majority of residents were Black?

Yes. In the 1960s and 1970s, campus expanded significantly which impacted the communities living around its footprint in the triangle described above. Most of these properties were acquired without the use of eminent domain, but with the potential of its use as a part of the negotiations.

In later and more recent years, Longwood and its affiliated Longwood Real Estate Foundation has purchased properties that have been advertised for sale in the triangle, but has not engaged in pressuring tactics nor used the threat of eminent domain to acquire properties.

Does the institution have access to or copies of any records or documents that are relevant to these property transactions? Relevant records include real estate contracts, financial documents, title records, historical documents, family records, etc. If yes, please explain the type of documents and records that are available.

The University has done the deed research necessary to trace the history of property transactions dating back to 1839. The University possesses or has access to a variety of records that are relevant to the property transactions.

From 1884-1964, Longwood College (previously the State Female Normal School, the State Normal School for Women, and the State Teachers College) was governed by the State Board of Education, and only had its own Board of Visitors after 1964. The University Archives has an incomplete run of State

² Farmville Herald, March 17, 1989, page 3A

Board of Education minutes, which contain authorizations for property purchases and discuss the use of eminent domain.

Authorizations to use eminent domain were documented in presidential reports and in Board of Visitors minutes available in the University Archives. The student newspaper, the *Rotunda*, and the *Farmville Herald* also reported on the processes of master planning and proposed campus expansion. Other details can be gleaned from local maps, Farmville town directories, and other manuscript collections in the University archives. The University has access to deed records located in the Prince Edward County courthouse, and where appropriate, some are held by the University's Office of Capital Planning or the Longwood Real Estate Foundation.

Have you heard from members of the community to solicit their input on the impact of the institution's growth on the community as a whole?

Beginning in the 1960s, Longwood heard from members of the community in the triangle regarding the impact of campus growth on the community, and began soliciting community discussions regarding plans for expansion. In some cases, as referenced above, community input possibly changed expansion plans, notably with the construction of two high-rise residence halls (400 occupancy each) along Main Street in 1969 and 1970 instead of smaller, 200-occupancy residence halls elsewhere. Those discussions continued into the 1980s as the campus continued to expand, and informed decision-making.

The community made their concerns well known in other contexts as well. Farmville is an intimate mid-sized town where communities have ample opportunity to interact. From newspaper editorials and articles to sermons to conversations between administrators and Longwood employees who lived in the triangle, Longwood during that time was aware of the impact its expansion had on the surrounding community.

What steps, if any, has the institution taken to recognize the impact its growth has had on the surrounding community?

Beginning in the 1990s, but with concrete action beginning in the early 2000s and without prompting from outside agencies, Longwood began to not only publicly recognize the impact its growth had on the surrounding community, but to take steps to repair that relationship. This process has been difficult and emotional, and it has been clearly recognized that no one apology or recognition will heal deep wounds that are still felt among community members who were affected by campus growth of the 20th century.

In 2004, in an address at the campus's Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebration that marked the 50th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, President Patricia Cormier pledged that Longwood would never again use eminent domain—or the threat of the practice—to expand its footprint. Farmville Herald editor Ken Woodley, a public champion and leading voice for the statewide Brown v. Board of Education Scholarship that supports the educations of those affected by school closings during Massive Resistance, dubbed this promise the “Cormier Doctrine.”

In 2006, Longwood professors Dr. Edward Kinman and John Williams collaborated on an art installation on campus called *Domain*. The ceramic mural is displayed in Chichester Hall, an academic building that occupies ground that once was part of the community affected by campus expansion, and reflects how the community layout changed as Longwood's footprint expanded. Accompanying the installation is a description of the project:

Landscape is transient, always changing. What we see today differs from the past and will evolve into something new tomorrow. Today's highly manicured Longwood campus hides most of what was here yesteryear. There is little evidence of a swimming hole, large coal piles, tin can factory, milling company, tobacco warehouse, ice plant, dry cleaner, gas station, lumber yard, funeral home, Baptist church, two parsonages, farmland, forest, two elementary schools, and numerous houses on land now called Longwood. Not only has land use changed, but Longwood's footprint has expanded greatly. The central panel of this work maps in twenty-year increments how Longwood has expanded from its tiny niche on High Street to occupy an area twenty times larger than in 1900...

The outer panels of Domain encode place from diverse perspectives. In the mid-1960s a decision was made to expand the college grounds. Land south and west of campus, occupied predominantly by African Americans, was targeted for acquisition. These residents, trying to preserve place, contested Longwood's plans. As mapped on the right panel, place experienced by this community was rooted in their homes. The left panel depicts a different way—the institution's—of seeing the "same" place: a patchwork of properties, void of people. Here the task of purchasing so many parcels is viewed in economic terms; the different colors represent the affordability of the properties based on assessed values.

