



REDEFINING CLASSICS

ALL STORIES BELONG HERE

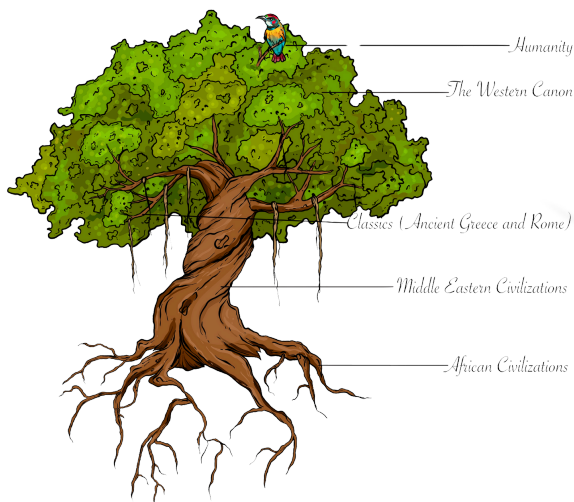
Saturday, May 24, 2025

10 am-6 pm

Hosted by the College of Arts and Sciences of Catholic University

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The Sankofa Tree



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OUR MISSION

Our Mission is simple: to celebrate the unity amidst diversity within the classical tradition, which transcends all earth-made divisions and leads us inexorably closer to truth. To bring together peoples of all races, cultures, languages, identities, and backgrounds. To gather around the fire of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty, in both earnest conversation and community. We aim to strive toward something greater, that which uniquely attracts each of us to the classics, and to become greater for it. We stand against the false narrative that says this tradition isn't for every human being. The purpose of this event is to show how we all can find inspiration in the classical tradition. We have an exciting variety of speakers and our renown musical guest, Ruth Naomi Floyd, who each share a passion for unity and the joy of learning found in the classical tradition. We humbly invite you to partake in this community and to enjoy our Gathering.

OUR STORY

Redefining Classics stands as a unifying celebration for all who cherish the classics and the classical tradition. It transcends the confines of academia, extending its embrace to educators, homeschooling parents, students, and enthusiasts invested in the Great Conversation.

Here, Classicists and Liberal Arts scholars converge, recognizing that while their fields may differ, classics forms the very foundation of the liberal arts. No longer is this gathering exclusive or financially inaccessible; it opens its doors wide to all who perceive the value in the classical tradition, inviting them to share, connect, affirm, and nurture a community rooted in a tradition that has influenced humanity across continents since time immemorial.

Under the theme “All of Our Stories,” this inaugural event fosters a deepened understanding of one another by encouraging the sharing of personal journeys into classics and the classical tradition, and how these have served as wellsprings of inspiration. Main speakers will lead the charge, igniting conversations in smaller, more intimate settings where attendees can freely exchange their narratives. It is our sincerest hope, that you enjoy the Gathering, and that it may draw you nearer to Goodness, Truth, and Beauty.

In Light,

The Redefining Classics Team

GATHERING SCHEDULE

Introduction	10:00-10:10
1 st Conversation	10:15-11:10 am
2nd Conversation	11:15-12:10 pm
3rd Conversation	12:15-1:10 pm
Lunch or Reception for 12 Black Classicists (CUA Classics Dept)	1:15-2:15 pm
4th Conversation	2:15-3:10 pm
5th Conversation	3:15-4:10 pm
Dinner	4:15-6:00 pm

Each room is named after a place that intersects with the Classical Tradition.

GATHERING SCHEDULE

Maloney 204 Conversations about Classics (ROME)

Break Out Speakers:

- 10:15-11:10 Conversation 1: Leslie Kay
- 11:15-12:10 Conversation 2: Michele Valerie Ronnick
- 12:15-1:10 Conversation 3: Shana O'Connell
- 1:15-2:15 or 12 Black Classicists Reception (CUA Classics Dept)
- 2:15-3:10 Conversation 4: Junius Johnson
- 3:15-4:10 Conversation 5: Carolivia Herron

Maloney 207- Conversations about Classical Education (GREECE)

Break Out Speakers:

