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## Ford's Theatre Announces Public Program Offerings in February

**17<sup>th</sup> Annual Lincoln Oratory Festival**  
**February 4-5, 2025**

**Written Then, Spoken Now: *Freedom Was In Sight!***  
**February 7, 2025**

**Education and Power in Post-Emancipation America**  
**February 11, 2025**

**WASHINGTON** – Ford's Theatre announced three upcoming public programs in February: the 17th annual **Lincoln Oratory Festival**, the culminating event for local elementary and middle school students after a deep, weeks-long dive into historical oratory work with Ford's Teaching Artists; **Written Then, Spoken Now: *Freedom Was In Sight!***, an elevated book talk with author **Dr. Kate Masur**, dramaturg **Faedra C. Carpenter** and educator **Candra Flanagan**; and **Education and Power in Post-Emancipation America**, an exploration of the enduring legacies of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) founded during Reconstruction with professor **Leigh Soares** and historian **Blake Lindsey**

### Lincoln Oratory Festival

The 17th annual **Lincoln Oratory Festival** honors the enduring power of words with local students performing a selection of speeches on the historic Ford's Theatre stage on February 4-5. Ford's Theatre Teaching Artists worked with local students to expand vocabulary, develop public speaking skills and strengthen confidence while building an understanding of the historical impact Lincoln and others have made as great writers and orators. Ford's Teaching Artists are ChelseaDee Harrison, W. Ellington Felton, Max Johnson, Kirsten Noetzel and Heidi Fortune-Picker.

The **February 4** performance at 10:30 a.m. features students from **Haycock Elementary School** in Falls Church, Virginia, and **DC Prep Edgewood Middle School** and **Ludlow-Taylor Elementary School** in Washington, D.C. Students will perform speeches by Abraham Lincoln, Frederick Douglass, Powhatan, Geraldine Ferraro and Sojourner Truth.

The **February 5** performance at 10:30 a.m. features students from **Fairhill Elementary School** in Fairfax, Virginia, **Kimball Elementary School** in Washington, D.C., **Francis C. Hammond Middle School** in Alexandria, Virginia, and **Lee Montessori PCS** in Washington, D.C. Students will perform speeches by Abraham Lincoln, Powhatan, Mary McLeod Bethune, Geraldine Ferraro and Sojourner Truth.

"Building competencies in formal and informal communication among students is a vital tool to furthering a child's development," said Ford's Theatre **Irani Foundation Director of Education Tricia Patrick**. "This program involves key elements including learning from the past, collaboration and ensemble building and speech performance so that students build confidence in themselves as individuals as well as a classroom community.

Through this program, over the course of five classroom visits, students gain not only historical perspective but also invaluable insights into the timeless principles of effective communication by applying Ford's Approach to Oratory. This year, the program connected with new first-time participants and welcomed back several return schools, highlighting the importance of speech and communication in the classroom and as a life skill.

Support for The Lincoln Oratory Festival program is provided by **Lincoln Oratory Residency and Festival Sponsor Bloomberg Philanthropies**.

Both performances feature appearances by Bloomberg representatives who will discuss the personal and professional benefits of developing public speaking skills and share their own tips and tricks for mastering the art of oratory.

"Bloomberg Philanthropies is proud to support this incredible Ford's Theatre program, which helps students develop crucial skills including public speaking and communicating effectively and passionately," said **Josh Eastright, CEO of Bloomberg Industry Group**. "I wish I had a program like this when I was in school."

The Lincoln Oratory Festival is a free event. General admission tickets are required and can be reserved here: [fords.org/event/oratory-residency-and-festival](https://fords.org/event/oratory-residency-and-festival).

### **Written Then, Spoken Now: *Freedom Was In Sight!***

**Written Then, Spoken Now: *Freedom Was In Sight!*** is an elevated book talk with acclaimed Reconstruction scholar **Dr. Kate Masur**, author of *Freedom Was in Sight!: A Graphic History of Reconstruction in the Washington, D.C., Region*, dramaturg **Faedia C. Carpenter** and educator **Candra Flanagan** on February 7 at 7 p.m. Blended with their conversation, Ford's will showcase vibrant illustrations by Liz Clarke and feature actors reading aloud excerpts of the book. The event will conclude with a book signing.

The Written Then, Spoken Now program leverages the convergence of history and theatre, bringing to life stories of Black Americans in Washington, D.C., and its surrounding region, who bravely worked to

reunite their families, build their communities, and claim rights long denied them.

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services [MA-252940-OMS-23].

Written Then, Spoken Now: *Freedom Was In Sight!* is a free event. Tickets are required and can be reserved here: [fords.org/event/written-then-spoken-now-freedom-was-in-sight](https://fords.org/event/written-then-spoken-now-freedom-was-in-sight).

## Education and Power in Post-Emancipation America

**Education and Power in Post-Emancipation America** is a virtual event presenting an opportunity to discover how Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) founded during Reconstruction became cornerstones of education, empowerment and the movement for a more equitable society. On February 11 from 7-8 p.m., University of Maryland professor **Leigh Soares** and historian **Blake Lindsey** discuss how educational institutions are Reconstruction's most resilient and enduring legacies in American History

Education and Power in Post-Emancipation America is part of *History Talks*, a webinar series that investigates facets of Abraham Lincoln's complex legacy and its relevance to today. These engaging talks, designed for history enthusiasts of all ages, feature compelling visuals with content experts delving into Lincoln's legacy and the world of Civil War Washington.

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services [MA-252940-OMS-23].

Education and Power in Post-Emancipation America is a free virtual event. Registration: [fords.org/event/education-and-power-in-post-emancipation-america](https://fords.org/event/education-and-power-in-post-emancipation-america).

Ford's Theatre education and public programs are supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies, BP America, D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, The Hearst Foundations, Institute of Museum and Library Services, The Honorable Anita B. and The Honorable Timothy J. McBride, National Park Foundation, National Park Service, PwC, Southern Company and Visa Inc. with additional support from United Airlines.

## Ford's Theatre Society

One of the most visited sites in the nation's capital, Ford's Theatre reopened its doors in 1968, more than a hundred years after the assassination of President Abraham Lincoln. Operated through a partnership between Ford's Theatre Society and the National Park Service, Ford's Theatre is the premier destination in the Washington, D.C. to explore and celebrate Abraham Lincoln's life and legacy.

Ford's Theatre Society was founded under the guidance of executive producer **Frankie Hewitt**, who, during her 35-year tenure, established Ford's as a living, working theatre producing performances that highlighted the diversity of the American experience. Since the arrival of **Paul R. Tetreault** as director, critics and the theatre-going public have recognized Ford's for the superior quality of its artistic programming. With works from the Tony-nominated *Come From Away* and the nationally acclaimed *Big River*, to the world premieres of *Meet John Doe*, *The Heavens Are Hung In Black*, *Liberty Smith*, *Necessary Sacrifices*, *The Widow Lincoln*, *The Guard*, *Grace*, and *Something Moving*, Ford's Theatre is

making its mark on the American theatre landscape. Under the current leadership of Board of Trustees Chairman **Phebe N. Novakovic** and through the lens of Lincoln's leadership and legacy, Ford's Theatre endeavors today to advance Lincoln's "unfinished work" with programs and performances that cultivate empathy, encourage dialogue and bridge divides in American life.

For more information on Ford's Theatre and the Ford's Theatre Society, please visit [www.fords.org](http://www.fords.org).

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