My tenure as president began in 2013, and shortly thereafter a series of meetings were held between Longwood administrators, leadership and members of the Moton Museum, site of the historic 1951 student walkout to protest school conditions, and community members to discuss a formal affiliation between the university and the museum.

In September 2014, the Board of Visitors apologized for not only Longwood's use of eminent domain but also its inaction during Massive Resistance. The Board resolution reads in part:

WHEREAS, after passing from direct state governance to governance by an appointed Board of Visitors in 1964, Longwood caused real and lasting offense and pain to our community with its use of eminent domain to facilitate campus expansion, and acted with particular insensitivity with regard to the relocation of a house of worship, and

WHEREAS, this history places a special obligation on Longwood to harness the influence of its scholarship and teaching to serve as a leader in the cause of equality of opportunity, and to facilitate reconciliation in the community; be it

RESOLVED, that the Board of Visitors on behalf of the University expresses its profound regret for these institutional actions, and apologizes to those who have been hurt, and be it

RESOLVED FURTHER that Longwood will work in conjunction with its neighbor the Robert Russa Moton Museum and embrace the museum's mission of civil rights in education, helping share the story of the struggle for civil rights in Prince Edward County and its essential role in American history, while promoting scholarship and edifying our students about the events that took place here, in furtherance of the University's mission to develop citizen leaders...

In that same resolution, the Board of Visitors established the Moton Legacy Scholarship program, which provides financial assistance for students with a demonstrated commitment “to the cause of equality of opportunity in education.” The Moton Legacy Scholarship has provided full tuition funding for student awardees’ senior years since 2015.

The next year, 2015, the Moton Museum and Longwood University entered into a joint affiliation that preserved the museum’s site and educational mission in perpetuity, calling the National Historic Landmark “sacred ground in the history of our community, the Commonwealth, and nation.” Longwood provides operational funding as well as marketing, fundraising, technology, scholarship, and teaching support to the museum.

Since 2015, the Museum has grown and thrived, and has developed a series of signature programs including the Moton Author Series, Moton K-12 Teacher in Residence Program, and Moton Museum Teacher Institute. Visits and school field trips to the museum have increased dramatically over the last 10 years.

In 2018, Longwood unveiled a new monument celebrating the consequential history of Farmville and its surrounding communities with the Farmville Freedom Monument, which celebrates those who struggled to advance the cause of freedom in our Commonwealth and Nation, many of whom lived in the community affected by Longwood’s use of eminent domain.

A NEW BIRTH OF FREEDOM

This is America’s first two-college community, with the founding of Prince Edward County in 1754, Hampden-Sydney in 1775, Farmville in 1798, and Longwood in 1839. It is a crossroads of American history, home to Patrick Henry and Barbara Johns, to the people of Israel Hill, the Moton strikers, and the generation locked from public education. This is where the Civil war moved to culmination, and where the Civil Rights Movement took stride for the nation.

This monument honors all in our community throughout these centuries who have labored and sacrificed to bring forth, in Lincoln’s words, “a new birth of freedom.” It marks also our commitment to honor their struggles by serving as a beacon of education and of leadership forged in reconciliation, and marks our resolve to pass a still finer ideal of liberty to generations to come.

In 2019, Longwood invited L. Francis “Skip” Griffin Jr., the son of Rev. L. Francis Griffin who was a fierce advocate for education rights and a prominent voice in the civil rights movement, to serve as Commencement speaker. Skip Griffin and his sisters were not only affected by the Prince Edward public school closings during Massive Resistance, but were also plaintiffs in the landmark 1964 desegregation case that forced Prince Edward County to reopen those schools. In his remarks, Griffin recalled moving from his home under the threat of eminent domain, noting that he stood where his boyhood backyard once was, and noted the progress that has been made in the years since:

I have a tradition where I like to go and scope out the stage where I am about to speak. I came with my wife, Lynette, and I walked across this plaza and I stood here and I realized that I was indeed in the backyard of my boyhood home. It took me a moment to gather myself, and it was a reminder that history and life has a way of moving forward, even if slowly.

My sisters and I used to walk from our home just about there, sometimes we'd cut across the campus to First Baptist Church, to Sunday School, to Vacation Bible School, to church ceremonies and other events. And we would think, knowing that it was at that time an all-women's school and all white, we would think that no matter how well they did in school—and they were all great students—they would not be able to attend Longwood.

I worked for years at the Boston Globe and we used to say we had a ringside seat to history. Well here in Farmville we were in the ring of history. History has taught us that America moves forward not on the strength of its leaders alone, but on the strength of its citizen-leaders...