- 10:15-11:10 Conversation 1: Diana Smith
- 11:15-12:10 Conversation 2: Toyin Atolagbe
- 12:15--1:10 Conversation 3: Jeremy Mann
- 1:15--2:15 LUNCH or 12 Black Classicists Reception (CUA Classics Dept)
- 2:15-3:10 Conversation 4: Michael Atkins
- 3:15-4:10- Conversation 5: Paul Henderson

Maloney 316- Conversations about Humanities/Liberal Arts (EGYPT)

Break Out Speakers:

- 10:15-11:10 Conversation 1: Alexandra Hudson
- 11:15-12:10 Conversation 2: John Mark N. Reynolds
- 12:15--1:10 Conversation 3: Jessica Hooten Wilson
- 1:15--2:15 LUNCH or 12 Black Classicists Reception (CUA Classics Dept)
- 2:15-3:10 Conversation 4: Bobby Bracks
- 3:15-4:10 Conversation 5: Claudia MacMillan

Maloney 326-Miscellaneous Classical Conversations (PERSIA)

Break Out Speakers:

- 10:15-11:10 Conversation 1: Joelle Hodge
- 11:15-12:10 Conversation 2: Erica Robles-Anderson
- 12:15--1:10 Conversation 3: Jovia Godfrey
- 1:15--2:15 LUNCH or 12 Black Classicists Reception (CUA Classics Dept)
- 2:15-3:10 Conversation 4: Carrie Eben
- 3:15-4:10 Conversation 5: Wesley Walker

Maloney Auditorium (ETHIOPIA)

- 10:15-11:10 Conversation 1: Caroline Stark
- 11:15-12:10 Conversation 2: James LaGrande
- 12:15--1:10 Conversation 3: Pier Penic
- 1:15--2:15 LUNCH or 12 Black Classicists Reception (CUA Classics Dept)
- 2:15-3:10 Conversation 4: Onyema Nweze
- 3:15-4:10 Conversation 5: Katie Vizenor

*Dinner is from 4:15-6:00 pm in the atrium of Maloney Hall

THE PLATO PASSPORT

You will have 5 conversations today. Please follow the order on your passport below as you go to each room. Each room is named after a place that has intersected with the classical tradition.

10:15-11:10-Egypt

11:15-12:10-Rome

12:15-1:10-Greece

1:15-2:15 Lunch

2:15-3:10-Ethiopia

3:15-4:10-Persia



OUR SPEAKERS

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Toyin Atolagbe

Toyin Atolagbe (Ed.D. Grand Canyon University; M.Ed. University of Lethbridge; B. A. English University of Ilorin) is the Executive Director of Great Hearts Christos, a private Christian classical school with two campuses in Gilbert and Phoenix. She previously served as Headmaster of Great Hearts Archway Lincoln campus and was part of the founding faculty of Great Hearts Archway Arete and Archway Trivium. Also, she is the Co-founder of Agape International School, a private Christian classical school providing free education to an underserved community in Ilorin, Nigeria. She has been in the educational field for over twenty years as a teacher, teacher trainer, administrator, and co-founder.



Shana O'Connell

Dr. Shana O'Connell is a Master Instructor in the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies at Howard University. Her work on Roman wall painting in the Eastern Mediterranean (Israel; Turkey) has been supported by the Loeb Classical Library of Harvard University, W. F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research in Jerusalem, and the International Catacomb Society. At Howard she teaches Classical Art, Classical Mythology, and has taught Art Appreciation and Slavery in the Ancient World. Additionally, Dr. O'Connell is an artist who is currently captivated by needlework and lives in Washington, DC.

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Erica Robles Anderson

Erica Robles Anderson is a cultural historian. Her work centers on tradition, narrative, and innovation. Erica is currently completing a three-book project on transformations in households, schools, and religious organizations from the postwar era to the present. Classical education plays a remarkable role in this history, coordinating across a diverse network of actors and institutions at several scales. Erica is an Associate Professor of Media, Culture, and Communication at New York University. She holds a Ph.D. in Communication and a B.S. in Symbolic Systems, both from Stanford University. While there, she participated in a residential Great Books program known as “Structured Liberal Education.” She is currently a fellow at the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS), and the editor-in-chief of the award-winning journal, Public Culture.

