

JESSICA M. HARRIS

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EDUCATION

- Doctor of Education, Out-of-School Learning – University of Pittsburgh, School of Education (Graduation Year 2026)
- Master's of Educational Psychology – University of Virginia, School of Education & Human Development
- Bachelor of Arts, Echols Interdisciplinary Degree (Youth and Social Innovation, Drama, Arts Administration) – University of Virginia, College of Arts and Sciences

EXPERIENCE

- **Arts and Community Research Program Manager – [The Equity Center](#) (2022-present)**
 - Supports the work of the Equity Center and the President's Council on UVA-Community Partnerships, with a particular focus on community safety and connection between university and Charlottesville.
 - Distills findings and generates reports, presentations, literature reviews, and professional learning community sessions. Coordinates weekly meetings and facilitates project management and logistics.
 - Continues to generate community-focused research reports and program evaluations with a focus on equity and justice and an eye toward community benefit.
 - Managed the [Wallace Foundation-funded research project](#) designed to support eighteen BIPOC arts organizations across the country as part of the Community Orientation Action Research Team.
 - Co-wrote and conducted Wallace-funded research that led to the research report: "[Organizational Well-Being of Black Arts Organizations in Virginia](#)." This report involved conducting focus groups with participants; holding interviews with executive leadership; coding transcripts; conducting document analysis; and compiling the final report and presentations.
 - Liaised with the Wallace Foundation, managing project deliverables and holding periodic meetings. Guided research foci and compiled external communications.
- **Founder, Artistic Director, Arts Educator – [Empowered Players](#) (2016-present)**
 - Runs 501(c)3 nonprofit youth theater program, Empowered Players. Provides free and accessible arts education to over 100 K-12 students a year in rural Virginia.
 - Conducts up to fourteen theater education classes and camps focused on socioemotional learning per semester and summer. Directs numerous musical theater performances; offers classes on a myriad of theatre topics; teaches students with and without disabilities through adaptive and integrated theatre programs; and partners with local schools to provide accessible classes.
 - Coordinates intern program that identifies, supervises, trains, and mentors music, arts, and education university students.
 - Facilitates nonprofit board meetings, applies for regional and national grants, collaborates with local arts organizations, and manages organizational finances. Oversees all technical aspects of the program including live theater performances as well as creation of film and videotaped productions and promotional efforts.

- **Manager of Community Partnerships – [UVA Department of Drama](#) (2022-2023)**
 - Facilitated community partnerships for community-embedded production of *Twelfth Night*. Engaged in thoughtful outreach and connection-building with community partners and nonprofits.
 - Coordinated with Arts Administration faculty to facilitate engagement and learning opportunities for Arts Administration students involved in *Twelfth Night* community-engaged process.
 - Generated learning for undergraduate students by fostering deeper understanding of the Charlottesville community and its partners.

- **Intern & Postgraduate Fellow – University and Community Action for Racial Equity and [Institute for Engagement and Negotiation](#) (2017-2022)**
 - Managed and edited UCARE weekly newsletter, connecting local residents with outreach and equity opportunities.
 - Serves as member of the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers Community Engagement Committee and continues to work with Charlottesville public educators and UVA students to develop and maintain K-12 educational modules for the Memorial.
 - Helped facilitate Charlottesville Area Racial Equity forums designed to help the community heal after August 11th and 12th, including artistic components and attendee engagement.

- **Interim Director & Ensemble Member – [UVA Acts](#), Center for Teaching Excellence (2019-2022)**
 - Utilized Theatre for Dialogue techniques and devised with the ensemble to create research-based performances that promote preventative practices and interventions for UVA faculty around equity in the classroom and workplace.
 - Directed performance units for faculty trainings, connecting with ensemble members on character development, technique, and blocking.
 - Worked closely with Artistic Director to generate scholarly research, craft performance material, and act in performances.

- **Senior Presidential Fellow – [Office of the President](#), University of Virginia (2020-2021)**
 - Performed a variety of tasks to support and promote various initiatives within the office, including identifying key stakeholders, conducting necessary research, writing talking points, and engaging with members of the University and greater Charlottesville community.
 - Supervised Research Assistant to run 'Dialogue Across Grounds' program, a dialogue series designed for over 100 students to connect with one another and offer perspectives for institutional change. Focused on educational and engagement opportunities for students through the program.
 - Organized and hosted two seasons of 'Arts on the Hill,' an initiative designed to connect University of Virginia artists and artmakers of all genres and support creativity through the COVID-19 pandemic. Collaborated with student and community artists culminating in weekly episodes; worked to identify artists; ensured a diversity of expression; and elevated the arts within the University community.