There are some people who say that Longwood has not done enough. I don't share that opinion. Those were different times. We were engaged in a struggle in which at that time we were on opposite sides. But I want to say to the Board of Visitors, to the President, and to you who will soon be alumni: Longwood may not be what she will be, she may not be what she wants to be, but thank God she ain't what she was.

Longwood has changed, and I applaud her efforts to grow, to improve, to provide more offerings to students, and to be more inclusive to students. In 1958 when we had to move from this home, the thought of me being here as speaker and the thought of students of color being in the graduating class was not a possibility. That is not lost on me, and it is not lost on the members of this community."

Also in 2020, Longwood launched its Bicentennial Initiative ahead of its 200-year anniversary in 2039. The project is studying institutional history, including the role of African-Americans on campus, to acknowledge those experiences, and to recognize the contributions people of color have made to campus.

As Longwood began the process of interpreting its institutional history, leadership and the Board of Visitors named three campus buildings for local civil rights pioneers. Allen Hall was dedicated in 2020 and named for Dr. Edna Allen Bledsoe Dean, the first tenured Black professor in university history who taught in the social work department for 24 years. Moss Hall was named in 2020 for Dr. C.G. Gordon Moss, a dean and professor of history for 25 years who was an outspoken advocate of re-opening public schools during Massive Resistance and of equality and justice for all Americans. Johns Hall, which sits next to Moss Hall, was named for Barbara Johns, the courageous student at R.R. Moton High School who in 1951 led a student walkout of the school in protest over conditions, which spurred the lawsuit that became part of *Brown v. Board of Education* and spurred the student civil rights movement.

One of the properties that was purchased during a time of expansion but not demolished is the Clark House on Main Street, the childhood home of Dr. Theresa Clark, a longtime social work professor at Longwood. Within the last five years, the home, now called the Clark House Intercultural Center, has been used by predominately Black fraternities, sororities, and other organizations.

In 2024, on the 70th anniversary of *Brown v. Board of Education* and the 60th anniversary of *Griffin v. Prince Edward Schools* which forced public schools to be re-funded in the county and opened, Longwood held a special Commencement weekend. Joan Johns Cobbs, the sister of Barbara Johns and who herself took part in the 1951 Moton High School walkout, served as Undergraduate Commencement speaker. The Graduate Commencement speaker was A.E. Dick Howard, the University of Virginia law professor who

as a Supreme Court clerk to Justice Hugo Black helped pen the *Griffin* decision and who in 1971 rewrote the Virginia Constitution which included the assurance that every resident has access to public education, a response to Massive Resistance.

Also that Commencement weekend, Longwood held a special ceremony called “Brown to Griffin and Beyond: Celebrating the Heroes of the Civil Rights Movement in Education,” during which community members who were plaintiffs in the Davis case, those who had their educations interrupted by school closings, and those who were denied entrance to Longwood on the basis of race were conferred degrees of Honorary Juris Doctor and invited to take place in a graduation ceremony on campus. More than 400 degrees were awarded. Skip Griffin again served as speaker, telling the audience of honorees:

Some of you may think this is a small gesture. Make no mistake, this is a significant gesture. It's not something that people are given to doing in these times. And what Longwood is doing today is to simply say, "I see you. I heard your crying. I acknowledge your pain and trauma. I appreciate all that you did in the name of justice for the preservation of one country. You did it out of love, courage, and a sound mind." And somebody saw you. Somebody called you here today to say I see you and acknowledge you.

In the coming months and years, there will be further opportunities to recognize the impact that members of these communities have had on our shared history and to celebrate their stories. In 2025, Virginia will dedicate a statue of Barbara Johns in the Capitol's Statuary Hall, where she will stand alongside George Washington as representatives of the Commonwealth, taking the place of Robert E. Lee.

Robert Russa Moton Museum has also been nominated by the U.S. government to be named a UNESCO World Heritage Site. That lengthy process has moved forward and a decision by the international body should be made over the coming years.

Who is the best contact person at the institution who we can connect with as we undergo our study?

For further information or detail on the answers above, please contact:

Matthew McWilliams
University Spokesperson and Deputy to the President
mcwilliamsmj@longwood.edu
434-395-4806

We appreciate the opportunity to compile this information for the Commission and are happy to provide further detail if available. As noted previously, research is ongoing, particularly through Longwood's Bicentennial Initiative, into previous campus expansion and circumstances surrounding individual properties. Longwood continues to discuss ways to engage with the community that was affected by its past use of eminent domain and to build a future together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Taylor Reveley IV". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "W." being more prominent.

W. Taylor Reveley IV
President, Longwood University