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Junius Johnson

Junius Johnson is a writer, teacher, speaker, independent scholar, and musician. His work focuses on beauty, imagination, and wonder, and how these are at play in the Christian and Classical intellectual traditions. He is the executive director of Junius Johnson Academics, through which he offers innovative classes for both children and adults that aim to ignite student hearts with wonder and intellectual rigor. An avid devotee of story, he is especially drawn to fantasy, science fiction, and young adult fiction. He performs professionally on the french horn and electric bass. He holds a BA from Oral Roberts University (English Lit), an MAR from Yale Divinity School (Historical Theology), and an MA, two MPhils, and a PhD (Philosophical Theology) from Yale University. He is the author of 5 books, including *The Father of Lights: A Theology of Beauty*, and *On Teaching Fairy Stories*. An engaging speaker and teacher, he is a frequent guest contributor to blogs and podcasts on faith and culture. He is co-host of *The Classical Mind* podcast and is a member of *The Cultivating Project*.

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Michele Valerie Ronnick

Michele Valerie Ronnick is a Distinguished Service Professor in the Department of Classical and Modern Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at Wayne State University in Detroit. Her scholarship includes studies of Greek and Latin from ancient to modern times including their influence on a wide range of people including John Milton, Gianni Versace, Tom Stoppard, Audre Lorde, Emma Amos, David Lynch, and Edgar A. Poe. Her pioneering investigations into the reception and impact of classical studies upon people of African descent began in the early 1990s has opened up a new field of scholarship known today as Black Classicism, a.k.a. *Classica Africana*.

Her photo installation on Black Classicists developed with the support of the James Loeb Classical Library Foundation at Harvard University has been since its first exhibit at the Detroit Public Library in September 2003 displayed at nearly 80 venues. Her article, "William Sanders Scarborough: The First African American Member of the Modern Language Association," *Publications of the Modern Language Association*, Special Millennial Edition issued in 2000, stimulated the Modern Language Association to create the William Sanders Scarborough Book Prize which has been given annually since 2001. In 2020 the American School for Classical Studies in Athens established the "William Sanders Scarborough Fellowship" for study in Greece.

Along the way, she has won a number of awards. She is particularly proud to have received a proclamation from her hometown, Sarasota, Florida, declaring March 12, 2005 'Michele Valerie Ronnick Day' in honor of her work on William Scarborough and in 2006 the key to the city of Macon, Georgia, presented by Mayor C. Jack Ellis for her book, *The Autobiography of William Sanders Scarborough: An American Journey from Slavery to Scholarship* with a foreword by Henry Louis Gates, Jr.

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Diana Smith

Dr. Diana Smith served as the Principal and academic leader at Washington Latin for 15 years beginning in 2008, following several decades' experience teaching and leading in both public and private schools. With a Ph.D. in English from the University of Virginia and a B.A. in Classics from Princeton University (Phi Beta Kappa), Dr. Smith returns to Washington Latin as the Chief of Classical Education, working with campus academic leaders to refine and sustain the classical curriculum and teaching model. Dr. Smith led the organization's effort to define The Latin Way, which seeks to explain the "lived reality" of our schools' culture. She also teaches at both the 2nd Street and Cooper campus, reflecting her commitment to staying close to the classroom and her love of teaching.

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John Mark Reynolds

Dr. John Mark Reynolds is the President of The Saint Constantine School and a member of the Board of Directors of Orthodox Christian School Association (OCSA). He is also a faculty member at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, a Fellow of the Center For Science and Culture at The Discovery Institute, and the former provost of Houston Christian University. He was the founder and director of the Torrey Honors College, the Socratic, great books-centered honors program at Biola University. He received his Ph.D. in Philosophy from the University of Rochester, where he wrote his dissertation analyzing cosmology and psychology in Plato's *Timaeus*. Dr. Reynolds is the author of numerous books, including *When Athens Met Jerusalem: an Introduction to Classical and Christian Thought* and is the editor of *The Great Books Reader*. He is a frequent blogger and lecturer on a wide range of topics including ancient philosophy, classical and home education, politics, faith, and virtue.

