

Land Acknowledgement and Historical Acknowledgement for Leading EDJ Day

We will start today with a land acknowledgement. In the making of this text we would like to thank the Newberry Library; Todd Ristau and organizers of the 2020 Applied Theatre Conference; and the Hollins Working Group on Slavery. A land acknowledgment is a statement that recognizes a place where Indigenous peoples have lived historically and continue to live today. It calls attention to Indigenous peoples' ongoing connections to a place and to the importance of confronting the often violent history that forced them from that land. It also recognizes how institutions have benefited from dispossession and settler colonialism, as well as how they can work with the tribal communities whose land they are situated on to explain this difficult history to the public. If you would like to make your own land acknowledgement in the chat during this presentation, we invite you to type in the names of the Indigenous peoples who lived, who continue to live, on the land where you live and work. Thank you.

In the spirit of truth and reconciliation, we acknowledge the Tutelo/Monacan people, as well as other Indigenous peoples, whose land on which Hollins University now resides. We recognize their historical and ongoing connection to this land, this water and this air. We do this to pay respect to the Tutelo/Monacan Nations, and to their elders past, present and emerging. We hope to inspire greater curiosity among non-Native peoples about the land on which they live, to halt the erasure of Indigenous history, and to encourage support of Indigenous communities both locally and globally.

No discussion of racism held on this campus will be complete without an examination and acknowledgement of our history. The bricks of some of our oldest buildings were most likely made and laid by the hands of enslaved people. When Charles Lewis Cocke arrived on this campus, he was accompanied by enslaved people whom he owned, and he was not alone in this. The college paid nearby slaveholders for the labor of enslaved people on this campus; donors who gave money to the college gained their wealth by the hands of enslaved people.

There is no doubt that the forced labor of enslaved people sustained this institution from its earliest days. Hollins must do the work of fully investigating, acknowledging, and repairing our history. In the research and advocacy of the Working Group on Slavery and its Contemporary Legacies and by students, faculty and staff, there has been a beginning to this ongoing and continual task.

Hollins acknowledges the enslaved and their descendants, some of whom work on this campus today; we must recognize the full contributions made by African Americans throughout our history, as well as those made by our current Black students, staff and faculty. We owe it to ourselves and our community to learn from our history and its legacies and recognize how they shape our daily lives. And then we must take action towards restorative justice. It is only when we do this that we can truly lift our eyes as our motto commands us and call Hollins whole.

Please include the following in print: This statement includes texts used with permission by the Newberry Library; Todd Ristau and the organizers of the 2020 Applied Theatre Conference; the Hollins Working Group on Slavery and its Contemporary Legacies.