Commentary: Whose Black History To Believe?

By Earl Ofari Hutchinson

I, like many Black high school students in the early 1960s, learned about Africa watching Tanzania; about Egypt watching "The Ten Commandments"; about America slavery watching "Going With The Wind." I believed the claims of many eminent historians that Blacks contributed little or nothing to society. By the 1970s I knew better, however. Thanks to the likes of Carter G. Woodson, the pioneer Black historian and educator who, 50 years earlier, initiated what was then called Negro History Week, and other Black and White scholars, the contributions of Africans to world history and African Americans to U.S. history have been permanently rescued from oblivion.

Black abolitionists Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman, educators Booker T. Washington, and W.E.B. DuBois, activists Marcus Garvey and A. Philip Randolph, writers Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston, and modern day civil rights leaders such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. have finally claimed their place in many history texts. The problem is they are still too often compartmentalized into separate and unequal chapters, such as civil rights, or slavery. This gives the false impression that Black contributions are little more than a sideline to the red workings of history.

This is nonsense. Black inventors, explorers, scientists, architects and trade unionists were major players in the development of American industry. Black abolitionists, religious and civil rights leaders have profound influence on laws, politics and ethics in America. Our artists, writers and musicians gave America and the world its most original and distinctive culture and art forms.

Some Afro-centric historians argue that Blacks are a separate people, in matters they claim that Blacks made all the major contributions to world civilizations. They reveal in the past that enslaved African kingdoms, and empires and ignore the rich contributions that Blacks made to world civilization. By distorting history to score racial brownie points, Black and White ideologies have left many Blacks and non-Blacks wondering just what Black history to believe?

The following highlight just a few of the major contributions that will be learned about African-American contributions to the world's history.

"Stephen Spielberg's 'Amistad' was a powerful reminder that the issue of Afro-American human rights, slavery, politics, religion, and racial relations in the U.S., Africa, and America continues to fuel racial strife today."
Continued from Front Page

seven children and died when she was a year old. They were Besise, Zipporah, Matthew, Stephon, Cheresh, Rose and herself. “When Dean, who was also born in Arkansas. The last wife had four children they were Leslie, Leonard, and Richard -Wesley, Dean who still the 97 years in June, said they went to school there is a one room schoolhouse, there was a Post Office and a general store. "Daddy use to go to Los Angeles to get the food supply. He’d carry the train. He would also charter a ship to ship. He built the family house," she said. Her dad owned a share of a gold mine in Searchlight, Nevada. Dennis G. Caubiesler. President of the Mojave Desert Heritage and Cultural Association said the train stopped at Lanfair every day at the same time. The business is reporting it was sold to the nomads they were called "Homeroads. Their wheat would put everything in the car and used right to Lanfair, the railroad was very helpful," he said. They are thinking back over that life in Dean’s, spoke of how the teacher who was White lived in the school, cooked beans on the hot plate, and that the school was integrated with about half the children being Black. When asked about integration she chuckle and raised her voice, “Integrate schools. We are glad to have that many kids, (students),” said Dean. Casebier said there were two schools in the area, in Goffs, where the school has been preserved and in Lanfair 15 miles up the road. Caubiesler research shows that one of the original Black settlers, William F.served in the Civil War on the Union side. Reportedly there are some original settlers who still send the Plains reports, (students) were. Ronald Baker and Harriet Hodwell Casperson still own land where there’s nothing, but the buildings. The Casebier, according to the foundation the school still exists. Casperson is the daughter of William Hodwell, the eldest son of Richard Wesley. According to the Casperson, the 160 acres of her property in 1991, said Caubiesler. "Settlers settled coming to the area in 1910. Blacks began coming in 1911, and by 1917 most had left the homesteads,” said Caubiesler. Caubiesler is looking for family members and descendants of the Lanfair Valley and is very interested in talking to them. He can be reached by calling (760) 753-4482.

Not Just During Black History Month

The Black Voice News

Press conference held in front of San Bernardino City Hall to discuss proposed treatment center.

Continued from Front Page and there is knowledge that the school is. They were concerned about the time of day the study to 6 p.m. on a summer day and they said the community doesn’t want it. Valerie Pope-Laxiitad, was concerned about the center, and how the developer tried to paint her as the instigator because the clinic is presently located in her building on Baseline. He, in a written appeal said she was the leader of the project. She took issue with him on that. Many in the community think his comments an fair-minded that if the majority of the community and Black come out in opposition to something that is detrimental in their community they are associated with gang members.

Fupper Henry Emerson, President at St. Anthony’s Catholic Church proposed a !2.5 million AIDS public funds, and said “it puts our church and community at risk. Our school (St. Anthony’s) children will have to walk by the cen ter and there will be no protection for the children.”

While Nelly Johnson, said “families have invested their sav ings and it is too great a cost to pay. There are more appropriate locations, the city should not break the back of the homeowners.”

Sister Betty McGilvin, President of St. Anthony’s reminisced the city the project was flawed from its start. While Harrys Jacks, the developer had a conflict.

The developer was so upset by the developers that Harold, , said “there is a lack of support for the project. We hope it’s not the future land use in the area.

Black Press News: WASHINGTON

By Ilae Hooks

I’ve been involved in helping the community for most of my adult li fe. I’ve seen many hardships; we all know social justice. It’s always seemed obvious to me that the problems of our inner cities trace back to education, that is to say, failed education. We could do more good-effective literary programs than with all the police and jail money we could spend.

Somehow, this truth has yet to ring enough to many in our country. This despite the fact that in 1979, the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) reported that it expects one in 20 Black males to serve time during their lives. If mere rates of incarceration remain the same, the BJS report's outer end of twenty percent in the country to serve some time in prison during their lifetime. It’s as if no one has noticed these trends, or that we’ve thus made a connection between literacy, education and crime. It’s an all or one of working the situation around. But this isn’t some recent trend. In fact, the law enforcement officials can afford to observe and study for decades. As I, failed education means that the lives of friends or family could be affected, and the door shut on their opportunities for success and happiness.

We can’t work hard enough to put an end to this kind of injustice. A few years ago, I heard about something that could really make a difference. That could give greedy youth the basic skills they need to get a running start on life. It all revolved around study and literacy.

I found a program right in the heart of our city, San Bernardino, that made the World Literacy Crusade. A Baptist minister named Alfred C. Johnson was completely turning around the lives of former gang members, drug abusers and dropouts by helping them learn how to read. And the changes came, it was no surprise. Why was it really obvious that these results were occurring not only occasionally, but randomly. The kids were hard cases. They weren’t just poor students—many had been in, and had committed serious crimes.

Hearing curious, I wanted to know why this program was working as it was. Rev. Johnson told me that the techniques he used were something called Study Technology. I was contacted by L. Ron Hubbard. I was used to hear a businesswoman and visionary. L. Ron Hubbard was when he wrote “When children become enterprising to society, society has fostered its fame.”

I launched the World Literacy Crusade and the Study Technology programs. The first time I spent in Compton, the more excited I became. Kids who had overcome their own problems were starting to be trained in Study Technology, and volunteering time to help others. On top of this, a group called Applied School’s work ethical to deliver and promote Study Technology was sending a steady stream of volunteers into Compton to help Rev. Johnson. These people kept coming back after work, after school, and ready to study.

I decided to do whatever I could to help. I became a vocal advocate for the World Literacy Crusade and saw it spread... first to church and community groups throughout Los Angeles, and then to other cities and even other countries. Before I knew it, I had forty groups operating in the US and around the world. This hasn’t been easy— but growing pains never are.

We also formed an alliance with the NAACP with the goal of having a World Literacy Crusade program in every church and community group. Now, this year, we have a program. Never in my life have I felt so optimistic for the future young people can have the chance they deserve to build a decent future. There are reason schools found themselves not really succeed, become bored, distract or decide they “hate school.” Mr. Hubbard has written extensively about these problems. After all, he’s provided the tools to resolve them, called Study Technology. Study Technology is good news for our kids. Don’t get the idea that it takes years to understand and implement these methods. They that anyone can use to help anyone else achieve mastery of a subject. If you have the desire to help and the willingness to roll up your sleeves with the rest of you, the volunteerism will.

We’re building new World Literacy Crusade chapters throughout the country, mapping new, training natives, bringing new volunteers into communities. There might be some who say the arts all sounds a little too good to be true. This will always be some who lose that the problem of literacy is too complicated to be solved at a school never.

Find out more on our web site, listen to us at the World Literacy Crusade. Visit one of our programs. We lose this precious tool, this achievement. We can’t afford to lose this. Never in my life have I felt so optimistic for the future young people can have the chance they deserve to build a decent future.

Continued from Front Page

somehow, that one day in 90 years. And the discovery was perhaps closer to the new County Hospital. Community-supporter Warren Anderson who was in stemmed by this issue, a unique idea that all my constituents are against. She was not build in proposed location she and Curlin sparred over who should make the vote. The vote was unin di cated that Mr. Johnson, NAACP said “families have invested their save s and it is too great a cost to pay. There are more appropriate locations, the city should not go. It is too great a cost to pay. There are more appropriate locations, the city should not break the back of the homeowners.”

People felt Anderson was not the support of the city and Curlin spurred over whether they should make the vote. The vote was unin di cated that Mr. Johnson, NAACP said “families have invested their save s and it is too great a cost to pay. There are more appropriate locations, the city should not break the back of the homeowners.”

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Chronic Cough Often Age-Related in Children

Treatment for children's chronic cough may be determined by age. "Diagnosis for coughs according to patient's age," Professor Abramson said.

