



in partnership with



# A SPECIAL INITIATIVE FOR OUR NATION'S CAPITAL'S CHARTER SCHOOLS



## THE FATHER OF OUR COUNTRY AND THE WOMEN WHO PRESERVED IT LESSONS ON CIVILITY AND CHARACTER

The third in our series of Why America? for DC's students focused on the presidency, and the enormous role of women in fighting for equality, not only for themselves, but for enslaved peoples.

To that end, the nearly 600 students of 12 of DC's finest schools of choice were treated to entertaining, informative and creative content surrounding the earliest days of Washington and the city that is named for him.

Held at the venerable Shakespeare Theater Company's Sidney Harman Hall, the students were entertained by the U.S. Army Brass Quintet which also played the National

Anthem after presentation of the colors by the Army Color Guard, an event that we soon realized



was not common for our students. They whispered "what is that?" and "what are we supposed to do?" to their classmates and teachers. And that is indeed the goal of this effort - to introduce students to

lessons, milestones and landmarks about our history and its practices that may not always be available to them or part of their traditional learning.

As Miss America led the audience in *God Bless America*, the students stood attentively and some sang. When they sat, the program was in full swing.

### A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS:

- Bridges PCS
- Center City PCS Capitol Hill
- Center City PCS Shaw
- Children's Guild PCS
- Cornerstone PCS
- DC Bilingual PCS
- Friendship Chamberlain
- Friendship Woodridge
- Richard Wright PCS
- Roots PCS
- St. Francis Xavier
- Washington Latin
- Washington School for Girls

### SPECIAL THANKS TO:

- Shakespeare Theatre Co.
- Lawrence Staten
- USMC Color Guard
- US Army Brass Quintet
- Miss America Foundation and Miss DC
- Mount Vernon interpreters
- Uncle Chips for great food!
- Metropolitan Shuttle



## KEEP THOSE CARDS AND LETTERS COMING

*“Our students loved the program! We are so thankful for the opportunity!*

*We would love to be a part of the program in April.”*

Ms. Evans,  
Bridges PCS

*“THANK YOU so much..."*

*Both the students and the teachers came back so excited about the day!... the actors made them feel like they had really met the historical figures... The bus was perfectly organized, the trip was so educational, the food was great... really, we feel so blessed.”*

Mr. Max,  
Cornerstone Schools of Washington, DC

*“Just wanted to let you know how much I enjoyed Tuesday morning at The Shakespeare Theater. What a nice program, really enjoyed interacting with the students. Bonus, getting to meet Miss America & Miss District of Columbia, two intelligent and beautiful crowned women. Thanks for all the work and coordination you put into it.”*

Fifer Don Francisco

## MODERATOR AND HOST LAWRENCE STATEN, HEAD OF THE HISTORY DEPARTMENT AT WASHINGTON LATIN CHARTER SCHOOL, WELCOMED THE STUDENTS WITH A FUN RAP VIDEO ABOUT WASHINGTON AND LINCOLN



*“As you saw in the video, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln are the reason we celebrate Presidents Day, which was last week. But today, we’re going to learn more about why George Washington is called the Father of Our Country. We’re also here to learn about how women helped make sure we had many more presidents, and worked to preserve our history and strengthen our country. Why are we here to learn about George Washington?”*

*“How many of you know that the presidency was designed specifically for this one man? It was designed for him because the Continental Congress believed the president had to be strong in character - the kind of character Washington had. The first Congress was meeting to discuss how to create this country, and they debated the Executive Branch. Some didn’t think we needed a president. Others insisted we could not be ruled by a king but needed someone who worked equally with other branches. This was just the beginning of the story of America. Why America? Because they sought freedom. But our story, this story, was just beginning to unfold. There was much more to do than create a presidency. That’s why we are here. Not only was this just the beginning...but the story continues...and you need to be a big part of it as you grow up....”*

## THERE WERE MANY WHO BELIEVED THAT WASHINGTON’S LEADERSHIP COULD HELP SOLVE MANY PROBLEMS THAT THE YOUNG NATION HAD AT THE TIME

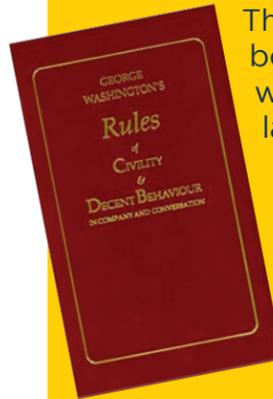
Phillis Wheatley, a young enslaved woman, prayed that George Washington would become the leader that would make all injustices go away. She was well-educated and her owners knew she was smart, and gave her a lot of books to read.



She became the first published African American poet which is why we can be here more than 200 years later and know her

story. Phillis agreed with the Continental Congress that Washington was the man to lead the nation so that all could eventually be free. Her message in poetry to George Washington was about being a courageous leader - and it was shared with the students via video.

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[edreform.com/WhyAmerica](https://edreform.com/WhyAmerica)  
to see Resources and Videos**



The theme of civility was echoed in the sharing of George Washington’s little red book, “The Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation” which was also given to every teacher in attendance as they left. The students laughed as Mr. Staten read some of the humorous, but often still relevant rules:

**4<sup>TH</sup>** In the Presence of Others  
Sing not to yourself with a humming Noise, nor Drum with your Fingers or Feet.

