



SEPTEMBER 28-30, 2007 ROCHESTER, NY

## News

*For Immediate Release*

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### **35 National Experts to Convene Sept 28-30 at Frederick Douglass International Underground Railroad Conference and Freedom Festival** **Juan Williams, Bernice Johnson Reagon and Darryl Van Leer to Deliver Keynotes**

*Rochester, NY—August 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.



Keynote presenters and performers Juan Williams, Bernice Johnson Reagon and Darryl Van Leer will be joined by 30 experts including educators, historians, museums directors, and artists, who will deliver presentations on a wide spectrum of subjects on the Underground Railroad.

Attendees will hear about the latest research; connections between the Underground Railroad and genealogy; regional, intra-city, 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 will also feature:

- Nationally known Frederick Douglass Reenactor, Michael Crutcher, "The Spirit of Frederick Douglass
- An 80-foot exhibit on the Underground Railroad being created by Nazareth College students
- Exhibitors
- An extensive offering of books for sale by Moodmakers Books

- Literacy Ceremony, Friday September 28, to recognize elementary school students who have read the book, *Freedom Crossing*

“The Frederick Douglass International Underground Railroad conference is one of our key initiatives,” said Spencer Crew, President, National Underground Railroad Freedom Center of Cincinnati, an organizer of the event along 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.”

Integrated with the conference will be 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, Friday September 28** - one of America's leading political writers and thinkers. He is the senior correspondent for NPR, a political analyst for Fox Television, and a regular panelist for FoxNews Sunday. In addition to prize-winning columns and editorial writing for The Washington Post, he has also authored six books.
- **Darryl Van Leer, My Life in Bondage, 7:30 p.m. Friday September 28** – with *Special Guest Thomas Warfield, Reception to follow* – The award-winning actor, and performer of *Power on Earth*, began his television acting career by working regularly on Black Entertainment Network's Bobby Jones Gospel Show as a background vocalist, writer and photographer. Today, he enjoys a successful and varied career in film and TV as a featured performer.
- **Bernice Johnson Reagon, Keynote, 9:15 a.m. Saturday September 29, 2007** Major cultural voice for freedom and justice; singing, teaching--speaking out against racism and organized inequities of all kinds. She is Professor Emerita of History at American University, Curator Emerita at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History.

### Presenters

**Tony Burroughs**, *Professional Genealogist, Genealogy*

**Linda Cousins-Newton**, *Founder, Nana Tubman Honor in Ghana Project & Director, Ancestral Promotions, The Underground Railroad - An International Embrace*

**Anthony M. Cohen**, *Historian, Director, The Menare Foundation, Inc., Patrick & Me: A Family Saga of The Underground Railroad*

**Claudine Dixon & James Schroeder**, *Library Media Specialist and Social Studies Teacher, Greece Central School District, 21st Century Classroom meets 19th Century History*

**Walter Gable, M Ed, M.S.** *Seneca County Historian, The Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and Women's Rights Activism in Seneca County*

**Katherine Gagne, M Ed, Teacher, Penn Yan Central Schools**, *Recollections with Jean Rankin: My Work on the Underground Railroad*

**Genesee Community Charter School 2006-2007 5th Grade Class**, Working for Freedom

**Nancy A. Hewitt, PhD**, Professor, Rutgers University & **Christopher Densmore**, *Curator, Friends Historical Library, Swarthmore College*, Crossing Borders for Freedom: Free Blacks, Quakers, and the Underground Railroad

**Rickerby Hinds, MFA, Playwright**, *University of California, Riverside*, Frederick Douglass, Hip Hop Head

**Dean V. June**, *Teacher, Attica Central School*, Then What Happened?

**Lea Kemp**, Rochester Museum & Science Center, Building an Underground Railroad Exhibit

**Pepsy M. Kettavong**, *Artist*, "Let's Have Tea:" How a sculpture of Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony expresses the values of a neighborhood, a city, and our democratic society

