

Embattled Montpelier CEO Begins Purge of Whistleblowing Employees

After Public Promises Not to Retaliate, Young Fires Long-Serving Staff; MDC Calls for CEO, Board Chair Resignation; National Trust Condemns Foundation's Action

ORANGE , VIRGINIA, USA, April 18, 2022 /EINPresswire.com/ -- This morning Roy Young, CEO of



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James French, Chairman of the Montpelier Descendants Committee

The Montpelier Foundation, began firing long-time staff members who questioned the Foundation’s retraction of its much-publicized and praised promise to share governance of President James Madison’s estate with the Montpelier Descendants Committee, the organization representing descendants of the families whom Madison enslaved.

After making repeated public statements that the Foundation would not retaliate against staff for opposing the Board’s abandonment of its commitment, Young has reneged. Thus far today Young has terminated via email Elizabeth Chew, Ph.D., Executive Vice President and Chief Curator, Matthew Reeves, Ph.D., Director of Archaeology

and Landscaping Restoration, and Christy Moriarty, Director of Communications. He fired Alex Walsh, Events Manager, last week. Young today also suspended Christopher Pasch, Archaeology Field Director, and Mary Furlong Minkoff, Ph.D., Director of Archaeology and Curator of Archaeological Collections.

The targeted employees collectively have more than 50 years of service to Montpelier and 100 years of experience in their fields.

As news of the Foundation board’s abandonment of its commitment to the Montpelier Descendants Committee emerged in recent weeks, the majority of [Montpelier’s full-time staff issued a statement](#) of support for fulfilling the promise. Greg Werkheiser of Cultural Heritage Partners PLLC, attorney for the Montpelier Descendants Committee, stated: “When Young fires everyone who thinks he is a failed leader, he’ll find Montpelier uninhabited.”

Nearly 7,000 members of the visiting public and donors have signed [a petition](#) supporting the MDC and Montpelier staff. James French, Chairman of the Montpelier Descendants Committee,

stated, "It is now plain to all that Montpelier will not recover with Roy Young or Board Chairman Gene Hickok at the helm. MDC calls on them to step down before the damage they are doing is irreparable."

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, which owns the 2,650-acre presidential plantation and leases it to the Foundation, issued [a statement condemning Young's retaliation](#) against employees.

Dr. Reeves has been Director of Archaeology at Montpelier for twenty-two years. He has built an acclaimed public archaeology program that has set precedent in the United States for inviting the public to work side by side with professional archaeologists in the excavation of sites where enslaved people lived and worked. He has collaborated with members of Montpelier's Descendant Community since his arrival at Montpelier. Dr. Reeves is a distinguished scholar who has published widely on the landscape and material world of slavery at Montpelier, archaeology-metal detector partnerships, and descendant archaeology. He has trained a generation of archaeologists passionate about working with the public in the investigation of the institution of slavery.

Dr. Reeves remarked: "I have devoted my archaeological career to understanding the lives of the enslaved men, women, and children who lived at Montpelier in partnership with the Montpelier Descendants Committee. To be retaliated against by the Montpelier leadership for doing my job is a bitter irony."

Dr. Chew has served as Executive Vice President and Chief Curator for seven years, in a distinguished career at museums and historic sites that spans thirty-five years. She joined Montpelier to head the projects funded by David Rubenstein's 2014 gift of \$10M and led the team that created the award-winning The Mere Distinction of Colour exhibition in partnership with the Montpelier Descendant Community. She was on the team of authors of the 2018 Rubric of Best Practices for Descendant Engagement in the Interpretation of Museums and Historic Sites. While at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, she was co-curator, with Rex Ellis of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, of the 2012 exhibition Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello: Paradox of Liberty.

Dr. Chew commented: "My colleagues and I stood up for our longtime partners in the Montpelier Descendants Committee, just as they have always encouraged and valued us. I do not regret taking this stand."

Christy Moriarty has been employed at Montpelier for nine years. She began her career as Tourism Coordinator, then advanced to Tourism Marketing Manager and finally, in 2020, to Director of Communications. Throughout her tenure, she has been responsible for strategically promoting Montpelier as a tourism destination and cultural heritage site by ensuring all messaging aligns with the Foundation's mission and key strategies, including developing content for social media, websites, newsletters, and other distribution channels; overseeing the design,

content, and production of marketing materials; and identifying media and press opportunities. She also represented Montpelier on the Orange County Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Advisory Committee, and Charters of Freedom Committee, and was the key liaison for individual, local, and regional tourism partners.

Dr. Bettye Kears, a leader of the Montpelier Descendant's Committee and Foundation board member, stated: "We are in awe of these faithful employees for their principled stand, and pray that their leave from Montpelier is temporary. Any historic site would be lucky to have them. Montpelier, however, will be unable to replace the brain trust it has so thoughtlessly discarded."

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About the Montpelier Descendants Committee

The Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit devoted to restoring the narratives of enslaved Americans at plantation sites in Central Virginia, including but not limited to James Madison's Montpelier, from the margins to the center of historical discourse. The MDC promotes a more accurate understanding of the lives of enslaved people based on broader, richer and more truthful interpretations of American history. Through a series of public programs, events, research, and communications the MDC seeks to demonstrate how the lives of enslaved persons made possible and informed the ideals of universal liberty enshrined in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, yet denied to them. Membership in the MDC is open to all descendants of enslaved ancestors in the central Virginia area, known as the Arc of Enslaved Communities.

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