

## **The Emancipation Memorial: Contested Memory, Historical Responsibility, and Their Intersections with Art**

*An Exploratory Conversation in Two Parts presented in Collaboration with Mosaic Theatre Company's Production of Monumental Travesties by Award-Winning Playwright Psalmayene 24*

*Presented under the auspices of the Benjamin Drummond Emancipation Celebration sponsored by National Capital Bank*

### **Biographies:**

**Dr. Kay Wright Lewis** is the Interim Chair of the Department of History. She completed her PhD in the department of history at Rutgers University, New Brunswick in 2011. Her research focuses on slavery and abolition, African American intellectual history, Atlantic World history, and the history of violence. Lewis' book, published by the University of Georgia Press, is entitled "*A Curse Upon the Nation": Race, Freedom, and Extermination in America and the Atlantic World*". As a graduate student, Lewis held an Andrew W. Mellon Competitive Dissertation Fellowship at Rutgers University. After graduation, she was a Fellow at the Gilder Lehrman Center at Yale University in 2011, and Lewis' dissertation was one of the finalists in the Southern Historical Association's C. Vann Woodward Dissertation Prize competition. This year she is the recipient of a Mellon Scholars Short-term Fellowship from the Library Company of Philadelphia. And she received a Three Month Fellowship from the prestigious Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery at the Schomburg Center for Research in New York City for her new research project tentatively entitled *The Children of Africa Have Been Called*. Lewis has presented at many national and international conferences and has taught at Rutgers University, Fairleigh Dickinson University, and Norfolk State University.

**Historian Dr. Edna Greene Medford** was Chairperson and Professor of History at Howard University, where she specialized in 19<sup>th</sup> century United States history, with an emphasis on slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction. Dr. Medford's publications include: *Lincoln and Emancipation* (2015), *The Emancipation Proclamation: Three Views* (co-authored with Harold Holzer and Frank Williams, 2006), and she is the editor of *Historical Perspectives of the African Burial Ground: New York Blacks and the Diaspora*, volume 3 of *The New York African Burial Ground: Unearthing the African Presence in Colonial New York* (2009).

Dr. Medford has served on several professional boards. She is a member of the Executive Council of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, a member of the Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Foundation, an Executive Committee member of the Lincoln Forum, and serves on the boards of the Abraham Lincoln Association, the Abraham Lincoln Institute, and the Ulysses S. Grant Association.

**Psalmayene 24** is an award-winning playwright, director, and actor. Playwriting credits include *Dear Mapel* and *Les Deux Noirs* at Mosaic Theater Company, *Free Jujube Brown!* at The African Continuum Theatre Company, and *Zomo the Rabbit: A Hip-Hop Creation Myth* at Imagination Stage. Directing credits include *Native Son* at Mosaic Theater, *Flow and Pass Over* at Studio Theatre, *Necessary Sacrifices: A Radio Play* at Ford's Theatre, *Word Becomes Flesh* at Theater Alliance, *Cinderella: The*

Remix at Imagination Stage, and Not Enuf Lifetimes at The Welders. His play, *Les Deux Noirs*, is published by TRW Plays. Acting credits include *Ruined* at Arena Stage, *Dear Mapel* at Mosaic Theater, and HBO's *The Wire*. Psalm, as his colleagues call him, is the writer/director of the short film, *The Freewheelin' Insurgents*, presented by Arena Stage. He is the recipient of a Helen Hayes Award for Outstanding Direction of a Play and has received the Imagination Award from Imagination Stage. He is the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Playwright-in-Residence at Mosaic Theater.

**Mosaic Theatre Company Artistic Director Reginald L. Douglas** is dedicated to creating new work and supporting new voices. He has directed at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center, Contemporary American Theater Festival, Everyman Theatre, Weston Theater Company, La Jolla Playhouse, Audible, Bard at the Gate, Profile Theatre, Playwrights Realm, The Kennedy Center, Pittsburgh CLO, Arizona Theatre Company, Barrington Stage, Cape Cod Theatre Project, Negro Ensemble Company, TheatreSquared, Playwrights' Center, McCarter Theatre Center, Florida Rep, The Lark, New York Theatre Workshop, City Theatre (where he served as Artistic Producer), Studio Theatre (where he served as Associate Artistic Director), and many other national companies. Reginald has developed and directed work by nationally-recognized writers including Dominique Morisseau, Suzan-Lori Parks, Cori Thomas, Angelica Chéri, Lynn Nottage, Nikkole Salter, among many others. A member of the Board of Directors of Theatre Washington and of the National New Play Network, Reginald received the National Theatre Conference's Emerging Professional Award in 2020.

Now in its 8th year, Hill Center's Benjamin Drummond series honors America's first liberated enslaved people with scholarly and celebratory programs that bring together a diverse group of prominent experts, artists, and public figures throughout the year to explore the Civil War and its aftermath from the African American perspective. Named for the Old Naval Hospital's first patient, a young African American seaman taken prisoner by Confederate ships, Benjamin Drummond Emancipation Day Celebration marks 161 years since President Abraham Lincoln signed The District of Columbia Emancipation Act, which freed DC's over 3,000 enslaved people nearly nine months before the Emancipation Proclamation.

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