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## **FORD'S THEATRE BRINGS EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY TOGETHER VIRTUALLY FOR NINTH ANNUAL NATIONAL ORATORY FELLOWS PROGRAM**

Washington, D.C. – Ford's Theatre Society recently brought together students and educators from across the country virtually for its National Oratory Fellows Program. This year-long program typically culminates in a weekend in D.C., where 36 teachers and 36 student delegates attend workshops, rehearse their original and historical speeches on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, and ultimately perform on the Ford's Theatre stage. This year, Ford's Theatre Education experimented with putting the culminating retreat online for participants through Zoom, giving teachers and students the chance to acknowledge the achievements of the group in this unprecedented time.

The fellows experienced online professional development workshops on using an Actor's Approach as a close reading strategy for historical speeches, a stations activity to teach Ford's Podium Points and a breakout session to discuss ways to integrate oratory by content area.

Students from **Ford's Theatre National Oratory Fellows** classrooms were invited to participate in online workshops with Ford's Theatre teaching artists to continue their growth as orators. They completed online workshops in memorization tips and techniques, learned how to use the drama-based activity of tableau to create character and presence when giving a speech, learned warm-ups and relaxation techniques to prepare for performance, and received coaching and feedback on their historical speech or original speech performances from Ford's Teaching Artists.

"Continuing to communicate and connect is essential during this pandemic. The virtual workshops allowed us to continue our program and offer some sense of normalcy for everyone involved," said **Ford's Theatre Associate Director for Arts Education Cynthia Gertsen**. "The National Oratory Fellows program helps us to highlight to students how to use our voices to make connections and find comfort with one another. Now more than ever, we understand the importance of how words can bring us together even when we are apart."

"I am proud of my work as a fellow this year. The experience and professional development I've gained working with Ford's helped me to create a fun and effective way of combining the actor's approach to oratory with historical thinking skills," said **Master Fellow Caitlin Goodwin**. "The education team at Fords worked hard to make sure that we were provided with support and opportunities for learning and growing throughout this

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pandemic. The zoom activities were so well organized and truly gave me some great new ideas for implementing oratory strategies with my students. It was a unique opportunity to learn and grow with my colleagues from around the country.”

“The ideas and concepts that we share in our fellowship have transformed my career,” said **Veteran Fellow Jason Rude**. “Though we weren't able to meet face to face this spring, we were still able to share transformative ideas with each other in our online workshops. The adjustments that I picked up will seem small to most, but they will have a huge impact on how I approach my classroom this fall.”

### **National Oratory Fellows**

The 2019-2020 cohort of National Oratory Fellows includes teachers from 16 states and the District of Columbia. The 37 Fellows (in alphabetical order by state) are:

- Arizona: Alexandra Navarro and Kathryn Notarpole (Mesa)
- California: Lindsey Charron (Newport Beach), Karen Richey (Elk Grove) and Callen Taylor (San Francisco)
- Colorado: Angela Hambleton (Lafayette) Connecticut: Barbara Connery (Morris)
- Idaho: Wally Hames and Amber Obert (Kuna)
- Illinois: Joe Cernak (Homer Glen)
- Iowa: Jason Rude (New Hampton)
- Kansas: Monty L. Graber (Newton), Dave McIntire and Ben Rivers (Wichita)
- Kentucky: Joseph MoneyMaker (Smithland)
- Maryland: Deborah Colbert Durgadeen (Takoma Park), Joyce Erb- Appleman (Bowie), Krista McKim, Susan Scola (Rockville) and Jim Rossi (Hagerstown)
- Missouri: Vanessa Holloway (Kansas City), Jennifer Stockdell, Jeff Weary and Melissa Woodward (Independence)
- Nebraska: Mike Buchanan (North Platte) and Darrin Comstock (Omaha)
- New Jersey: Lisa Romero (Edison)
- New York: Caitlyn Goodwin (McGraw)
- Ohio: Allison Decker, Casey Kaufman (Harrison) and Kelly Rowland (Toledo)
- Pennsylvania: Lauren Baxter and Georgette Hackman (Denver)
- Texas: Stacey Callaway (Midland)
- Virginia: Carinne Hackshaw (Alexandria)
- Washington, D.C.: Giani Clarkson, Marie Connolly and Angelo Parodi

The **Ford's Theatre National Oratory Fellows program**, started in 2011, builds and strengthens teachers' skills to use public speaking and performance as teaching and learning strategies in the classroom. Through video-conferencing, Ford's Theatre Teaching Artists conduct multiple virtual classroom visits to work with students throughout the school year. Participating teachers began the year with a two-day professional development retreat with Ford's Theatre education staff and Teaching Artists at Ford's Theatre. These sessions focused on how teachers can use the study of oratory in their classrooms to develop students' speaking, writing

and leadership skills, in addition to deepening their knowledge and understanding of great American orators including Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. Distance learning is part of the process for the program throughout the year, as the National Oratory Fellows have regularly collaborated with Ford's Theatre Teaching Artists to build their capacity for speech writing, public speaking and performance tools.

Ford's Theatre education programs are supported by Lead Education Sponsor **BP America** with additional support from **Bloomberg Philanthropies, D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Institute of Museum and Library Services, National Park Service, Southern Company, United Airlines** and **Visa Inc.**

Schools and teachers interested in learning more about the National Oratory Fellows Program should visit [www.fords.org/for-teachers/programs/oratory/national-oratory-fellowship/](http://www.fords.org/for-teachers/programs/oratory/national-oratory-fellowship/).

### **Ford's Theatre Society**

Since reopening in 1968, more than a hundred years after President Abraham Lincoln's assassination, Ford's Theatre has celebrated Lincoln's legacy and explored the American experience through theatre and education. Under the leadership of Director Paul R. Tetreault, Ford's Theatre has been recognized 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* and *The Guard*, Ford's Theatre is making its mark on the American theatre landscape. For its accomplishments, the organization was honored in 2008 with the National Medal of Arts. For more information, visit [www.fords.org](http://www.fords.org).

### **#FordsOratory**

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