



Descendant Symposium | September 13, 2024

Main Plenary Sessions:

1. From Chains to Change: The Evolving Movement of Descendants of Enslaved Communities

Exploring the significance and impact of the national movement advocating for the recognition and empowerment of descendants of enslaved laborers.

Scheduled Time: 9:30am to 10:30am

2. Restorative Justice and Reparations: Towards Healing and Reconciliation

Examining the principles of restorative justice and reparations in the context of addressing historical injustices inflicted upon enslaved communities and their descendants.

Scheduled Time: 12:30pm to 1:30pm

Breakout Session Topics:

Breakout Session 1: 10:45am-12pm

1. Genealogical Research Strategies for African American Families

Practical guidance and tools for conducting genealogical research specifically tailored to African American families, including overcoming research challenges and utilizing specialized resources.

2. Land Reparations and Property Restitution

Exploring the concept of land reparations and the restitution of property to descendants of enslaved laborers, addressing historical land theft and dispossession.

3. Montpelier Descendants Committee: Projects and Partnerships



The Montpelier Descendants Committee (MDC) leadership plans to provide an update on various ongoing projects aimed at recognizing and honoring the enslaved individuals at Montpelier and the nearby plantations. These projects include the Memorialization Project, which involves creating and installing a memorial for an enslaved burial ground containing approximately 300 unmarked graves. Additionally, the committee is working on the Arc of Communities Initiative, or "the Arc," which aims to identify significant sites of remembrance throughout Central Virginia that are linked to free communities, towns, and former locations of enslavement across the region. The MDC will also acknowledge the vital partnerships that are supporting these initiatives and will offer opportunities for descendants to participate in these efforts.

During Lunch, we invite Dr. Andrea Douglas to share more about [Swords Into Plowshares](#).

Breakout Session 2: 1:45-3:00pm

1. Healing Spaces: Promoting Mental Health and Wellness in Descendant Communities

Explore the importance of creating healing spaces within descendant communities to address intergenerational trauma, promote mental health awareness, and foster holistic well-being.

2. Cemeteries and Burial Preservation

Explore the vital work of preserving African American cemeteries and burial grounds. This session will delve into strategies for protecting these sacred spaces, addressing challenges such as neglect and land development, and honoring the ancestors interred there.

3. Community-Based Archives and Oral History Projects

Exploring the role of community-based archives and oral history projects in documenting and preserving the stories and experiences of enslaved communities and their descendants.

4. Cultural Preservation: Celebrating Heritage and Identity Through Arts and Culture



Examine the role of arts and culture in preserving and celebrating the rich heritage and identity of descendant communities, including storytelling, music, visual arts, and cultural festivals.