Coughs can indicate a likeness longer than three weeks. A symptom that says Dr. Stuart Abramson, an assistant professor of pediatrics at Texas Children's Hospital.

"It is a training disease and diagnosis for many, because it is not something universal," he said. "But once the cause is found, treatment is usually effective." Abramson lists three categories for childhood coughs:

1. **Up to 6 months:**
   - The most likely causes are gastroesophageal reflux or asthma. Coughs that result from reflux often result in vomiting. Treatment includes keeping infants in an elevated position, using thickeners to control the reflux, and medicines that control the reposition of stomach contents.
   - Asthma or other allergic conditions are common in children. Asthma symptoms can lead to insomnia and should be monitored.

2. **6 to 18 months:**
   - The patient is seen usually not due to CVA or sinusitis, an inflammation of the membranes lining the facial sinus. Sinusitis is generally treated with antibiotics, but similar surgery may be necessary in some cases. Respiratory allergies may be seen due to these conditions and should be controlled.

3. **More than 6:**
   - Most children who have coughs due to CVA or sinusitis, an inflammation of the membranes lining the facial sinus. Sinusitis is generally treated with antibiotics, but similar surgery may be necessary in some cases. Respiratory allergies may be seen due to these conditions and should be controlled.

**From Whence we Came:**

**Chronic Cough Often Age-Related in Children**

**Our Bodies**

**Family Talks**

**Fool:**

Behind the word "fool" there is a rich and colorful story. Throughout the centuries, its meanings have ranged from ignoring, to fun, to making false promises.

* Up to 6 months: The most likely causes are gastroesophageal reflux or asthma. Coughs that result from reflux often result in vomiting. Treatment includes keeping infants in an elevated position, using thickeners to control the reflux, and medicines that control the reposition of stomach contents. Asthma or other allergic conditions are common in children. Asthma symptoms can lead to insomnia and should be monitored.

**NOTE:** Dr. Levine holds a F.A.C.P. and F.A.C.P. F.M.P. He owns a private practice in San Bernardino and welcomes reader mail concerning their bodies but regrets that he is unable to answer individual letters. Your letter will be incorporated into the columns as space permits. You may direct your letters to Dr. Levine in care of News, P.O. Box 3811, Riverside, CA 92507.

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**Dreams and Realities**

Because the present is our future.

**Fashion Show & Luncheon**

The Friends of Dorothy沥青 Banch Library invites the public to a fashion show and luncheon, Saturday, March 21, 1998 beginning at 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the San Bernardino City School's Westside Annex, 1526 J. Highland Avenue, San Bernardino, CA. For more information contact, (909) 887-4484.

**Health**

**Fitness**

The Black Voice News

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Thursday, February 19, 1998
California Realty reflects on the progress and dreams he’s had profound effect on him. Black Voice News

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Strang From The Underground to Premiere at Mt. Rubidoux S.D.A.

Another Peace

A mini series presented by An outstanding cast (from all over the world)

Coming to Valley Fellowship Church

Event Calendar

Monthly Services

Weekly Services

Wednesday

7:30 p.m.

Bible Study, Prayer & Fellowship 7:15 p.m.

Saturday

9:00 a.m.

Bible Study, Prayer & Fellowship 10:00 a.m.

Wednesday

6:30 p.m.

Revival Services 6:30 p.m.

Saturday

7:00 p.m.

Church School 9:00 a.m.

Wednesday

11:00 a.m.

Children's Church 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday

2:30 p.m.

Children's Church 2:30 p.m.

Wednesday

4:00 p.m.

Children's Church 4:00 p.m.

Sunday

10:30 a.m.

Revival Services 10:30 a.m.

Thursday

7:00 p.m.

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

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7:00 p.m.

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7:00 p.m.

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.
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Pioneer Doug Williams takes over helm at Grambling

By LELAND STEIN III

SAN DIEGO, Jan. 25 - Back to the scene of his formative days, where a Croat-American football coach once gave him a second chance, where a tote bag of free groceries once kept a student athlete hungry, where a former running back once ran a 35-yard pass for a touchdown and setting a NCAA record of 4,811 career passing yards in the professional ranks, Williams is back again. For the first time in his life, he has returned to the Black Institution. As the No. 17 overall selection in 1978. He was also a first team All-American by the Associated Press and first to

with many of the white coaches is when everyone else is gone and we're trying to keep our young guys to go to the league, but what we really have to offer is more for corporate America. You see on TV, I want to be a role model to look at in sports or in school. The role models were the legend Robinson. Williams has been a pioneer in football in a number of ways. He is the first black quarterback to start and win the Super Bowl. He is the first black head coach, the first black quarterback, the first black NFL player, the first black freshman All-American. He has touched, and, the men that he has molded. Coach has everything just worked its way out. But, it wasn't my ultimate

It's unfortunate that a lot of black kids today do

As a quarterback basically I wasn't thinking

I'm in the room to produce men. Sure we would love for some of our kids to be thinking about playing at that level. Then I have to say what level are you talking about? Because I know that there isn't any college out there that has done a better job of producing players in places than Grambling. Those are the things we have to overcome and I think we will.

So therefore the greatest athletes were at the black institutions - the level it had attained in the past. Sending over 200 players to the .picture. The only time Grambling will come into the picture it will happen and part of America was praying for me. Some things are just blessings that come your way. Some things are just blessings that come your way.

WILLIAMS: Williams was the first black quarterback to start and win the Super Bowl. He was also a first team All-American by the Associated Press and first to

GRAMBLING: Basketball and baseball were the two sports that I always wanted to play. I always figured that baseball might be the one sport that I could actually compete at that level. Like many other black kids, I also wanted to play basketball. But, when you grow up in the ghetto, you're thinking about making it to the next level. Then I have to say what level are you talking about? Because I know that there isn't any college out there that has done a better job of producing players in places than Grambling. Those are the things we have to overcome and I think we will.

STEIN: Tell me about the Grambling experience and what coach Robinson added to you.

WILLIAMS: Basketball and baseball were the two sports that I always wanted to play. I always figured that baseball might be the one sport that I could actually compete at that level. Like many other black kids, I also wanted to play basketball. But, when you grow up in the ghetto, you're thinking about making it to the next level. Then I have to say what level are you talking about? Because I know that there isn't any college out there that has done a better job of producing players in places than Grambling. Those are the things we have to overcome and I think we will.

WILLIAMS: I've always been a person that, even though they labeled me a black quarterback, passed was something I always put upon myself. Joe Gibbs always labeled me as a happy-go-lucky person. He use to call me Cool Hand Luke, because nothing bothered me.

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STEIN: Was there even more pressure at his franchise? I don't think that anything will match the way we were to execute the plays. No matter what we did it worked, thirteen plays we scored five times... that's mind-boggling.

STEIN: How did you feel when the final gas sound was uttered and you were NFL champions?

WILLIAMS: CHAMPIONS: Denver's Terrell Davis (28), didn't know at the coin toss that he would return Doug Williams (not) and win the Super Bowl MVP award. I'm in the room to produce men. Sure we would love for some of our kids to be thinking about playing at that level. Then I have to say what level are you talking about? Because I know that there isn't any college out there that has done a better job of producing players in places than Grambling. Those are the things we have to overcome and I think we will.

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By Taylor Jordan

The Boys Choir of Harlem will celebrate Black History Month in a program of classical and contemporary music at the Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts on Feb. 22.

The 7 p.m. concert will feature spirituals, jazz, classical compositions and contemporary, choreographed production numbers.

Tickets are still available at the Cerritos box office, (800) 300-4345 or (562) 916-8500. Ticket prices range from $20 to $32.

The choir, founded and directed by Dr. Walter J. Turnbull, commemorates its 30th anniversary this year. Since 1958, the choir has provided hundreds of inner-city children the opportunity to realize their creative potential and helped 98 percent of the boys complete high school and continue college education.

The touring ensemble of 35 boys graduated from Columbia University School of Business Institute for Leadership Management and has received numerous honorary university degrees.

The choir’s artistic director was named in “Who’s Who in American Colleges and Universities” and as “one of the 15 greatest men in BlackAmerica” by McCaff’s magazine. He has appeared on “Nightline,” “20/20,” “The Today Show” and “60 Minutes.” He made his operatic debut with the Houston Grand Opera and has been featured in several solo recitals with the New York Philharmonic and the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Turnbull, in the autobiographical “Lift Every Voice” co-written with Howard Murdoch, shares his rise from impoverished childhood to inspirational experiences with the internationally-famous choir. He also offers a blueprint on teaching children the significance of discipline, hard work and self-respect so they can attain their highest goals.

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Poet Quincy Troupe to Appear at College

On February 23, poet Quincy Troupe will give a reading of his poetry at Riverside Community College in McComber Hall, Room 114, at 7:30 p.m. Quincy Troupe is the “World Heavyweight Poetry Champion,” a title he won at the 1994 Tropicana Resort in Las Vegas. Troupe is known for his ability to transfer his sound to the page. The typical Troupe poem comes at the reader like a locomotive on fire, full of blazing and powerful imagery.”

Critical reception for the artists on Sunday, February 22, 1998, from 2 to 4 p.m.

The Riverside Community College Art Gallery is open Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., from 5 to 7 p.m., and closed Saturday, Sunday, and all school holidays. Contact RCC at (909) 222-8857. Admission is free. For further information, call the Art Gallery at (909) 222-8494.

RIVERSIDE

Poetry Champion,” a title he won at the 1994 Tao’s.