**Kate Clifford Larson, PhD**, *Professor, Simmons College*, Harriet Tubman's Personal Network to Freedom: The Importance of Family and Community along the UGRR

**Karen Livsey**, Librarian/Archivist, Fenton History Center, Chautauqua County: A Slave Capture, Uncle Tom's Cabin, Eber Pettit and More

**Harry Bradshaw Matthews, M Ed**, *Associate Dean and Director, U.S. Pluralism Programs, Hartwick College*, Role of the U.S. Colored Troops in the Resistance and Liberation of Enslaved Americans

**Timothy McDonnell, M Ed**, *Board Member/Newsletter Editor, New York Geographic Alliance*, Geography of the Underground Railroad in New York State

**John R. McKivigan, PhD**, *Professor, Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis*, Frederick Douglass: Underground Railroad Passenger, Conductor, Advocate, and Passenger

**Owen W. Muelder**, *Director, Galesburg Colony Underground Railroad Freedom Station at Knox College*, The influence of upstate New York abolitionists on the western Illinois Underground Railroad and the 5th Lincoln-Douglas debate

**Donald Earl Papon, M Ed**, *President, North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association*, Waterways to Freedom

**Marie Kent Parsons**, *Researcher, Writer & Editor, Creative Non-Fiction Writer*  
**Co-presenters: Performers for Readers Theater Production**, Voices of Light: The Words and Works of Farmington Friends

**Monique Patenaude Ph. D. Candidate**, *Graduate Student/A.B.D. Univ. of Rochester*

**Ruth Rosenberg-Naparsteck**, Uncle Tom's Cabin as Parable: Harriet Beecher Stowe's Sermon

**Rosemary Sadlier**, *Pres. Ontario Black History Society*, A North Side View of Slavery

**Virginia Sullivan**, *Routes Coordinator, Adventure Cycling Assn* & **Dr. Stephen Thomas**, *Director, Center for Minority Health, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh*, The Underground Railroad Bicycle Route - Exploring History by Bicycle

**Judith Wellman, PhD**, *Director, Historical New York Research Associates, Sites of Conscience: From the Underground Railroad to Women's Rights in Upstate NY*

**Delores M. Walters, PhD**, *Educational Program Consultant, Learning from the Legacy of Women's Resistance to Slavery: Why Northern Slavery Cannot be Ignored*

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

"This conference will enable educators and others in the learning community to engage in substantive educational activities on these topics," said David Anderson, Chairman of the Rochester/Monroe County Freedom Trail Commission. "Racism, secrecy and the passage of time have hindered the research and dissemination of accurate information about Frederick Douglass and the Underground Railroad. It is therefore absent from most textbooks, and most history."

"Once more, in urban centers, where the majority school population is African American, there is an urgent need for culturally enriching educational programs that engage African Americans in the descendent experience, and provide positive role models."

The Conference is fittingly named for Frederick Douglass, who spent 25 years (1847-1872) – one of the most productive periods of his life – in Rochester, NY. The self-made leader, who rose from an impoverished birth into chattel slavery, gained eminence as a powerful orator, renowned author, newspaper editor, and statesman. Douglass became the most celebrated African American of the 1800s, and assumed the status of an American icon: a visible public representative of African Americans and the public conscience of a great moral struggle familiar to all Americans.

It was also in Rochester, 160 years ago in 1847, that 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.

### **Fees, Registration, Sponsorship Opportunities and More Information**

For a complete schedule, to read more about speakers and to register online visit <http://www.workforcediversitynetwork.com/iur.aspx>.

- The Full Conference fee including all keynotes and choice of concurrent sessions is \$150 (save \$25 by registering on or before August 31.)
- Tickets for keynote events may also be purchased separately: \$40 for Juan Williams luncheon (\$350 for tables of 10), \$25 for Bernice Johnson Reagon's talk, and \$35 for Darryl Van Leer's performance and reception.
- Scholarships and group discounts are also available.
- Free admission to the Susan B. Anthony House for Conference attendees.
- For more information visit the Web site, sign up for email alerts or call 585-256-4642.

### **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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