



DC Public Library



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For further information, contact:
Gabby O'Brien
Gobrien@burness.com

A REFUTATION: Live Dramatic Readings and Open Public Discussions in Washington, DC, Exploring Health Inequities Today and in 1793

Theater of War Productions will present a timely performance of 18th century texts with actors Chad Coleman, Brian F. O'Byrne, Michael Potts, and Peter Marks.

*****Registration Links to Live Performances Below*****

February 3, 2025 — Dramatic readings by acclaimed actors from conflicting historical accounts of Philadelphia's 1793 yellow fever epidemic will spark a guided audience discussion on America's current health inequities, in *A REFUTATION*, with two performances in February in Washington, DC.

Theater of War Productions' [Bryan Doerries](#) directs, adapts, and facilitates *A REFUTATION*, with funding support from [The Greenwall Foundation](#) as part of its 75th anniversary celebration. Two DC institutions – [DC Public Library](#) and [Ebenezer United Methodist Church-Capitol Hill](#) are providing performance spaces and serving as community partners for this theatrical event.

The primary text for the readings comes from a pamphlet by Absalom Jones and Richard Allen, two prominent Black religious and civic leaders in Philadelphia, describing the Black community's suffering and loss during the epidemic. It was written to rebut a popular, short history of the epidemic written by Irish American publisher Matthew Carey that perpetuated racist tropes and falsely asserted that Black nurses and other caregivers swindled and abused their white patients. Actors for *A REFUTATION* include [Chad Coleman](#) (*The Walking Dead*, *The Wire*), [Brian F. O'Byrne](#) (*Conclave*, *Million Dollar Baby*), [Michael Potts](#) (*The Wire*, *The Piano Lesson*), and [Peter Marks](#) (former chief theater critic for *The Washington Post*).

By presenting interwoven selections from both pamphlets as a dramatic oratorical debate featuring acclaimed actors, *A REFUTATION* will catalyze powerful guided audience discussions about health inequities in America framed by the perspectives of current nurses, EMTs and paramedics, health aides, frontline workers, and first responders with lived experience.

“We are thrilled to help bring *A REFUTATION* to live audiences in our nation’s capital and around the world via Zoom,” said [Michelle Groman](#), JD, President & CEO of The Greenwall Foundation. “This work serves as an important reminder that harmful and persistent health disparities in modern America have deep roots, dating back hundreds of years. We hope that it will inspire a thoughtful discussion among many voices on how we can advance more equitable – and therefore more ethical – health care in the U.S. today.”

“Theater of War Productions is proud to be premiering *A REFUTATION* in Washington, DC, with the generous support of The Greenwall Foundation,” said Bryan Doerries, Artistic Director of Theater of War Productions. “It is a special privilege to partner with Ebenezer United Methodist Church and the DC Public Library to present these powerful texts from the late 18th century — including the first federally copyrighted work by African American authors — as a catalyst for community-driven discussions about health inequities in America today.”

"Stories like this remind us why libraries preserve voices that history tries to silence," said Richard Reyes-Gavilan, Executive Director of DC Public Library. "When Black people were slandered in the press, they refused to let that be the final word and published the truth. The story of Absalom Jones and Richard Allen shows us that the fight for truth and recognition is timeless. Their courage in confronting misinformation remains deeply relevant, offering us a chance to reflect on how the past speaks to the challenges of misinformation today."

“Ebenezer United Methodist Church is thrilled to collaborate with Theater of War Productions on this compelling performance of *A REFUTATION*,” said Reverend Bresean A. Jenkins, Ebenezer United Methodist Church. “Throughout history, theater has served as a profound medium to educate, provoke thought, and inspire societal change. For over 134 years, Ebenezer United Methodist has stood at the forefront of social justice, advocating tirelessly within the public square. We are honored to support this piece of artistic brilliance and to contribute to a legacy of enlightenment and transformation.”

A REFUTATION will be presented two times in Washington, DC:

February 21, 2025

7:00 pm – 9:30 pm EST

Ebenezer United Methodist Church – Capitol Hill

400 D Street SE

arefutationebenezer.eventbrite.com

February 22, 2025
2:00 pm – 4:30 pm EST
Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library
901 G Street NW
arefutationdcpl.eventbrite.com

Registration is required to attend in person or on Zoom.

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The [District of Columbia Public Library](#) is a dynamic source of information, programs, books and other library materials and services that improve the quality of life for District residents of all ages that, when combined with expert staff, helps build a thriving city. The Library provides environments that invite reading, community conversation, creative inspiration and exploration, lectures, films, computer access and use, workforce and economic development, storytimes for children, and much more. DC Public Library includes the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Library and 25 neighborhood libraries and also provides services in nontraditional settings outside of the library buildings. DC Public Library enriches and nourishes the lives and minds of all District residents, provides them with the services and tools needed to transform lives, and builds and supports community throughout the District of Columbia.

Established in 1838, [Ebenezer United Methodist Church](#) is the oldest Black congregation on Capitol Hill. On April 29, 1975, Ebenezer was designated a Historical Landmark. There have been several churches organized from Ebenezer and a number of sons and daughters have become ministers of the gospel. The church continues to be a beacon of light in their community of faith.

[The Greenwall Foundation](#) seeks to make bioethics integral to decisions in health care, policy, and research. It awards approximately \$3-4 million annually in support of its mission to expand bioethics knowledge to improve clinical, biomedical, and public health decision-making, policy, and practice. The Foundation's work is guided by two strategic priorities: first, shaping and supporting a broad, inclusive bioethics, and second, increasing bioethics' impact on policymaking. To learn more about the Foundation, visit greenwall.org.

[Theater of War Productions](#) works with leading film, theater, and television actors to present dramatic readings of seminal texts—from classical Greek tragedies to sermons, books, speeches, long-form journalism, and modern works of poetry—to provide a framework for engaging communities in powerful, guided discussions about critical subjects. The company uses a combination of live theater and guided dialogue to help diverse communities address pressing public health and social issues, helping break down stigmas and foster empathy,

compassion, and a deeper understanding of complex topics. For more info, visit:
theaterofwar.com.