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(The San Diego Reader)

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Retracing the Underground Railroad

Part II

By Cheryl Brown - Black Voice News

February 19, 1998
THE 1998 INLAND EMPIRE INTERNATIONAL
CARGO CONFERENCE & EXPO

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From the Editor

When I received the first invitation to participate in the First International Underground Railroad (UGRR) , I was intrigued. By the time I was invited to return for a second trip that added Covington, Kentucky and Cincinnati I was even more excited, I thought I knew what to expect. Still excited and still intrigued about what I’d seen and experience this second trip gave me the opportunity to meet the network of people involved in this growing UGRR movement and see friends I’d kept in touch with over the many months since the first trip.

Don and Marsha Hammond, of San Bernardino, long time family friends, informed me of what was happening in their home Chillcote, Ohio and told me of the Second Underground Railroad Summit that would be held in Columbus coinciding with the start of the tour. Thelma Smith of Oberlin, a fifth generation citizen, tour guide and genealogist extended an invitation to share her room.

R.J. Balanger of the Detroit Visitor’s and Convention Bureau had whet my appetite when he told me the second annual trip may begin in Alabama, the entire state but he put emphasis on Mobile, a place where the last slave ship Clotilde brought a cargo of kidnapped Africans. Kidnapped from Dahomy, (Benin), West Africa. More amazing than seeing the spot where the burned haul of the ship set for over 100 years, the trip would somehow complete for me the United States connection. It would tie the slave ships to the beginning of the line, once arriving in America to Canada, the end of the line, for those travelling on the UGRR. When I got an invitation from Frances Smiley of the Alabama Office of Tourism to make the connection I knew my experience would be somewhat complete. At least on these shores and on this leg of the Underground Railroad.

These trips were all fast paced there is no time for rest even if you wanted to. The information was so expansive it had to know what to include in this tabloid. Last trip I included more information on Mrs. Edith Washington Johnson, the granddaughter of Booker T. Washington this time we talked with her more extensively but the time with her was overshadowed by the opportunity to visit an actual site of the Underground Railroad. There will be more on her in another update.

The second trip was journaled on the Internet every step of the way. The website is beautiful. I thank Anthony Palacios and Jim Navarro for their dedication in working so diligently to get the site up and so well designed. I thank Barry Pullium and the San Bernardino County Schools for taking on the project and internet provider, Enterprise for Economic Excellence (eeo.org). I thank the Department of the Interior, Vince deForest for his help and encouragement.

Many times at awe, many times jovial but never far from the fact that this was a real tragedy that happened to real people. Much of the history we will never know but much is still available for us to know and through the likes of, the historians who never fail to tell the story who work tirelessly most of the time for no pay but to leave the truth of what happened to a people not so very long ago.

“Violence was not a byproduct of slavery, slavery itself was violent,” said playwright Rickerby Hinds in his play. As we study the suffering that happened to our ancestors, let us realize for too long our story, hasn’t been told or has been told through the eyes of others, it’s time the truth be known. No sugar coating, no exortion of the truth just telling the story just as it was.

The three groups would like to thank the Visitor’s and Convention Bureaus of:

Covington, Kentucky
Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio
Greene County
Lorain County, Ohio
Detroit, Michigan
Windsor, Essex County and Pelee Island, Windsor, Ontario, Canada
State of Alabama, State Tourism Department

It is now my duty--as it was Harriet Tubman’s, Josiah Henson’s and others--to tell the story, conduct the experience, to teach all people to honor and love our ancestors and appreciate what they did for us. It is my solemn duty to communicate to you the strength and courage our ancestors used to pave the way for us, in this modern day and age, to be free from bondage. I invite you to turn these pages and imagine the steps taken by those daring Africans; and, I hope everyone reading this expanded special edition is compelled to action in honoring our ancestral heritage. On the first trip I became a conductor, on the second I was named an abolitionist, join me as I call on the inimitable spirit of Harriet Tubman to guide me, as we travel on the Underground Railroad. As your editor I am pleased to offer you this gift of history. ALL ABOARD!

CONDUCTORS: LaUna Newman, Minneapolis Spokesman; Vicky Douglas, Minneapolis Spokesman; Judy Seal, Tri State Defender; Gwyneth Windon, Tri State Defender; Cheryl Brown, Black Voice News; Delores Johnson, Atlanta Tribune; Alice Thomas, Jackson Advocate; Renell Whitehead, Cincinnati Herald; Mike McNair; Louise McNair; Celeste McNair; Linda McNair, Buckeye Review; R.J. Balanger, Detroit CVB; Sandra Bradt, Ontario Canada, CVB; Mary Richardson, Detroit, CVB; Cheryl Bierly, Greene CVB; John Able, Greene County CVB and Suzanne K leased, Lorain Co., CVB.

CONDUCTORS Trip 2: JoAnne Harris, American Visions; Cynthia Nevels, Capitol Spotlight; Dian Stelly, Free Lance Writer; Hugh Orr, House Home & Away; Terry Williams & Julie Deans, Young Horizons Indigo; Marcia Schonberg, Free Lance Writer; Dr. Tendayi Kumbula & Barbara Kumbula, Muncie Times; Petra Gertjegerdes, Columbus Times; Theresa Hannah & Larry Hannah, Nashville Gospel Channel; Royal Hill, Jr., Black Meetings & Tourism; Cheryl Brown, Black Voice News; Phil Branch, Black Meetings & Tourism; Francine Chick, Windsor, Essex County & Pelee Island Convention & Visitors Bureau; R.J Belanger & Cheri King, Metropolitan Detroit Convention & Visitors Bureau; Erin Smith, Lorain County Visitors Bureau; Lois Smith, Greater Cincinnati Convention & Visitors Bureau; John Abel & Marc Gauder, Greene County Convention & Visitors Bureau.

CONDUCTORS Trip 3: Angela da Silva, Black Tourism Network & Tours; Mildred Hightower, Cruise Vacation & Tours; Betty Glassar, Sunshine Tours & Travel; Geraldine Mackey, Ft. Washington Travel Service; Liorretta Wimberly, Wimberly Black Belt Tours; Florence Stone, Del’s Travel Service; Grace Gourdine, Travel With Grace; Tami Clayton, Travel With Grace; Patricia Mills, Magnolia Tours; Sandy Woods, Cavalier Travel; Ward D. Morrow, Horizon Tours; William (Bill) Cook, World Over Travel; Cleareta Blackmon, Mobile Beacon and the manager of Dreamland Restaurant; Driver, Charles Jackson; Staff, Frances Smiley, Rosemary Judykins, Brian Shefrin, Chris Usery.
The Slave Ship Clotilde

The Last Ship to America 1859

As anyone who is a regular reader of the Black Voice can attest we are steeped in the history of our people. The events we write about each week will someday be viewed as history, they are our current events. For the past two years I have been deep in the study of the Underground Railroad and have made several trips to research the time, the history and the people. They are the people we will talk about in our future. They are the ones who conquered the land and made America great. Slave owner’s diaries are full of references that it couldn’t have been done without the enslaved Negroes.

The Underground Railroad is now in Congress, HR 1635, is a bill that will preserve the history that is the foundation of our country. The Underground Railroad is the largest migration in our country’s history, it used every form of transportation, it used all races of people and it was deadly for anyone caught engaging in it.

The first slavery seems to appear in what is now America in 1619, Blacks came on the Mayflower but they were not slaves they were indentured servants. Negros who were enslaved worked the plantations, as stevedores, in mines, in other heavy work and were generally well trained in various trades.

Slavery was legally abolished from 1777 to 1804 in various states up north but took on more intensity in the south. The abolition movement began growing in the early 1800’s and was in full swing when Abraham Lincoln was elected president in 1860 he had to decide to abolished slavery to save the Union. In 1865 slavery was abolished. With this as a backdrop the story I’m going to tell is about the last shipload of enslaved Africans. It is a story about Alabama. Last week I went on a tour of the State and I can see why Black folks all over America are returning home.

This is a story about the slave ship Clotilde, the last slave ship to reach the shores of America in 1859 in Mobile, Alabama. The ship was burned so that it could never be used again but the charred remains of it stayed on the river for 100 years. The last survivor Cudjo Lewis died in 1959 the people have erected a statue to him that faces the land he left in Africa.

One of the descendants of the ship has written two books about the lives of her grandparents James and Lottie Dennison. Grandfather James was the ship’s Pilot and grandmother Lottie was kidnapped from Dahomy (Benin) West Africa, and never saw her family again.

"Although slavery was not a new phenomenon; when we think of human beings, we deem that slavery was and still is a Biblical evil," said Mable Dennison in the books she so proudly authored for both her grandparents. "Both of my grandparents have a different story to tell, I could not do them justice by putting them in one time there were three ships with guns ready to leave. Two ships escaped a third was caught, by this time slave ships were outlawed. They were brought in where the Tombibee and Alabama Rivers meet and where Burns Meaher had a Plantation. The new arrivals she writes, "nearly grieved themselves to death. Some were put on display for purchase other were sent to Selma, Alabama."

James was the ship’s Pilot and was a trusted slave. In order to increase the numbers of the enslaved Jim Dennison was made to marry Lottie. She didn’t like the arrangement at first and later when she fell in love did marry him again. Three children were born to them. They settled in homesteaded property in Africa Town, South Mobile, Alabama.

Mable Dennison tells of a slave escape but says they were caught. James Dennison’s took the name of his slavemaster named was Myer or Meyers, Meahers, Meyers named after his slaveowner.

James had indentured himself to slavery he was the son of an Indian and wanted to see the world on the many ships in his birthplace, Charleston, South Carolina. Although not born a slave he signed a statement saying that he was and was presented with a certificate of membership for Ex-Slave Bounty and Pension in 1909 when he said he was 60 years old at that time.

