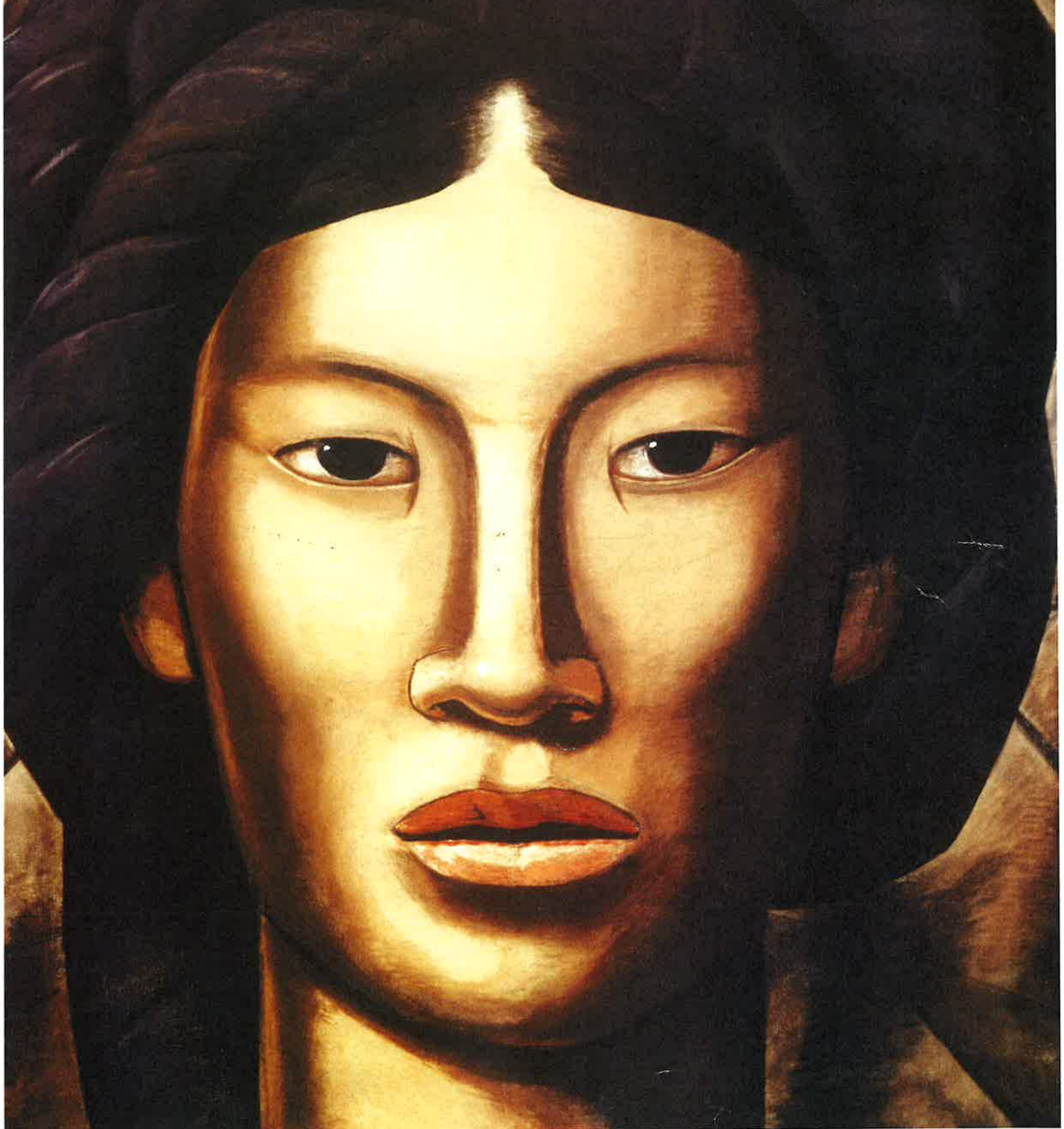


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# HUMANITIES

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## JEFFERSON LECTURE 2022

Marking the 50th anniversary of NEH's Jefferson Lecture in the Humanities, historian and educator Andrew Delbanco delivered "The Question of Reparations: Our Past, Our Present, Our Future" on October 19, 2022, the first Jefferson Lecture held since the onset of COVID-19. The historic President Lincoln's Cottage in Washington, D.C., was the backdrop for an outdoor tented stage that featured Delbanco along with Teagle fellow Henry J. Seyue reading "I, Too" by Langston Hughes, Hollins University president Mary Dana Hinton introducing Delbanco, and musicians Ronald A. Crutcher and Joanne Kong performing "The Swan" from *The Carnival of the Animals* by Camille Saint-Saëns. NEH Chair Shelly C. Lowe (Navajo) opened and closed the presentation, welcoming everyone to a reception afterward on the grounds nearby.





In his lecture, Delbanco traced the history of the idea of reparations to Black abolitionist Martin Delany’s call before the Civil War for a “national indemnity . . . for the unparalleled wrongs, undisguised impositions, and unmitigated oppression” of enslavement. In a plausible example of reparations, during the war General William T. Sherman awarded hundreds of thousands of acres from Charleston to Florida to some 40,000 former slaves.

But intrinsic to the argument for reparations, Delbanco pointed out, is a debt that did not begin and end with slavery. For many decades afterward, public investment in education for Black Americans paled beside public investment in education of white Americans. Lynchings, Jim Crow laws, and a brutal culture of everyday racism from race riots to redlining to unequal benefits of the GI Bill carried forward the legacy of legal racism, all while adding to the accumulated disadvantages slowing the progress of Black Americans.

Noting the common humanity of all who go unrecognized and unheard, Delbanco concluded by invoking Martin Luther King Jr.’s dream “to repair the broken ‘network of mutuality,’” producing a world “where anyone’s remediable suffering is an affront to us all.”

Opposite, Andrew Delbanco delivers his Jefferson Lecture while, pictured below, the audience listens attentively.

From upper left, clockwise, Hollins University president Mary Dana Hinton describes Delbanco’s career; NEH Chair Shelly Lowe pauses for a picture with, from left to right, Tamara Fore-Ravelo, Shayna Naranjo, and Matthew Makomenaw; attendees enjoy the after-lecture reception; earlier in the day, Chair Lowe, center, meets with representatives from AmeriCorps Yasmeen Shaheen-McConnell, CEO Michael D. Smith, Alvin Warren, Shirley Sagawa, and Catherine McLaughlin; and Teagle fellow Henry J. Seyyue converses with an audience member following the lecture.

—Photos by Cheriss Miry