



SEPTEMBER 28-30, 2007 ROCHESTER, NY

News

For Immediate Release

Frederick Douglass International Underground Railroad Conference Starts Today!

35 National Experts to Convene

Juan Williams to Deliver Opening Keynote, Darryl Van Leer to Perform This Evening

Rochester, NY—September 28, 2007—Hundreds are expected to attend the Frederick Douglass International Underground Railroad Conference, which starts today at 12 Noon at the Rochester Riverside Convention Center.

Today's Highlights:



- 9-10:30 a.m. - AKWAABA Underground Railroad Riverwalk Tour Free to registered conference attendees, starts at Clarion Hotel.
- 12 Noon – Welcome by nationally known Frederick Douglass reenactor, Michael Crutcher.
- 12:15 p.m. – Juan Williams, journalist, opening keynote. Williams will sign copies of his latest book following the luncheon.
- The noon program also will include remarks by Monroe County Executive Maggie Brooks and RIT President William Destler.
- Following the talk Jo Natale of Wegmans and Pepsy Kettavong will present Williams with a miniature replica of Kettavong's well-known, "Let's Have Tea" sculpture.
- 1:30-4:45 p.m. - Concurrent Sessions with speakers
- 2- 6 p.m. – Student Engagement Literacy Project, 200 youth to participate.
- 7:30 p.m. - Mayor Robert Duffy welcomes everyone, and Jennifer Sanfilippo, regional representative for Governor Eliot Spitzer, will deliver a Freedom Proclamation, musical performance by Thomas Warfield, film and TV actor Darryl Van Leer, who will recreate the early life of Frederick Douglass with his riveting performance of "My Life in Bondage."
- 80-foot Exhibit on Underground Railroad created by Nazareth College students.
- 16 exhibitors and vendors including Moodmakers Booksellers, which will sell a wide selection of books.

The two-day conference Sept 28 and 29 will bring to life one of America's most remarkable stories and illuminate compelling accounts of courageous people and historic places.

Attendees have registered from more than 10 states and Canada to hear 35 of the nation's leading authorities on the Underground Railroad. Experts 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.

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."

"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."

Freedom Festival is Sunday 2-6 p.m. Free!

The conference will officially close on Sunday with the Freedom Festival, providing an opportunity for the general public to celebrate this heritage. The free event will offer entertainment, a series of historical reenactments, tours to area historic places including the Susan B. Anthony Neighborhood and the Susan B. Anthony House, and more activities for the entire community.

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, Registration & Presenter Information

Register at the door. For details see <http://www.workforcediversitynetwork.com/iur>. The full Conference fee including all keynotes is \$150. Tickets for keynote events may also be purchased individually except for the Juan William's keynote, which is sold out for non full conference attendees.

Conference Organizers and 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 LLP, Janet Buchanan Smith Charitable Checking Account, RG&E, Wegmans, Bausch & Lomb, 13WHAM TV, Alstom Signaling Foundation, Workforce Diversity Network, Rochester City School District, Nazareth College, St. John Fisher College, and the Winters Family Fund to Promote Diversity and Inclusion.

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