James Mayer Dennison was enrolled in the Army on April 10, 1865 and served for three years at Baton Rouge, Louisiana as a colored trooper. He was discharged because the war was over and there was no more need for his military service. After the war and the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation he reclaimed his former name.

Cudjo Lewis another ex-slave is mention in her book for many years until his death in 1959, he told stories of his home in Africa. Lottie and Cudjo became a family. They attended the same church, the in Plateau, Alabama. They ate together twice a month on Sunday, the children called him uncle Cudjo.

The story is well documented and there is much more. In order to understand the sacrifices of our ancestors, and for mankind to understand their contributions we must tell the story. The story of the last ship from Africa is only one of them. This is the story of James and Lottie Dennison, and the ship Clotilde.
JOURNAL ENTRY - DAY 1

After arriving in Covington, Ky and driving to pick up my daughter Regina at Wilberforce University, we arrived in Columbus at nightfall and met the attendees of the UGR Summit and went to sleep.

The next morning, we awoke to have breakfast and go on the Columbus UGR bus tour. It was unbelievable! Kathy Nelson is remarkable and Vince DeForest, UGR Project Coordinator and Assistant Director of the UGR Program, is a gem! There was one and a half seats available on the bus for us. Beverly Gray that wonderful friend of Don and Marsha Hammond, friends from our home in San Bernardino gave me her seat. Everyone on the tour was amenable to the adventure we were embarking on.

Our first stop in Columbus took us to the Kelton House. A sure runaway haven. The house is well documented because of the work that has been done by the daughter of the owner. He died tragically after having a dizzy spell and falling out of the window of the third story floor. His son was the first from Columbus to die in the Civil War. When he travelled south for his remains he fell off the wagon on his head. It is said when he returned home, he continued to have seizures and the final seizure claimed his life.

Ghost are said to haunt this house and recently a meeting was being held and the smell of smoke from the fireplace grew more intense and ran the group meeting out. There was no fire visible and they thought they were the only ones there. As children, Martha Harthway arrived with her sister Pearl in 1860 from Palinton County, Virginia. Her sister moved on in the Underground System but Martha was taken in by the Kelton Family. She lived there as a servant and they treated her as they did their other children. In 1874, Thomas Lawrence married Martha. They met in many cases they are now parking lots. One site pointed out was the home of Jerry Finney. Jerry Finney was a free Black man, who lived with his family and worked as a server. He was well known and liked by everyone. One night he was lured across the river by a court justice to Franklyn Town. He was told he was the property of Delane Long a slave catcher shackled him and took him to Kentucky. When word got out in Columbus, prominent attorneys went to Kentucky to fight for his freedom. Kentucky would not release him. The only way was to buy his freedom for a considerable amount of money. The town raised it and secured his release. The fight took its toll and a few months later, Finney died.

As we traveled the area many stories were told, from the present Ohio State University Kappa Sigma house student’s house which was formerly the mansion of William Neil, who owned the stage coach house student’s house which was formerly the mansion of William Neil, who owned the stage coach line, to his wife who is said to help orphans and women to the Southwick Good Funeral Home formerly Clinton Methodist Chapel. One story was told about a well known Columbus Dispatch reporter. He wrote that in 1930 when he lived at the Kappa Sigma fraternity house an old Black man came to the door. He explained that he lived in Canada and he came to the house because he wanted to see the place that gave him freedom. Without any prompting, the man took off to the cellar, to the room where he stayed for a week. It was by then, being used as a storage room that has a complete history of the site’s activity in the Underground, complete with a ridge in the back for the escaping enslaved to the Carolyn Brown House. Always thought to be the White mistress of the house. After she died it was found she was the Black daughter of a slave owner and she brought her Black son whom no one knew was her son with her. She had one of the area’s nicest houses this information was documented in the family Will filed at the bank.

The Livingston House was another very interesting site. He is the father of the tomato. Before his time tomatoes could not be eaten by people. He developed the edible tomato. While he was developing his seed line (the largest in the world) he also used his seed wagon to deliver fleeing runaways to the next stop. His wagon had deep bins for the seed on the side and underneath was a false bottom. We enjoyed lunch and fellowship during this stop and looked at the beautiful gardens. Regina joined the van group because she was so uncomfortable on the bus. I think she enjoyed the trip more this way.

Continuing the trip, we saw before mentioned places and more and took in lots of information. In the latter town of Springfield, 29 sites have been documented. Each, all private residences have red flags signifying they are a bonafide UGR site.

We arrived back at the hotel and changed for dinner and the reenactment.

On the steps of the refurbished Columbus Ohio State House, was the regiment all tattered and torn but there none the less. The Confederate Soldiers, they met a Union battalion and a 54th Colored Regiment from Massachusetts and the fire and drum band brought them in. The Emancipation Proclamation was read on the State House steps and the epic went forth that all men were created equal. No more slavery. The original discussion from the legislators was read and the land cannons were shot. It was moving and awesome.

Following the outside program was the inside. It was the unveiling of the Quilt commemoration the The quilt took your breath away. It depicted all of the trails of the UGR by Wilbur Seibert.

Negro Spiritus were sung. Two proclamations were read Beverly Gray was the MC dressed in period clothes.
Re retracing the Underground Railroad

Part II

Just as Christians go to the Holy Land, Muslims return to Mecca, and Jews return to Israel, every African American and African from any nation should retrace one of the many routes on the Underground Railroad.

We must return to the past so we can better understand our future.

My past was connected as I retraced the steps my ancestors took when they refused to be slaves anymore. It was truly a religious experience.

They left the plantations of the south in the dead of night and in the cold of winter to escape the selling, raping, beating, killings and the breaking up of our families. Make no mistake about it, what my ancestors went through was more inhumane than any person or group of people should ever have to go through.

Every African American and African Canadian are direct descendants of the survivors of slavery. Many families trace their roots to the Underground Railroad.

The Underground Railroad, for whom Harriet Tubman is so famous, is not a mode of transportation. It was instead a system of safe houses, churches, barns and other places where the fugitive slaves could rest and eat during the day as they travelled by night over 2,000 miles to freedom in a land called Canada.

This re-creation is not to glorify or glamorize what they did. It was, for
me, at least a time to be connected to my ancestors, to know that they were brilliant people and to know we, their ancestors, are products of that brilliance and strength.

Beginning in 1619, for close to 250 years, some 100 million Africans were selected to be transported across the Atlantic ocean. They were a strong people. If they were weak, they didn’t survive, what is referred to by historians as the ‘Middle Passage.’ Those who survived were the strong of the strong.

The slave traders took the Africans to many different nations including, China, Japan, Australia, Europe, the Caribbean, South America and even Canada, virtually all over the world. They had to survive the different climate changes, and the different nationalities of the people. Although they were all Black they were not the same, their differences were as real as the English and the Irish or the Cherokee and the Sioux. But those differences were never taken into consideration. No one cared.

This ugly part of American history has been virtually hidden until now. Some of the hideouts are still visible, others have been destroyed, many locations and many stories died with the owners because it was death to anyone helping an escaping African.

As far as we know, the first re-enactment of the Underground Railroad began in 1978 in the town of Oberlin, Ohio, the town that started the Civil War. A town which was very much against slavery and was founded on the principle of equality. The students who conceived the idea researched and planned it with the help of historians like John Hope Franklin, and Lerone Bennett, Jr. The first idea was to recreate a slave escape by the Oberlin students to satisfy the requirements of a class project.

However, the more they researched, the more the project took on a life of its own and instead of the leisurely travel through the South to record their experiences in a journal the idea began to take shape as a 19th century experience of a fugitive slave circa 1850. The experiences of the seven is enough to fill a book as they walked in the cold, avoiding heavily populated areas, hiding in barns and being fed by friendly abolitionists. They began their trek in Greensburg, KY near the Tennessee border and ended at Oberlin College. They spent one month and traveled 420 miles.

Going into the project, the students felt like many Blacks today: slavery is negative, it conjured up feelings of guilt, embarrassment and irritation when it is spoken about. The students reported at the end of the journey that they didn’t feel that way. They focused on the slaves high ambition, ingenuity and perseverance.

The Oberlin students felt what I felt when I tried to retrace the steps of my ancestors in the flight to freedom, through the Underground Railroad. "We must look at slavery as a time when we were an enslaved people," said one of the participants on the trip.

Time and time again as we met the keepers of the culture, they’d say, our history is too important for any portion of it to be romanticized and lightly glazed over, rather than be SERIOUSLY investigated.

My trip to freedom begins in Mobile, Alabama home of the last slave ship to America. Onto Kentucky and finally across the Ohio River to Cincinnati we moved onto Greene, the home of Wilberforce University, an AME church college. It is because of the African Methodist Episcopal Church activities in the anti-slavery movement, the county is the location of many, many stops on the Underground Railroad. We followed the "North Star" on the railroad and ended in Canada at the furthest point for slaves settling in the Windsor, Ontario area of Canada.

Although my travel on the Underground Railroad wasn't dangerous and I experienced it in the comfort of hotels and a bus, I was no less moved to tears and I now feel connected to an important part of my past. The trip was an eye opener and a moving experience and when I reached "destination freedom" the emotion was so great just thinking about it brings tears to my eyes.

Of all the awards I’ve received, all the accolades that have been bestowed on me did not prepare me for the emotion that followed Dr. Bryan E. Walls’ bestowing the title of "Conductor" of the Underground Railroad on me during the first trip and abolitionist on the second.

