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**Juan Williams keynote for Freedom Fest**

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Thu, Sep 13, 2007

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(Rochester, NY)-September 5, 2007—More than 35 of the nation's leading authorities on the Underground Railroad will convene in Rochester, NY Sept 28-30 for the Frederick Douglass International Underground Railroad Conference and Freedom Festival. They will bring to life one of America's most remarkable stories and illuminate compelling accounts of

courageous people and historic places.

Keynotes Juan Williams, Bernice Johnson Reagon and Darryl Van Leer will be joined by 30 experts including Tony Burroughs, Anthony Cohen and leading educators, historians, museums directors, and artists. They will present the latest research, genealogical connections, regional and international collaborations, parallels to slavery and civil rights, and how to use this information in the classroom.

The conference will be held at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center and also feature: - Michael Crutcher, "The Spirit of Frederick Douglass - 80-foot Exhibit on Underground Railroad - Closing session, Story & Legacy of Freedom Fighters, interactive reenactments - Literacy Ceremony, 3-5 p.m. September 29 recognizing elementary school students - Freedom Festival, free to the public, 2-6 p.m., Freedom Square, September 30

Dr. Alfreda Brown, Conference Chair and Chief Diversity Officer for Rochester Institute of Technology said, "This conference will provide an

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extraordinary opportunity for educators, researchers, curators, historians and others to attain a better understanding of how the Underground Railroad has impacted who we are today and how relevant this heroic and triumphant struggle is to addressing current social and cultural issues.”

“The Frederick Douglass International Underground Railroad conference is one of our key initiatives,” said Spencer Crew, President, National Underground Railroad Freedom Center of Cincinnati, which is an organizer of the event with the Rochester/Monroe County Freedom Trail Commission in Rochester, New York.

Crew added, “The event serves as a vehicle to preserve the legacy of Frederick Douglass, to further Underground Railroad research and help encourage community pride in Rochester’s local history.”

The conference will also feature a Freedom Festival, a series of events including a performance by film and television actor, Darryl Van Leer, entitled *My Life in Bondage*. The Freedom Festival will provide an opportunity for the general public to celebrate this heritage.

**Keynote Events - Juan Williams, Opening Keynote, Noon, September 28 -** leading political writer and thinkers, senior correspondent for NPR, political analyst for Fox Television, and panelist for FoxNews Sunday.

- Darryl Van Leer, *My Life in Bondage*, 7:30 p.m. September 28 – with Special Guest Thomas Warfield, Reception to follow – the award-winning actor, enjoys a successful and varied career in film and TV as a featured performer.

-Bernice Johnson Reagon, Keynote, 9:15 a.m. September 29, 2007 Professor Emerita of History at American University, Curator Emerita at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History.

Frederick Douglass spent 25 years in Rochester. He became the most celebrated African American of the 1800s, a visible public representative of African Americans and the public conscience of a great moral struggle familiar to all Americans. In 1847 Rochester, Douglass launched an assault on slavery through the power of the press, establishing the *North Star*, one of the most influential African American antislavery papers.

**Agenda, Fees, Online Registration & Presenter Information Register online at <http://www.workforcediversitynetwork.com/iur.aspx> or call 585-256-4642. The full Conference fee including all keynotes is \$150. Tickets for keynote events may also be purchased separately.**

#### **Sponsors**

The Conference is presented by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio, the Rochester/Monroe County Freedom Trail Commission, and made possible through the generous support of Xerox, The Community Foundation, Monroe County, the City of Rochester, Heritage New York, Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester Institute of Technology, Senator Jim Alesi, the University of Rochester, Harter Secrest & Emery, Janet Buchanan Smith Charitable Checking Account, RG&E and the Workforce Diversity Network, City of Rochester School District, Nazareth College, St. John Fisher College, and the Winters Family Fund to Promote Diversity and Inclusion.

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*-R. Gunther, Graduate*

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