

# Colonial Williamsburg

The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation  
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## Colonial Williamsburg Offers Free Admission June 19 and Welcomes Renowned Artists Nikki Giovanni, Sheila Arnold, and Darryl Reeves for Juneteenth Programming



From L to R: Ken Schwarz, Darryl Reeves, Karina Roca, Nikki Giovanni, and Sheila Arnold. Images courtesy of The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Download high-resolution images [here](#)

WILLIAMSBURG, Va. (May 21, 2024) – The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation is proud to announce its dynamic lineup of [Juneteenth programming](#) featuring acclaimed poets, storytellers and artisans who will illuminate the significance of this national holiday. The events will take place June 16-19 at various locations throughout Colonial Williamsburg's Historic Area and Art Museums. Visitors can pre-register for complimentary admission on June 19 in honor of Juneteenth at [colonialwilliamsburg.org/tickets/juneteenth](http://colonialwilliamsburg.org/tickets/juneteenth).

At the heart of the programming are three distinguished artists: Nikki Giovanni, Darryl Reeves and Sheila Arnold. Each brings a unique perspective and talent to captivate audiences and deepen their understanding of Juneteenth.

"We are honored to host such esteemed artists who will offer visitors a rich and immersive Juneteenth experience," said Cliff Fleet, Foundation president and CEO. "This programming not only commemorates an important moment in American history but also celebrates the resilience and triumph of the human spirit."

**Nikki Giovanni**, world-renowned poet, activist and educator, will deliver the keynote address at the [Juneteenth Sunrise Service](#) on Sunday, June 16, at 6 a.m. under the iconic Compton Oak in the center of the Historic Area. Known for her powerful words and unwavering commitment to social justice, Giovanni's presence will inspire and empower attendees as they reflect on the significance of Juneteenth.

Master Blacksmith **Darryl Reeves**, the most celebrated architectural blacksmith in the Gulf South, will return to the Public Armoury on June 18 and 19 to demonstrate the traditions of New Orleans' 18th- and 19th-century African American ironworkers. Reeves and his apprentice, Karina Roca, will work with Colonial Williamsburg Master Blacksmith, Ken Schwarz, to replicate an iron grave marker forged by enslaved Louisiana blacksmith Solomon Williams. Williams made several iron grave markers for family members in the 19th-century, one of which is [on display at the Smithsonian Museum of African American History](#). On June 17 at 1 p.m. in the Hennage Auditorium in the Art Museums of Colonial Williamsburg, Reeves and Roca will join Jonn Hankins, head of the New Orleans Master Crafts Guild, for a [panel discussion](#) on the challenges and opportunities in the field of Historic Preservation and the restoration trades.

Adding to the rich tapestry of Juneteenth programming, **Sheila Arnold**, an award-winning storyteller and historical interpreter, will lead engaging storytelling and discussion sessions including [Portraying the Ancestors](#) on June 18 and [Permission to Be Free: A Juneteenth Story](#) on June 19, both of which will take place at 1 p.m. in the Hennage Auditorium. Through her insight into the complexity of portraying enslaved women in historical narratives and her captivating performances, Arnold invites audiences to explore the intersection of art and history.

In addition to these featured artists, Colonial Williamsburg's Juneteenth programming will include a variety of interactive workshops, exhibitions and community gatherings. From educational seminars to live performances, there will be something for everyone to enjoy and learn from. Visit [colonialwilliamsburg.org/juneteenth](https://colonialwilliamsburg.org/juneteenth) for a full listing of Juneteenth activities. For additional information about parking and complimentary bus service visit [colonialwilliamsburg.org/visit/parking/](https://colonialwilliamsburg.org/visit/parking/).

Colonial Williamsburg's programming will coincide with other Juneteenth activities across the region coordinated by the Juneteenth Community Consortium, an association of organizations throughout Greater Williamsburg founded in early 2022 with a goal to educate, commemorate and celebrate Juneteenth. Visit [juneteenthcc.org/events](https://juneteenthcc.org/events) for a full list of programming taking place throughout the region June 15-19.

## **History of Juneteenth**

Juneteenth marks the anniversary of June 19, 1865 when thousands of enslaved people received the news that they were emancipated after Union forces arrived in Galveston, Texas, to enact President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation signed more than two years earlier. On June 17, 2021, President Joe Biden signed legislation making Juneteenth a federal holiday.

As Juneteenth continues to gain recognition across the nation, Colonial Williamsburg invites visitors to commemorate those lost to slavery, examine the struggle faced by Black Americans today and continue our unfinished work to create a more perfect union.

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***About The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation***

*The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation preserves, restores and operates Virginia's 18th-century capital of Williamsburg. Innovative and interactive experiences highlight the relevance of the American Revolution to contemporary life and the importance of an informed, active citizenry. The Colonial Williamsburg experience includes more than 600 restored or reconstructed original buildings, renowned museums of decorative arts and folk art, extensive educational outreach programs for students and teachers and 18th-century inspired culinary options from historic taverns situated along historic Duke of Gloucester Street. Colonial Williamsburg Resorts complement the experience, offering guests five unique hotel properties including the iconic Forbes Travel Guide Five-Star, AAA Five Diamond Williamsburg Inn, newly renovated Williamsburg Lodge-Autograph Collection, Williamsburg Woodlands Hotel and Suites, the Griffin Hotel, and authentic 18th-century Colonial Houses. The resort offers a range of events and amenities including four historic taverns, 15 food and beverage outlets providing exquisite culinary experiences from casual to elegant dining, the Golden Horseshoe Golf Club featuring 36 holes designed by Robert Trent Jones Sr. and his son Rees Jones, a world-class full-service spa and fitness center, pools, meeting and flexible event spaces, and scenic gardens providing the perfect venue for weddings and special events. Merchants Square, built alongside the Historic Area in 1935 as one of the first planned shopping districts in the United States, features more than 40 specialty boutiques with products ranging from apparel to fine jewelry, art, specialty foods and gifts. Philanthropic support and revenue from admissions, products and hospitality operations sustain Colonial Williamsburg's educational programs and preservation initiatives.*

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