He said to us, "do as my ancestors did go back and tell somebody and have our people show honor and respect to the ancestors many of whom travelled over 2,000 miles to change their lives, the lives of their family," and yes, even mine.
Shorter Hall at Wilberforce University as it stands today. The 3rd hall on the site set for demolition — 1st hall was said to be UGRR site.

**History**

In 1820 the Missouri Compromise permitted an extension of slavery into Missouri but not into Maine as the two states were admitted into the Union. It divided the country into half free and half slave. By 1857, the U.S. Supreme Court outlawed the Compromise and said in the Dred Scott decision that the government had no right to prohibit slavery. That decision instead, set up more controversy surrounding slavery.

However, abolitionist were on the rise. Contrary to the beliefs of many, there were many Black abolitionists fighting to end slavery in the United States. One of the great, was Bishop Richard Allen, who founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church the nation’s oldest and largest Black organization in America. Most of the White abolitionists were Quakers who were religiously opposed to slavery. They were helpful but they were not the only reason that slavery was abolished. Records suggests that Blacks working with other Blacks is what “broke the back” of slavery.

One of the main routes of the fleeing slaves began in Brown County, Ohio, in the town of Cincinatti. On top of a steep hill in Ripley, was the home of Rev. John Rankin, called “Liberty Hill,” the house on the hill, according to The Town That Started the Civil War, by Nat Brant.

...there were many Black abolitionists fighting to end slavery in the United States...

There were 102 steps that led to the top, overlooking the city, and between 1830 and 1865 it was estimated 2,000 fleeing slaves passed through Ripley, (Charles I. Blackson, *The Underground Railroad*, 1940).

Another is the John Parker home. Parker, a former slave purchased his freedom, had seven children and sent all of them to college. He wrote a book about his UGRR activities which was found and published recently.

The fleeing slaves gave way to a new industry, slave catching. In 1849, Kentucky became a major market for the purchase and sale of slaves, and the Kentucky legislature repealed a nonimportation act and allowed slaves to be sold or shipped to other states.

Every Black, free and slave, were fair game. It was so bad that many free Blacks were caught and sold on the auction block back into slavery. By 1850, teeth were put into the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793 and slave catchers were plentiful. Fleeing slaves who made it to the house on the hill had a chance to make it to Wilberforce, Ohio located in Greene County and the home of the Wilberforce University. The school was named for the British abolitionist, William Wilberforce. Wilberforce in 1808 almost single-handedly abolished slavery in the British Empire. It was this school near the town of Xenia, Ohio, twenty miles from Dayton that peaked our interest for Wilberforce University was a major step on the way to freedom.
Blacks Oppose Slavery

The American abolitionists began their organized opposition as far back as the 1787 when the Free African Society was founded by Bishop Richard Allen and Rev. Absolom Jones. It had as its goals, the establishment of a church, an insurance company, and a political organization. Its major goal was the establishment of educational facilities for Blacks. It was illegal by statute of law to teach the slaves to read and write. But regardless of the opposition, the tenacity and sheer brain power of the slaves propelled them to learn anyway. They founded the great Black colleges of today which continue to educate and graduate over 75% of all students who attend.

Wilberforce University a Main UGRR Stop

Wilberforce University is one of the main areas of the UGRR, and Shorter Hall, one of the primary buildings on the campus, was said to be a station. Shorter Hall is the third building to be built on this site. It is scheduled to be torn down because of asbestos contamination. It is one of the last buildings left of the original campus. In 1974, the worse tornado in the history of Ohio struck Wilberforce and destroyed the other university adjacent to Wilberforce, Central State. It also affected the Wilberforce campus, which, because of age, was relocated across the road from the original site.

Near the University is the home of Col. Charles Young, the third Black to graduate from West Point, which is a former UGRR stop. Apparently, the cellar and barn were hiding places. The cellar was filled with various routes created to mislead searching slave owners and catchers. A crack across U.S. Highway 42 lies directly above a tunnel used to help the slaves. The restoration of the home and site is being undertaken by Omega Psi Phi Fraternity.

Time did not permit a visit to every location that has been identified but among the places to see are: the site of the Ohio Anti-Slavery Society Convention in the early 1830's; the Rev. Jones Farm (Jones, Wilberforce University's fourth President, hid runaways in a barn that had a false floored hayloft); The Mitchell House (with stairs capable of concealing fleeing slaves); the Hilltop Road House (a pantry floor lifted out to reveal an underground room), and the Nosker Residence (a trapdoor revealed steps leading to a tunnel that connected to a small cave in the front yard).

Read the journal entry for our visit to Wilberforce.
Today began with expectations of interest but not the kind of excitement that eventually ended our day. Where do I start? I'll begin at the end for after meeting and being a dinner partner with Edith Washington Johnson (the granddaughter of Booker T. Washington and the goddaughter of George Washington Carver and related to through marriage Frederick Douglass) was exciting. It was to be my focus for our journal entry tonight however upon leaving her at the National Afro American Museum we were privileged to go on a nearly midnight run to one of the recently uncovered sites on the Underground Railroad.

After traveling by bus down a long dusty road we came upon a small house. The friendly owner met us, much like the day of the UGR when fleeing slaves were ushered into safety. Our find exceeded our wildest imaginations as we began singing Steal Away and Wade In The Water (two Negro spirituals) and as we got nearer and nearer to the site. We disembarked the bus. There it was out in the front yard a remnant of a basement that had a smaller tunnel that lead to another chamber and still another smaller tunnel that seemed to transition from the hole they had to enter from the well above ground and again once inside the well a passageway. The well seemed to be 25 to 50 ft. deep.

It was a cold and dark night and as a few of us crowded in the small chamber there was not a feeling of joy that we found the site, rather of reflection, sadness, and a deep respect for my ancestors who went to such lengths to escape the harshness of slavery. For a short time I could put myself in their shoes and feel the cold damp ground, the feeling of being too close from the tight area and know that whoever they were they were survivors.

The original larger house had burned down only a few years earlier, said the new owner and this basement, about 8 to 10 feet by 8 to 10 feet, was revealed, brick walls in tack. There was no entry from the inside of the house and it was a small part of the very much larger home. It was isolated entirely from the rest of the structure. It is a tremendous find for the historical association I'm sure. The owner Marcella Balin said she often sits and meditates, she finds a feeling of peace and solitude when going into the underground portion of the structure. She also had a Native American come to the site he told her something terrible happened there he could feel it.

Historian Mrs. Sue Parker from the Afro American Museum said four generations of African Americans lived in that house and some of the descendants still live in the area, they don't remember ever seeing that room that hides so many stories on the Underground Railroad. I hope that site and others that tell the American story will be saved, someone will see the importance of that Underground Railroad Museum. It will be something to see.

Leading the effort on the new museum is Edwin Rigaud an executive on loan from Procter and Gamble. The National Underground Railroad Freedom Center is a national education center and descriptive museum. The Freedom Center will touch the heart as well as the mind by using powerful experiences to inspire a new understanding of history. The cost is $80 million and $10 million has already been raised.

The logo for the museum is a candle in the window, a symbol of a safe house. It is designed to impact people. To salute the thousands of unknown characters. The stories are still being uncovered said Rigaud. One such is the find of the Parker story. John Parker a slave bought his freedom for $1,800. He lived south of Cincinnati. He was an inventor and spent his evenings rescuing the enslaved. He sent all seven of his children to college. Recently a book he wrote in his own language was uncovered in a library at Duke University. His book is on the market...His Promisedland, edited by Stewart Sprague.

Northern Kentucky was interesting as well. The Carneal House is located on the Licking River, it runs into the great Ohio River and it conceals a tunnel at the house that was used for cargo as well as hiding out slaves. The story goes that the family would have a party to cover up their activities, bring a host of people to the house and across the Ohio River stood the Immaculate Conception Church and a candle in the window signifying it was safe to approach. It is called a jumping off point for fleeing slaves.

The site of Elijah Kites' house was located on Sixth Street at Mill Creek. It is where Margaret Garner killed her child rather than send her back to enslavement, January 28, 1856. The story is the basis for Pulitzer Prize winner Toni Morrison's "Beloved." The story made the front page of the Cincinnati Daily paper. I read the original newspaper that carried this story and on the front page at the Cincinnati Hamilton County Library.

The trip to the Cincinnati Library was most enlightening. We learned how we could find our ancestors. They have the most extensive material anywhere.

The Col Young house was a stop on the Underground Railroad be answered.

The series of caves at the UGRR site revealed in 1989 when the house on top was burned.
In honor of Black History Month, Texaco salutes the energy of the African American Spirit.

A World Of Energy.
Today was very exciting as we visited the Paul Lawrence Dunbar home. Dunbar is the first Black to be recognized for his literary ability. The group was joined by none other that Dunbar himself. Dr. Herbert Woodson Martin a professor at the University of Dayton became Dunbar in his poetry. Dunbar was credited for being the first “Rapper” in his poem Matilda, we helped the docent LaVerne Sci to recite it saying “git back honey, git back! This was right up Petra’s alley.

Dunbar was good friends with Orville and Wilbur Wright and on display is a bicycle they made him. He also was a newspaper publisher, he and the Wright brothers helped each other. He wrote articles for their newspaper as well as his own and they printed his newspaper on their press.

Our group was fascinated by going through his house seeing his suit on the bed, his shoes by the bed and even his toothbrush in the bathroom. Petra was amazed as well as Royal and Julia at his “loafing room” still there are many original books from the 1800 “and early”.