John Mark attends St. George Orthodox Church in Houston, Texas. An avid technophile, the lights, thermostat, speakers, and computers in his house can all be controlled by his phone and voice control, to both cool and disastrous effect. He loves Disneyland, Star Trek, and the Green Bay Packers. John Mark and his wife Hope have four adult children: L.D., Mary Kate, Ian and Jane.

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Paul A. Henderson

Paul A. Henderson is a school administrator, former sports chaplain, author, and speaker.

He served as Dean of Students at Elijah House Academy in Richmond, VA, and he is currently serving as Dean of Students at Cornerstone Schools of Detroit to help transition the schools to the classical tradition. His first book, *Slave No More: Conquering the Master Within*, was released in 2022, and he has been featured as a guest writer for various publications. Paul holds a B.S. in History and M.A.T. from Virginia Commonwealth University.

Paul is married to Kierra, and they have four sons, PJ, Joey, David, and Noah.

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Carolivia Herron

Carolivia Herron is an African American Jewish author and educator living in Washington, DC. She is a Lecturer and Creative Writer in the English Department at Howard University, and an emeritus Distinguished Visiting Scholar of Project Humanities at Arizona State University. At Howard University she teaches the courses Humanities and Blacks in Antiquity. Carolivia's field of specialization is epic poetry of Africa, Europe and the Americas. She received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature and Literary Theory from the University of Pennsylvania, and has held professorial appointments at Harvard University, Mount Holyoke College, California State University, Chico, and the College of William and Mary. Dr. Herron's first novel, *Thereafter Johnnie* (Random House 1991) is being reissued as a classic by McNally Editions and two children's books, *Kindergarten Blues* and *Grilled Cheese* are in press with Picnic Heist Publications. Her earlier publications include *Peacesong DC*, *Nappy Hair*, *The Selected Works of Angelina Weld Grimké*, *Always An Olivia*, *Little Georgia and the Apples*, *Asenath and the Origin of Nappy Hair*. Carolivia has also written librettos for the operas and musical works: *Let Freedom Sing: The Story of Marian Anderson* (music composed Bruce Adolphe); *The Journey of Phillis Wheatley* (composer Nkeiru Okoye), *We are Free* in choral composition, *Reach out, Raise Hope*, *Change Society* (composer Bruce Adolphe, and *An Ocean Can Dry Into Silence* (composer Ellen Harrison).

In addition to her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Pennsylvania, Dr. Herron also holds a Master's Degree in Creative Writing, an MA in English Literature from Villanova U and a BA from Eastern University. She is an active member of her synagogue, Tifereth Israel and is the synagogue's liaison for Social Action programs in Africa. She is the president of North Washington Neighbors Inc., an organization that works for racial equality in housing and education. Carolivia is also the radio host of the show, "Epic City," on WOWN-LP Takoma Radio, 94.3 FM.

Dr. Herron is completing a play, *Pharsalia*: or, *For Crying Out Loud*, that is commissioned by TheaterJ of Washington, DC. The play dramatizes the stories of Herron's enslaved African American, Wampanoag, and Jewish ancestors at the Pharsalia Plantation in 1852 Virginia.

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Showing the beauty amidst diversity within the classical tradition

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Pier Penic

Pier Penic is a museum program curator, editor, education specialist, collections specialist, arts management, communications professional, creative consultant and experienced director with a demonstrated history of working in the education management industry of one of the world's leading museums dedicated to African American history and Africa's arts and culture. Pier Penic has had over twenty-four years of experience as an educator, reading specialist and program director for The Fairfax County Public Library in Virginia. She has worked as a professional development project manager with

The Library of Congress in their African and Middle Eastern Division. She is also the founder and director of Culture at Home, an academic and support group for African American homeschooling families and has worked as an education consultant for The National Park Service for several years. She has worked with and coordinated youth education programs in Creole languages, history, and visual art for The Haitian Embassy in Washington DC. and has worked with numerous authors, performance and visual artists throughout the United States, Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean. She has served as an art specialist and program director for students in Nigeria enrolled in CartoonAFRICA SDGs ActivismWritivism.

