



Commonwealth of Virginia
Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services

Central State Hospital

Vicki Yesbeck Montgomery
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Medical Director

June 11, 2010

King Davis, Ph.D., LCSW
The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work
1925 San Jacinto Blvd.
1 University Station, D3500
Austin, Texas 78712-0358

Dear Dr. Davis:

I am writing to convey my full support for the proposed project to collect and preserve the archives of Central State Hospital. As Hospital Medical Director, I am looking forward to working with you and your team on this historic venture.

In 2001, when I first came to Central State Hospital, my office was located in the Medical Library. Right away I noticed that the old patient legers dating back to the nineteenth century were on open display in the library. As I explored the workroom I discovered the reports, manuals, hospital board minutes, and state budget reports that had been collected from the one and one-half century life of this institution. My greatest surprise was finding boxes and boxes of uncatalogued photographs documenting the early and progressive history of the Central Lunatic Asylum, its patients, staff, and buildings. I spent many of my lunch hours looking through the photographs and patient admissions legers, trying to recapture the early life of the hospital.

I have been disturbed by the fading story that is in these archives in their current state. While we have done what we can to crudely protect and maintain the materials, it is clear that they are deteriorating. Even more, these resources are not in a condition that they can be made available to the academic community or to consumers, family members and the general public.

This is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity to preserve the intact history of the first hospital of its kind, a mental institution founded for the care of African Americans. As you know, this week was the 140th Anniversary of the act of the Virginia General Assembly incorporating the Central Lunatic Asylum as a regularly organized state institution, and that the hospital has been in full operation since that time. We will be happy to provide support for you and members of the project while you are in Petersburg. I am delighted that you have asked me and other current staff to collaborate with you in this endeavor.

Sincerely,


Ronald O. Forbes, M.D.
Hospital Medical Director

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