Dunbar died in 1906 at the age of 33 from Tuberculosis and his mother closed the door to his bedroom and his “loafing room” what she called his study and for 28 years never opened the door before she died in 1934.

Now on to Oberlin, Ohio a major stop on the Underground Railroad a place where fleeing formerly enslaved Africans could have a certain degree of safety. There we visited the homes of Abolitionists as well as slavery sympathizers.

After a good night’s sleep, we continued to find out more about the history of this fascinating town.

A visit to the Oberlin cemetery where there was so much history was a little tiring but very informative and sad. It included a monument built to remember a formerly enslaved child who died on his way to freedom in Oberlin at the age of 4, after a woman who picked him up along the way brought him to the town. He was too ill to continue on to Canada so she left him with a local man and his wife. The town was so touched by his struggle for freedom that nearly 2000 people attended his funeral. The beautiful black granite monument is a tribute to the memory of Lee Howard Dobbins, a name they gave him. Pat Cano of the Lorain County Visitor’s and Convention Bureau spearheaded the drive to erect the monument. It was a fitting tribute but a sad ending to the time in Oberlin.

After lunch we said our goodbyes to Oberlin staff and started on the next part of our journey. There is so much more to see in Ohio with it’s rich heritage but it hasn’t been researched and fully developed. We rode with excitement to our next adventure, the weather was getting colder the rain was coming down sporadically and I thought of what those running had to endure. We were in a warm cozy bus and our driver Ken King was doing an amazing job given the requests of each person on the bus. He always tried to accommodate us.

Off To Detroit: Motor City, and the Last Stop Before freedom.

We were off to Detroit and checked into the Doubletree, a very nice hotel. We dressed hurriedly, well I tried, Brigitte from the Visitor’s and Convention Bureau saved the day, she waited for me to finish dressing and off we went to the Franklin Brewing Company for a wonderful meal before the show. Starring at the Fisher Theater was Bring in da Funk a stage play that told the story of the struggles of Blacks beginning with the abduction from the shores of Africa to the freedoms of today. The story was told by a narrator and the hoofers, the syncopated tap rhythms of Black tap dancers. Phil, the play write was in second heaven as he watched the skillful way the story was told. Both Dr. and Mrs. Kumbula loved it once they got seated.

The entire group even those who didn’t understand some of the cultural references enjoyed it. Macia sat next to me and every once in a while she didn’t get the joke and I had to explain it to her. Petra who is adamant about the dance form because she has mastered it helped explain the difference in hoofing and tap. Hoofers use the lower part of their bodies and a syncopated beat while tap dancers are more gentle and light footed. She laughed when we needed the explanation I always thought it was slang for what we called it in our neighborhood. This was R.J. Balager’s second time seeing it and he said it was as exciting as the first. Cynthia smiled all the way to the bus. The day ended with a warning that we should get a lot of sleep, our trek the next day was going to take us to see one of the most if not the most outstanding museum’s in the nation, Henry Ford Museum and Greenville Village.

Up to Detroit: Motor City, and the Last Stop Before freedom.

We were off to Detroit and checked into the Doubletree, a very nice hotel. We dressed hurriedly, well I tried, Brigitte from the Visitor’s and Convention Bureau saved the day, she waited for me to finish dressing and off we went to the Franklin Brewing Company for a wonderful meal before the show. Starring at the Fisher Theater was Bring in da Funk a stage play that told the story of the struggles of Blacks beginning with the abduction from the shores of Africa to the freedoms of today. The story was told by a narrator and the hoofers, the syncopated tap rhythms of Black tap dancers. Phil, the play write was in second heaven as he watched the skillful way the story was told. Both Dr. and Mrs. Kumbula loved it once they got seated.

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A Visit To The Home Of Paul Lawrence Dunbar

Dr. Herbert Woodson Martin shows an uncanny resemblance to Paul Dunbar. He recites his work.

There were many steps on my Underground Railroad trip that merely showed the heritage of the area, but some of our steps were destined to break the intensity of the journey. One such place was the Historic Clifton Mill. There is no proof that this was a stop on the way to freedom, however the mill dates back to 1802 and was critical during the Civil War, and to end slavery, (his mother was enslaved in the deep south). He joined the 55th Massachusetts Infantry, an all Black Civil War unit. As he grew his reputation grew. He was the only Black student in his class at Central High School in Dayton. He was named to the school's debate society and became president of the prestigious Philomathean Literary Society. He edited the school newspaper and wrote for various Dayton community newspapers. He graduated Valedictorian of his class. Among his classmates and good friends were Orville and Wilbur Wright. Dunbar and the Wright Brother eventually published their own newspapers.

With all he had going for himself he still had trouble finding a job not because of qualifications but because of his race. He finally landed a job as an elevator operator in the Callahan Building located in the city and supplemented his salary by freelance writing in various national publications. His reputation grew, local people recognized him and he was invited to speak at numerous events.

By the age of 22 Dunbar published his first book of poetry, Oak and Ivy. As a writer he struggled for financial independence, by writing for magazines and selling his poetry book for a dollar.

It was at the 1892 World's Fair that he met Frederick Douglas, who was in charge of the Haitian exhibit. Douglas gave Dunbar a job after hearing him recite his poetry and called him "the most promising young colored man in America."

The sentiment expressed by Douglas was echoed by Dr. H.A. Tobey, the superintendent of the Toledo State Hospital who had struck up a friendship with Dunbar after reading Oak and Ivy. Along with Toledo, attorney Charles Thatcher and Dr. Tobey provided the money to publish Dunbar's second book, Majors and Minors.

Following Howells' review in Harper's the publishing firm Dodd Mead and Company combined Dunbar's first two books and published them under the title, Lyrics of a Lowly Life for which Howells wrote the introduction.

He went on tour to England. When he returned he married another writer, Alice Ruth Moore of New Orleans and settled down. He took a job at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. He had already contracted Tuberculosis and the dust of the library aggravated the condition. Although he was under doctor's orders to rest, he devoted his time to writing and lectures.

The happiness that Dunbar felt in his success as a writer was also his nemesis. He was an excellent writer and the only thing anyone wanted to buy or hear was the Negro dialect. No one wanted to recognize his talent. Dunbar's life and his work were becoming symbolic of the Negro struggle in America. He often wrote and spoke about civil rights issues. One famous piece was "We Wear The Mask."

Dunbar's health and his marriage declined and he died at his home in 1906 at the age of 33 from Tuberculosis and it is rumored a "broken heart." He had published four books of short stories, a variety of song lyrics and thirteen books of poetry.

With his success he was able to purchase for his mother the home where he died. His home died in 1934. The home was restored to the original look at the turn of the century by order of the Ohio Legislature. His boar hair toothbrush is in the cup in the bathroom. His suit on the bed, his mother's cookie making bowl in the pantry and his beautiful library of books are in tact. Also on display is his bicycle built by the Wright Brothers. Visitors must have a buckeye from his tree in the yard, the same tree he loved so much.

There will be an annual Dunbar symposium in the early summer.
One of the most awesome places we visited on the Underground Railroad was Oberlin, Ohio. A town that made integration work.

Historians don't all agree on the history of the Underground Railroad because the information is mostly oral and because the penalties for harboring fleeing slaves was jail, fines and even death. Oberlin, stop #99 on the Underground Railroad, is proud to point out they never lost a passenger.

History

The Fugitive Slave Law in 1850 was most heinous because it forced citizens who were against slavery to assist Slave Catchers. It punished some abolitionists by law for not helping.

The discussion, just over 100 years ago was that Africans were chattel, (property) that translated into dollars for their owners. The more intelligent the slave the more he/she was worth. A healthy Black male adult...was worth $1000 at that time, one who was skilled brought several hundred dollars more. The Governor of Mississippi estimated $30 million in slaves was lost between 1820-1850. A Georgia congressman blamed Abolitionists, who numbered some 2,000 in Ohio and Virginia near the Ohio River, for assisting some 40,000 to 50,000 fleeing slaves for the property loss.

The South was crying for more slaves. The Mississippi Democrat newspaper said during this time “without an increase of slave labor the South cannot progress.” A Georgian named Col. Gauldren, of The Savannah News Report, declared that “African Slavery (remember at this time there were also White slaves, who assimilated into the population) is morally and legally right, and that it has been a blessing to both races, that on the score of religion, morality and interest, it is the duty of the Southern people to import as many Blacks direct from Africa as convenient.”

With this attitude and that of the Fugitive Slave Law on their side, Slave Catchers and slave owners captured anyone Black, fleeing slave or free Black.

Northern states including Ohio enacted several statutes to counter the Fugitive Slave Law. They (some Northern states) established the right to a jury trial and the privilege of seeking a writ of habeas corpus. The function of the writ was to bring the alleged fleeing slave before the state court or judge in order to free him/her from unlawful restraint and to allow time for the fleeing slave to escape to Canada.

It was not uncommon for bands of Northerners to physically free Black slaves. The vigilante groups became known as the Rescuers.

It was this back drop a group known as the Oberlin Wellington Rescuers that the town of Oberlin is most proud.

The Rescue

In 1858, a Black man named John Price was caught by a Slave Catcher and a U.S. Marshal, who kidnapped him in Oberlin and took him to the Wadsworth Hotel in nearby Wellington. The town got wind of the situation and 200-500 people gathered in front of the hotel. The town was told by Deputy Marshal Jacob Lowe, the arresting officer, that the Militia had been called and would be on the 5:15 train. The crowd was angered at the kidnapping and shouted for Price to be let go. Records say that the slave catchers were afraid of the Militia threat, but 5:15 came and Militia members were not on the train. Following much discussion back and forth, maneuvers took place and ended with the Whites diverting the attention of the Slave Catcher and Marshal away from Price and the Blacks pulling him out of the back door of the hotel. When he was released he was hidden in the home of Oberlin professor James Fairchild, the least likely place for someone to look, before he escaped to Canada.

