

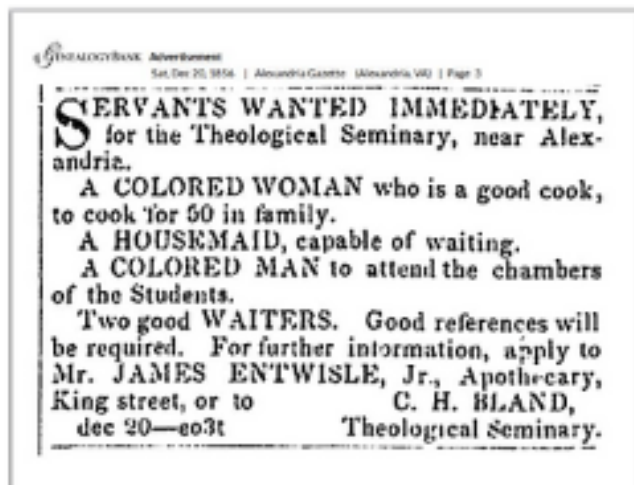
Virginia Theological Seminary sets aside \$1.7 million to pay reparations to the descendants of slave

For more than a century – during slavery, Reconstruction and beyond – Virginia Theological Seminary (VTS) used Black Americans for forced labor. Between 1823 and 1951, hundreds of Black people were forced to work for little or no pay on the campus as farmers, dishwashers and cooks, among other jobs. Back then faculty members and students also brought their own enslaved people.

Virginia Theological Seminary operated within the economy based on chattel slavery. VTS knows that

the majority of the founders, three of the first four professors, benefactors, as well as the institution itself, held Black people in bondage during the antebellum south. The Seminary hired enslaved Black people from local constituents and hired contractors that used enslaved persons and the discounted labor of freedmen. VTS constructed slave quarters on campus and operated daily as a traditional Southern, slave-based institution. Within the Episcopal Diocese of Virginia in 1860 82% of the clergy were enslavers.

In 2019 the school announced it had set aside \$1.7 million to pay reparations to the descendants of slaves who worked on its campus. In 2021, it made good on its promise and began handing out annual payments of \$2,100 each to direct descendants of those who worked there. The funds from the Reparations initiative go to “shareholders,” living direct descendants that are members of the generation closest to the person who labored at VTS between 1823 and 1951.



REP Education Sheet



The five goals of the Reparations initiative:

1. Build relationships with descendants when and if they are willing and interested, including the stories of their ancestors in the Seminary's history, and providing t or their designees with disbursements from the Reparations fund.
2. Build relationships with the two local African American congregations with close historical ties to VTS: Meade Memorial Episcopal Church and Oakland Baptist Church.
3. Support African American alums working in historically Black congregations.
4. Raise up African Americans to be trained for leadership (lay and ordained) in congregations.
5. Support projects related to racial and social justice.

The long term goal of the initiative was built to be flexible so that, in the future, more emphasis can be placed on systemic investment rather than on individual payments, if the families should determine they wish to go in that direction. VTS views the individual payments as the beginning of a reparative process that is likely to go on for generations, involving an ongoing dialogue between the families, the Seminary, and all those who support the concept of reparations.