- **Intern and Assistant Editor – [UVA Office of the Vice Provost for Arts](#) (2017-2020)**
 - Managed social media, marketing, and outreach efforts with UVA Arts.
 - Ensured that students were aware of the possibilities for engagement that UVA Arts provides through weekly newsletters, editing of the Arts Magazine, promoting arts efforts, and more.

- Planned and managed UVA Arts events like Days on the Lawn and Arts Grounds Day, and accomplished day-to-day tasks – helping the arts thrive on UVA Grounds.
- **Intern and Teaching Assistant – [UVA Arts Administration](#) (2017-2019)**
 - Assisted with the programmatic growth of the UVA Arts Administration program by compiling weekly communications, promoting classes and increasing enrollment, and managing program logistics.
 - Restructured curriculum with faculty, engaged current students in events and programs, and served as course assistant for and panelist in two Arts Administration classes.
 - Advised students on thesis projects and managed and directed artist residencies including playwright Nick Drake and musician Wadada Leo Smith.
- **Arts Educator/Instructor – Piedmont Virginia Community College – Kids College (2017-2019)**
 - Created theater and writing curriculum for elementary, middle, and high school students over six classes in summer academy for three summers.
 - Taught courses to students in an engaging and informative manner, resulting in students’ original plays, improv-a-thons, and acting performances.

SELECTED THEATRE EXPERIENCE

- **Director, *King Hedley II*, Charlottesville Players Guild (2023)**
- **Director, *Abiyoyo: A Story-Song Musical*, Charlottesville Players Guild (2023)**
- **Director, *El Mito: The Myth of My Pain*, Purdue University (2023)**
- **Director, *Into the Woods* (Teen Summer Musical), Live Arts (2022)**
- **Associate Director & Associate Music Director, *Beastgirl*, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts (2022)**
- **Director, *The Niceties*, Fluvanna County Arts Council (2020)**
- **Associate Director, *In the Heights* (Teen Summer Musical), Live Arts (2020)**
- **Assistant Director, *Pride and Prejudice*, The Heritage Theater Festival (2019)**
- **Director and Writer, *I’m Game*, The University of Virginia New Works Festival (2019)**
- **Director and Writer, *Locked/Loaded*, The University of Virginia New Works Festival (2018)**
- **Director, *The Black Monologues*, The University of Virginia (2017)**
- **Assistant Director, *Jitney*, Jefferson School African American Heritage Center (2017)**
- **Director, *Dancing with Myself*, Four County Players (2017)**
- **Camp Instructor, Four County Players (2016-2018)**

AWARDS AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- TEDx Charlottesville Speaker, 2019
- Kishore Scholarship Recipient, 2019
- Miller Arts Scholar, 2017-2020
- Echols Scholar, 2016-2019

PUBLICATIONS

- Jones-Lewis, S.D., & Harris, J.M. (2023). Organizational Well-being of Black Arts Organizations in Virginia: Case Studies. Prepared for The Wallace Foundation by The Karsh Institute for the Redress of Inequity Through Community-Engaged Scholarship.
https://libraopen.lib.virginia.edu/public_view/k3569458x
- Harris, J. (2020). Supporting Students in Rural Regions in the Age of Distance Learning. *Arts Praxis Journal*. 7(2a). New York University. <https://sites.google.com/nyu.edu/artspraxis/2020/volume-7-issue-2a/harris-supporting-students-in-rural-regions>

PRESENTATIONS

- Black Arts Organizational Wellness Presentation. July 2024. Black Theatre Network Conference.
- Black Arts Unconference. December 2023. The Equity Center.
- "Tools for Descendant Engagement: A Rubric for Harnessing the Power of Co-Stewardship." March 2023. Universities Studying Slavery Conference. University of North Carolina.
- A Monumental Reckoning: Symposiums on Contested Symbols, Contested History, and Public Space. March 2021. Ohio State University.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS & BOARD MEMBERSHIPS

- President: Descendants of Enslaved Communities at UVA 501(c)3
- Board Member: Kindness Café + Play, Fluvanna County Arts Council, Monticello Young Advisors Council
- Former Vice Chair, Theater for Youth Division: Virginia Theatre Association
- Professional Membership: American Alliance for Theater and Education, Black Theatre Network, Educational Theater Association, Southern Roots