Returning to Oberlin from the Rescue, Charles Langston, a Rescuer and local teacher, was feeling good about what they had done. Langston is also the brother of John Mercer Langston and relative of author Langston Hughes. The crowd called for a speech from Charlie, and for over an hour the integrated group gave speeches and marveled in what had taken place. Little did they know Oberlin's postmaster Democrat Edward Munson was taking notes. Democrats were against any attempt to get rid of slavery.

A total of 37 people were indicted for aiding and abetting the rescue of John Price. Twenty-three Rescuers were from Oberlin, eleven were from Wellington the others were from nearby communities. Of the twenty-three from Oberlin twelve were Black. Three jeopardized their own freedom because they also were fleeing slaves. Six of them were emancipated and
three were freeborn. A larger number of Blacks went to rescue Price but they could not be identified by the government witnesses.

As the government case unfolded it became clear to the town of Oberlin they were being punished because the town insulted the 15th President of the United States, James Buchanan, a Democrat who vigorously enforced the Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. That law was to put teeth in the Fugitive Slave Law of 1793. It was the 13th Pro Slavery President, Millard Fillmore, (1850-53) who signed the legislation and established a stronger Fugitive Slave Law. Twenty of the Rescuers went to jail for freeing Price. They were released three months later when the town countered by bringing kidnapping charges against the Slave Catchers, who detained Price. Among the Rescuers was a Black man named John Copeland, who took Price to Canada.

Later in the anti-slavery uprising known as John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, Copeland lost his life along with John Brown.

Oberlin had no choice in their response to slavery and all its evils. They had to walk the walk. Oberlin was named for John Frederick Oberlin who developed the first kindergarten and who believed in educating women which was unheard of at that time. Oberlin the town, was actually the school. He the founder was a Frenchman who never came to the United States but in 1832 John Jay Shipherd and Philo Stewart heard about him and wanted to start a town where the ideals of Oberlin could flourish. However, shortly after its founding the school ran into trouble. The year was 1835, wealthy businessman and abolitionist Arthur Tappan, said he would save the college if they would admit Blacks and hire certain anti-slavery professors. On a 4-4 vote they were hopelessly deadlocked. While a group of women stood outside of the door praying, the tie was broken. The chairman of the Board Rev. John Keep broke the tie and Oberlin began admitting Blacks to the school. For years it has remained the leading institution for Blacks in higher education.

Oberlin is famous also for another incident in the 1800's. In 1853 a fleeing slave Miriam from Dover, Kentucky escaped from her captor with her children, a grandchild and a foster child. Once they reached Oberlin, the foster child named Lee Howard Dobbins, age 4, was too ill to make the rest of the journey so a man and his wife gave shelter to Miriam and her children. Seeing his condition had worsened the couple decided to take care of Lee Howard. He died shortly after Miriam and the other children left.

The town held a funeral for him in First Church of Oberlin on March 26, 1853. Nearly every person in town attended. In 1993, a beautiful granite memorial was erected in his honor at the grave site.

Another famous event took place that involved a group of African American students from Oberlin College in 1980.

Students re-enact Escape

Oberlin has had its share of problems, especially when the attention was turned away from the Tappan focus.

In 1980, students preparing to complete a senior project wanted to re-enact a slave escape. Reportedly the project had its detractors. They (the students) first wanted to travel by bus and write about the experience travelling leisurely through the South, recording some of the experiences in a journal. As the research was being compiled the event began taking on a life of its own. It was student David Hoard who suggested modifying the trip into a slave escape along the Underground Railroad. It was decided the students would dress in slave clothing, taking a bare minimum of food and trek the 420 miles the slaves had to travel, hiding out in barns, and being at the mercy of people along their way. One account told of the students actually facing a landowner who cursing and swinging a baseball bat, ordered them off his property. As they progressed, they attempted to stay close to the shoulder of the Highway 68. This precaution seemed ludicrous to them until an angry motorist, swerved to shout obscenities at the group. From then on they traveled along the bottom of the ditches, in fear for their lives. They never knew where they would stay, as the advance crew, secured permission from the friendly Abolitionists daily. The trek was to resemble, as closely as possible, the experience of the fleeing slaves.

Oberlin has at least 15 sites to visit on the Underground Railroad Experience. This is a place every Black person and every other race should visit. It tells the story and gives the history of an enslaved people, who in spite of the circumstances persevered.
Oberlinite Historian Traces Roots

Great Grandparents

Thomas and Catherine Brown are great grandparents of Thelma Quinn Smith, local historian and tour guide in Oberlin, Ohio. They can be traced in the early census of 1850 in Oberlin, Ohio. Thomas was a Cherokee Indian stolen as a child from his family in Kentucky at age nine. He was taken to Cincinnati, Ohio to train race horses. When he became a teenager he ran away and came to Oberlin. Due to racial conflicts in 1835-1837, many slave and free people of color were driven out by laws requiring $500 bond money and the Fugitive Slave Act. Thomas came to Oberlin where he married Catherine. Eliza Brown, Mrs. Smith's grandmother, their daughter was born thereafter in 1848. Thomas was pursued by slave catchers but the abolitionists of Oberlin whisked him away to Canada and an Indian reservation. They later bought property in the Elgin Settlement in Ontario, Canada. It was there that Eliza, his daughter, married Aaron Franklin Hatter.

On the paternal side of Mrs. Thelma Smith was her great grandmother, Winifred Carter Quinn Conner. Conner was born in Duplin County, N.C. in 1801, she was the daughter of Alexander Carter and his wife Sarah Herring.

They were prosperous merchants and plantation owners. They were a prominent colonial family of mixed English and Indian heritage (free people of color).

Winifred was deeded a gift of land in North Carolina from her father, November 21, 1820 of 146 acres on Mathews Branch called "Blizzard Place." She and her husband Enoch Quinn lived on this plantations later accumulating over 800 acres of land in Lenoir County, North Carolina. Enoch died in 1840 and Winifred's father died in 1853.

The period of 1835-1850 became very unstable for slaves and free people of color. These families had members of family serving in the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and also the Civil War. Many had returned to the South to fight for the Union Army to free the slaves and for the remainder of their families living there.

Winifred was the matriarch of this group who migrated to Ohio. By 1857, she had bought property in Cleveland, moving westward into Pittsfield, Sandusky County and bought property in Elmore and Oberlin, Ohio. Many descendants and their families continue to live in the areas today.

The Laughinghouse-Godette-Quinn reunion will celebrate seventy-five years family reunion in Oberlin, Ohio in 1997. Family heritage dates back to 1648 in Isle of Wight, Virginia.

Together in support of each other.

In 1853 Winifred remarried John Conner (also of mixed heritage) with whom she and fifty other relatives and friends migrated to Ohio as rumblings of the civil war were evident and life became a harsh reality of survival for them. These families had members of family serving in the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and also the Civil War. Many had returned to the South to help those in the Union Army to free the slaves and for the remainder of their families living there.

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Winifred died in 1874 in Oberlin and is buried in Westwood Cemetery. She deeded the homestead property to her son George Quinn and it remains in the family today.

Thelma Quinn Smith is a historian, who gives the Underground Railroad tour from a Black perspective. She is a 5th generation Oberlinite and has a great working knowledge of the history of the Underground Railroad. Some of her relatives can be found today in Canada.

George W. Halter, a runaway slave from Blue Field, West Virginia in 1837 went to Niagara Falls as a horse trainer. He bought land at the Elgin Settlement in 1850. George Halter is the father of Aaron Franklin Halter who married Eliza Brown.

Thelma Quinn Smith has spent a decade researching the family history as a "Legacy To My Children."

Another Canadian community in Raleigh Township, North Buxton is a museum that has recorded the history of the community and citizens who were fleeing an inhumane system of slavery lasting over 300 years. They were "brave Black Voice News warriors for Special Collectors Freedom." They served in the military, bled and died to protect their families and their nation. They lay beneath the sod but their memory shall live on.

Thelma Quinn Smith is doing what we should all do, "Tell The Story."

Special Collectors Edition

Underground Railroad Experience

17

Children of Joseph and Mary Quinn. 1st row: Ruby Caldwell, Sandusky, Ohio; William Quinn, World War I Vet, deceased; Beulah Williams, Sandusky, Ohio. 1st Row: Elsie Arnold, Sandusky, Ohio; Thelma C. Smith, Oberlin, Ohio; Josephine Weatherspoon, Las Vegas, Nevada.
Retracing the Underground Railroad

Map by Alex Powell
Not to scale
JOURNAL ENTRY - DAY 4 -

The day was jammed packed and we can never spend enough time at the Ford Museum. We saw the Street light that Garrett Morgan invented, the device that Grandville Woods invented to electrify the streetcar and move the generation into a new era. We saw the chair that he attached to an electric wire that made it possible to run away; hence, "sleep tight and don't let the bed bugs bite." The chair was sitting in when he was assassinated. He abolished slavery to save the Union. Following slavery, Africans invented many items. Grandville Woods invented the wheel that he attached to an electric trolley car. It is located with other inventions in the Ford Museum. Garrett Morgan invented the Stop Light it is also in the Ford Museum.