Pier has taught classes at the National Museum of African Art and other Smithsonian Museums in African literature, film, music, art history, visual art, mixed media, environmental science, math and creative writing. She has created and coordinated summer writing workshops for teens at four Smithsonian affiliated museums and several other museums and universities in the Washington DC area.. She has also served as a publication consultant for The Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum's Women's Environmental Leadership Project. She managed the Coca Cola funded project Gen Z Speaks: A Right to the City Youth Project which involved working with teens to curate the Smithsonian exhibit Gen Z Speaks: A Right to the City.

Pier Penic has served as the K-12 Education Specialist for The Smithsonian National Museum of African Art.

She received her BA in literature and communications from Pine Manor College in Chestnut Hill, MA and she did her graduate work in world literature at American University in Washington, DC.

She resides in Alexandria, VA with her family.

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Michael J. Adkins

Michael J. Adkins is Dean of Academics, Director of the Lower School, and faculty member of Saint Agnes School (PreK-12) in Saint Paul, Minnesota. He has taught English, History, Theology, and Latin in elementary, middle, and high school for over two decades, and he currently works on curriculum development and institutional advancement. An educational consultant, public speaker, and retreat leader, Adkins has expertise in curriculum development, school improvement, pedagogy, and classical liberal arts education. This fall he will begin teaching for Catholic International University's brand new Master's program in Catholic Liberal Arts education (formerly Catholic Distance University). He holds a Bachelor's Degree in Honors Classics from Gustavus Adolphus College, a Master's Degree in Catholic Studies from the University of St. Thomas, and he recently earned his Doctorate in Education and Educational Leadership from the University of Mary. Adkins composed his Master's Essay on Pope John XXIII's Apostolic Constitution, *Veterum Sapientia*, and the importance of the Latin language, and his dissertation was a mixed methods study on classical education which resulted in a 110-item, peer-reviewed inventory of the key principles and practices of classical education. He has published various articles on education and theology in several publications including *The Celator*, *The Numismatist*, and *The Bellarmine Forum*.

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Anika Prather (Host)

Dr. Anika T. Prather earned her B.A. from Howard University in elementary education. She also has earned several graduate degrees in education from New York University and Howard University. She has a Masters in liberal arts from St. John's College (Annapolis) and a PhD in English, Theatre and Literacy Education from the University of Maryland (College Park). Her research focus is on building literacy with African American students through engagement in the books of the Canon and self-published her book *Living in the Constellation of the Canon: The Lived Experiences of African American Students Reading Great Books Literature* recently.

Anika is also the co-author for *The Black Intellectual Tradition* (with Dr. Angel Parham). She has served as a teacher, supervisor for student teachers, director of education and Head of School. She taught in the classics department at Howard University as a full time lecturer and she also served as Director of High Quality Curriculum and Instruction at Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy (until February 2024). Currently she is a sought after speaker on the topic of the relevancy of classical studies to the Black community. In 2015, Anika founded The Living Water School. The Living Water School is a unique Christian school for independent learners, based on the educational philosophies of Classical Education and the Sudbury Model. In the spring of 2022, Anika and Damon opened The Living Water Center where activities for the Living Water School, book talks, and other events are hosted. The Living Water Center (located in Old Town Alexandria) also houses The Blacks in Classics Museum which is open to the public on Saturdays and Sundays for visitors to see original artwork featuring Blacks who have been inspired by classics and the works of the Canon.

