MEDIA ADVISORY

Contact:

Marsha Coleman-Adebayo
(240) 731-9577
nofearcoalition@aol.com



On March 5, 2021, WUSA aired a shocking exposé that everyone who cares about Black lives and justice needs to see (click here for print version). They reveal that one of frequently interviewed archaeological experts on Moses Cemetery has failed to disclose she works for the developer who are destroying a site that the River Road community holds sacred. WUSA explains that, "Dr. Jones is not only an archaeologist but a paid consultant for...developers at the center of the controversy over the alleged desecration of the Moses Cemetery in Bethesda." In light of her status as a paid consultant, Dr. Jones's testimony and statements given to the County Council, the Montgomery County Planning Board, and which have informed public statements made by County Executive, Marc Elrich, cannot be considered impartial.

This is only one of many distressing examples of disinformation being spread about the River Road Moses Cemetery. For example, on August 10, 2020, the Bethesda African Cemetery Coalition received an unexpected letter full of unfounded claims from another organization dedicated to preserving a historic Black cemetery: the Descendants of the Morningstar Tabernacle No. 88 of which Jones is now a trustee. In discussions with our sister church members, we have only been able to locate one person who signed the petition and she told us (documented by video) that she was informed (erroneously) that Macedonia was trying to take over their cemetery, although she declined to say who told her that.

Curiously, City Paper reporter Kristina Gaddy reveals, "While I was working on the piece about the River Road Moses Cemetery for the Washington City Paper, I reached out to Moses Morningstar 88 in hopes of speaking with one of the signers of their press release. I received an unsigned email that said, 'Descendant signers have asked Alexandra Jones, PhD (copied here) to be our point person with any press inquiries.' " Kristina goes on to explain that she was only allowed to speak with one of the signers of the letter while Dr. Alexandra Jones was on the phone with them. We have to wonder why Dr. Jones - a paid consultant for the developer - is the purported spokesperson and Trustee for the Descendants of Morningstar Tabernacle No. 88 and will not allow those Descendants to speak without her presence. This also makes it apparent to us that the developer, not the Descendants, is likely behind the Descendants' letter. Despite the baseless claims in that letter, our inability to confirm that the remaining signatories support the content of the letter, and the direct connection to the developer's hired consultant, Dr. Jones, the letter has been shared widely, including being quoted by County Executive Marc Elrich.

The above WUSA9 video clarifies that Dr. Alexandra Jones has a clear conflict of interest as spokesperson for the developer, which she routinely fails to disclose when she presents herself as an independent archeologist. We call upon the County Council, the Montgomery County Planning Board, County Executive Marc Elrich, and journalists to reassess any decisions based upon WUSA9's exposé.

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