**7<sup>TH</sup>** Put not off your Cloths in the presence of Others, nor go out your Chamber half Drest.

**56<sup>TH</sup>** Associate yourself with Men of good Quality if you Esteem your own Reputation; for ‘tis better to be alone than in bad Company.

**90<sup>TH</sup>** Being Set at meat Scratch not neither Spit Cough or blow your Nose except there’s a Necessity for it.

## SOME OF THOSE CLOSEST TO WASHINGTON JOINED US FOR INTERACTIVE AND ENTERTAINING HISTORY TOLD IN FIRST PERSON BY CHARACTER INTERPRETERS

Dr. James Craik, George Washington’s personal physician and friend since the French and Indian War, introduced students to the 18th century through an interactive demonstration of manners and etiquette of the time. He spoke about Washington’s character and leadership as a soldier, colonel, and general. He introduced the students to the curtsy and the bow.



His wife, Martha Washington, spoke about Washington’s life as a farmer, statesman, and family man; the contributions of women during this time; and the difficulties of being alone for long periods during the Revolution.

Mt. Vernon’s resident Fifer, Don Francisco, played fifes, flutes, and drums to demonstrate their different sounds. Students joined to try marching and attempt some 18th century dance steps.

Caroline Branham, an enslaved house maid at Mt. Vernon, described the origins of many songs of the enslaved community. She demonstrated how song was a tool for those in bondage to express their faith, carry out their work, and lament their pain. The students had a chance to hear her sing and answer her call. These were the same songs they would have heard on the farm. The actress playing Caroline, Miss Brenda Parker, took back her persona to help students understand enslavement more personally.



## AS WE CONTINUED EXPLORING GREAT WOMEN, WE INTRODUCED TWO WHOSE LEADERSHIP AND CHARACTER INSPIRE US ALL

Miss America 2019 Nia Franklin and Allision Farris, Miss DC 2018, stressed to the students the importance that leadership, character, and service to country should have in their lives.

The day ended with the promised box lunches and CER-sponsored bus rides back to their schools. We hope that their heads were full of history and at least part of the answer to the question, Why America?

## HOW IT WORKS

We create themes around historic venues. We equip District charter schools with logistical support and other incentives to help students participate in “Why America?”

## TEACHER RESOURCES

CER makes available unique resources to help you prepare your class. If you are signed up these will automatically be sent to you. If not, please write [events@edreform.com](mailto:events@edreform.com)

## HOW TO MAKE SURE YOU ARE INVOLVED

If you want to have a school - yours or some other charter - participate or you'd like to help us broaden the reach of “Why America?” write us at [events@edreform.com](mailto:events@edreform.com) or call 202-750-0016

# WHY “WHY AMERICA?”

The city of Washington is rich in history, and landmarks abound. One can live a lifetime in DC and never see or hear of the events in history that make it our nation’s capital, and which can instill a newfound sense of activism.

Why America? was started by the Center for Education Reform (CER), a group whose 25-year history began in Washington, DC, and was instrumental in bringing about the charter school movement here and nationwide. CER collaborated with FOCUS DC to make experiential learning come alive for students in charter schools, as well as, other school sectors when they can join us. Why charters? Because you have the flexibility to accommodate new and different learning opportunities and are not stifled by as much bureaucracy as the traditional system.

We have identified places that students may have never gone, and found and developed content with experts and educators to make issues come alive for students. We cannot and will not claim to know how to teach your charter school students - that is not our expertise. But we can help expand their horizons, drive interest and engagement and help you help them become the revolutionaries of the future the way our founders were the revolutionaries of the past.

And so this brief report, our second, is designed to introduce or reintroduce you to what we are doing, what we have done, and what we hope to achieve. While we may only be in one city now, we are hopeful that asking “Why America?” in every city will drive more knowledge, more understanding, and more appreciation of civil society and American history, instilling in young people an understanding of what it means to be an American. **Our hope is that in some small way we help students know and love America - and work to make it the country they need and want!**

## DON'T MISS APR 29 WHY AMERICA? THE PRESIDENT'S NEIGHBORHOOD

in partnership with the White House Historical Association.

Join us as we rediscover the wonders of the President's Neighborhood, which is home for many significant statues, memorials, and structures which give context to our lives today. This is not just about Presidents, but other historic figures as well, such as the irreplaceable Frenchman, the Marquis de Lafayette, General Comte de Rochambeau, and Pierre Charles L'Enfant.

Here's what you can anticipate: Starting at the historic Willard Hotel we will make our way over

to the historic Decatur House to begin our learning journey.

Smaller groups will tour Lafayette Park stopping and learning about the statues, the buildings, and visiting St. John's church.

We will tour the White House Historical Association, which sits atop former slave quarters, a painful but necessary visit for all of us.

We end back at the Willard to grab our lunches and students will get to go and see where Lincoln had his first meeting about slavery.

In case of rain, we will take our program indoors.

We promise a fun and fascinating day exploring the neighborhood - the President's Neighborhood. We'd love for your school to be part of this special day. That's easy to do - just contact us at: [events@edreform.com](mailto:events@edreform.com)

Our final event, to be held in early June - Why America? Memorial Day and The Flag - will be announced in two weeks. To get on our list send your name to [events@edreform.com](mailto:events@edreform.com)



CER'S mission is to expand educational opportunities that lead to improved economic outcomes for all Americans, particularly our youth, ensuring that the conditions are ripe for innovation, freedom and flexibility throughout U.S. education.

For more information about CER, please contact [cer@edreform.com](mailto:cer@edreform.com).

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