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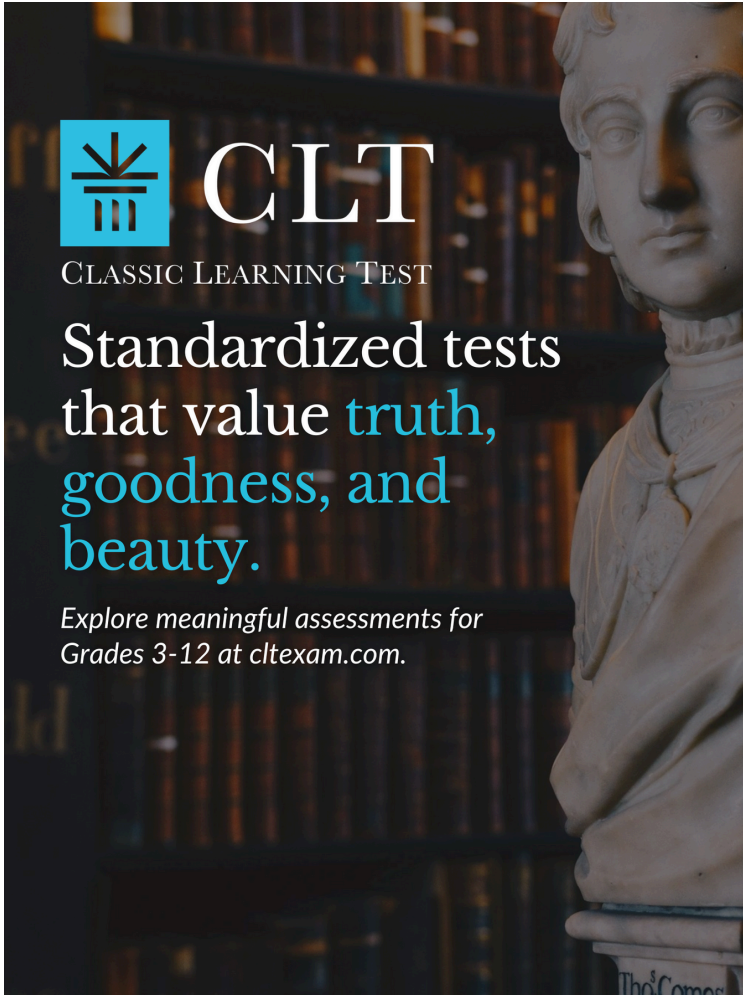
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OUR TEAM



ANIKA PRATHER, PH.D.

Founder and Host

Anika began this operation out of an earnest desire to host honest, open dialogue for people to engage with the riches found in the classics. She has made a life and career dedicated to uplifting diverse educational communities through the lens that the Great Conversation has always been for all people, everywhere. The inaugural Redefining Classics Gathering is reflective of her research, which focuses on building literacy with African American students through engagement in the books of the Canon. She has self-published her book *Living in the Constellation of the Canon: The Lived Experiences of African American Students Reading Great Books Literature* recently as well as co-authored *The Black Intellectual Tradition* with Dr. Angel Parham. She has served as a teacher, supervisor for student teachers, Director of Education, and Head of School. She taught in the classics department at Howard University as a full-time lecturer and also served as Director of High Quality Curriculum and Instruction at Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy (until February 2024). Currently, she is a sought-after speaker on the topic of the relevance of classical studies to the Black community.



INDIA LONG

Event Communications Coordinator

India Long graduated in May 2023 from Biola University with a B.A. in English Literature and a minor in Social Justice, Human Rights, and Conflict Transformation. She also graduated from their Torrey Honors College, a Great Books program where she studied, researched, and discussed over 100 classical, theological, and philosophical texts. Since then, India has worked administratively and pedagogically with classical schools, including Cornerstone of Washington D.C. and Anika's Living Water Schools. This has fostered her passion for classical learning and seeing the growth and prosperity of every student as they navigate the world's adversities through the lens of Goodness, Truth, and Beauty. She now directs programming for the Blacks in Classics Museum, will be managing Student Services and Administration at another classical school in D.C., and is passionate about making classical education accessible for all students from all backgrounds. She will begin graduate school in the fall at Howard University, where she will obtain her Master's in Social Work and then become a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker (LICSW).



DIANA SMITH

Development

Dr. Diana Smith served as the Principal and academic leader at Washington Latin for 15 years beginning in 2008, following several decades' experience teaching and leading in both public and private schools. With a Ph.D. in English from the University of Virginia and a B.A. in Classics from Princeton University (Phi Beta Kappa), Dr. Smith returns to Washington Latin as the Chief of Classical Education, working with campus academic leaders to refine and sustain the classical curriculum and teaching model. Dr. Smith led the organization's effort to define *The Latin Way*, which seeks to explain the "lived reality" of our schools' culture. She also teaches at both the 2nd Street and Cooper campus, reflecting her commitment to staying close to the classroom and her love of teaching.



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