Did you know there were two kinds of slavery, task and gang. Hermitage is the example of a task plantation, the slaves were highly skilled and allowed when finished making items for the slave master, could make items to sell. Many saved and purchased their freedom. The slave houses on this plantation were not indicative of most enslaved people's dwelling places.

It was here that we learned what the saying &quot;sleep tight and don't let the bed bugs bite" meant. The beds were made out of corn shucks and rope. The shucks were full of bugs and by tightening up the ropes the shaking would make the bugs fall to the ground or the wooden floors and scurry away; hence, "sleep tight and don't let the bed bugs bite". The saying came from the slaves.

Also at the museum was the George Washington Carver Memorial that he even slept in. It is a tribute to his great work. Inside is an explanation of the uses he invented for the peanut and sweet potato; even though it began to rain and it was too cold to go in other times I visited the cabin. Boy, it was cold. I began to think about the last time I visited, the bus left me and I was on my own; so I was determined not to be left this time. Diane was surprised of the complexity of the sites and the history that she never learned before. No one wanted to leave Greenfield Village and if it were not so cold we probably would have lost someone.

We had lunch at the Taste of History restaurant at the museum and appropriately I had the George Washington Carver lunch. Can you guess what it was? Right! A peanut and jelly sandwich and roasted peanuts it was delicious and as I ate I thought of Carver and what he did for us. Everyone wanted my sandwich instead of ones loaded with deli meats.

After lunch it was back on the bus and a shorter drive but to another country, Canada. As we crossed under the Detroit River through the tunnel, Royal hollered “Freedom, Canada the land of freedom.” He began reflecting on how our ancestors must have felt coming to freedom.

The North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre houses implems used to help keep slaves in line and subservient. Next door is one of the few African Methodist Episcopal Churches remaining in Canada because of the abolitionist activities in the U.S. The churches became B.M.E. (British Methodist Episcopal).

Freedom was so precious that one young girl was shipped to Canada in this trunk. A close look shows the air holes. The trunk is on display at the North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre.

It was a full day and the next stop was the breaking point for me. Most had a point that the intensity of the trip and the history we were being exposed to became more than we could handle and we just cried. The weather set it up for me. It was cold and raining as we ran from the bus to get inside of the warm North American Black Historical Museum, just as the runaways did in the dead of winter. I walked into the familiar building and the strangest thing came over me, I was cold like my ancestors. I was scared because I didn't want the cold that had been threatening, to catch. I was scared because I didn't want the cold that had been threatening, to catch. I was scared because I didn't want the cold that had been threatening, to catch. I was scared because I didn't want the cold that had been threatening, to catch. I was scared because I didn't want the cold that had been threatening, to catch. I was scared because I didn't want the cold that had been threatening, to catch. I was scared because I didn't want the cold that had been threatening, to catch.

The cabin that the museum is built around was very cold, left that way showing how uncomfortable life was. There was a bed of sorts nothing like our Sertas of today. There was even a baby cradle and the cabin had been occupied up until around 20 years ago or so.

I saw the trunk that an 11 year old girl occupied as she was shipped to freedom. The high heels made by someone in the distant Africa probably the first to invent them. The more I looked at what our forefathers did for freedom, the more emotional I became and I wasn't alone others in the group were affected by the displays at his our first stop in freedom.

It was the movie that broke it for Diane and she discretely left the room coat in hand and tears in her eyes as the slave catchers brutalized a runaway on the movie screen.

(NOTE): This location has one of the best genealogy collections in Black Canada.

There was not enough time; back in the bus we continued our trek to find our place in this new land Canada.
Many times I’ve heard Detroit (pronounced Dātroit by natives) referred to as the Northern Star, but I didn’t understand the magnitude of the history of the city until my trek on the Underground Railroad.

The fleeing slaves could spend time in Oberlin, because it was a safe haven. There were people who would hide the slaves, because it was a part of their moral duty. And, the Abolitionists were both Black and White. There were many other historic stops of the Underground Railroad between Oberlin and Detroit, however we did not visit them, except for Cleveland, the place where the Oberlin-Wellington of the suffering from slavery to Jim Crow to the Civil there still wasn’t enough time. My appreciation for success. But when we followed our guide Dr. George DeBaptiste, grandson of Jean DeBaptiste and Pointe DuSable, and travel across the river to freedom in Canada. Or if the river was frozen over they would walk across to freedom. This was dangerous because slave catchers were stationed along the river. It was also dangerous because the river may not be frozen solid.

Bethel AME (African Methodist Episcopal) the oldest AME church in Michigan, was organized in 1839. Its founder, Bishop Richard Allen was a great abolitionist. In 1845, the first church was built and the basement was used for the first Detroit Public School classes for Black children. Among its members were, Dr. Joseph Ferguson, an agent for the Underground Railroad

George Washington Carver House

Slave cabin at Ford Museum
Leech questioned the growing practice of men with pierced ears, “the slave owner would pierce a male’s right ear to identify him as a slave for life.”

slaves were property they had no rights under the Constitution. Resentment grew because even free Blacks were sold back into enslavement. There was no escaping, except into another country. The country of choice was for some over 1000 miles and they, my ancestors, walked every step of the way.

The enslaved people arriving in Detroit:

By the time they arrived in Detroit the fleeing enslaved could see, feel and touch freedom that many of their own parents, grandparents and great-grandparents could only dream about. They died in slavery. They died building this nation. They died working for no pay. Many were beaten and killed at the hands of their masters. Families were sold, children taken away from their fathers and mothers separated from their children and husbands - husbands with whom they had jumped the broom.

The emotion from the presentation of Dr. Leech was strong. My amazement lessened, my smile left and the intensity of his words struck my heart as tears came to my eyes.

He reminded us that our culture from Africa was stripped from us and we even had to adopt the master's name. ALL Black people had slave names from their masters. He also reminded us that Thomas Jefferson, was also the father of children born into slavery. Times were tumultuous. There were uprisings and blatant disobedience to the unjust Fugitive Slave Law of 1850, a pet project of President James Buchanan.

The Civil War/Lincoln and Henry Ford Museum:

President Abraham Lincoln (1861-1865) followed Democrat Buchanan, he won on the anti-slavery platform. The handwriting was on the wall, Northerners wanted an end to the laws that governed slavery. Lincoln inherited the bad policies from the Buchanan administration, that sided with the Democratic, states rights leadership in the south. The war was fought after the southern states who wanted to maintain slavery, succeeded in 1860-1861 and set up their President, Jefferson Davis. Lincoln declared this illegal, and warned the Federal Forts in the south would be held by the government. Confederate forces attacked Fort Sumner on April 12, 1861 and the Civil War began. Brave Black men fought for freedom of slavery. In 1862, they formed the 54th and 55th Massachusetts, the first regiment formed by a northern state. Even the fleeing slaves who went to Canada came back to join the fight for freedom. In 1863 Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, giving freedom to all of the country’s enslaved people. Driven by the obsession to preserve the Union, he won and the long war ended two years later on April 9, 1865.

On April 14, 1865, Lincoln was assassinated by a Southern fanatic, John Wilkes Booth. Lincoln died the following day. Located in Detroit as a part of the UGRR discovery of my roots was the chair Lincoln was sitting in and the blanket used to cover him at the Henry Ford Museum located in Dearfield, Michigan.
The museum is not to be missed. Not only is the Lincoln display there, you can also visit the log cabin where George Washington Carver stayed. Inventions by African Americans, like Lewis Latimer, who developed the improved method for making filament for Edison's light bulb, Garrett Morgan who invented the traffic light we still use today, Grandville Woods, inventor of the Electric Trolley car and others. There is an original plantation the Hermitage House complete with slave quarters and many, many historical items too numerous to name.

A Visit To Historic Motown:

Back in Detroit a visit to Hitsville USA, the former Motown Studio and conglomeration is fascinating. It is close and up-front. This is where we met Berry Gordy's sister Esther and heard her speak about the original Motown days and the Gordy family. She has an unassuming polite reserved way of telling the story. She is the Gordy family keeper of the culture. She tells the story of how the empire was built through family cooperation. It wasn't easy she was the main holdout on the loan her brother needed to start his record label.

The story of Mr. Gordy, father of Berry and Esther gives the framework for the unparalleled success of his son. When he came to Detroit, in the wave of the people in the industrial revolution he opened a grocery store and named it Booker T. Washington Grocery Store. Everyone in the family worked together in the store. The Gordy's instilled the work ethic and excellence in all seven of their children. It was particularly disturbing to the family when Berry quit his secure job and decided to get into the record business. He had no money but the family members developed a bank for their own use. Berry had to go before the group to borrow the $500 needed to get started. He cleared 10 cents on his first record deal. Remember the hit record, Shop Around? When Smoky Robinson saw what all the hard worked netted them he encouraged Gordy to strike out on his own label. He did, but was only mildly successful. To be completely successful, he needed more labels with different names.

Disk Jockey's were not inclined to play different artist on the same label. Gordy peddled his records from the trunk of his car. The Motown sound was hot. He also developed venues for all of his artists. Since the recording artists for the most part came off the street, he had charm classes for each. They were taught they would be performing for kings and queens so they must be prepared. They were taught how to eat properly, how to walk, how to meet their fans, everything possible for their success.

The music was always uplifting. There were problems, this was at the height of the Civil Rights era and songs (one by The Temptations) addressed the issue in a positive way "And The Band Played On." The message was there, so was the hope.

It was the hope and the success of these the ancestors of the enslaved Africans, it was just the lift needed to face the trip across the water to Windsor, Canada and with the exception of Sandwich, Canada, freedom!

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Special Collectors Edition

Lincoln's Chair:

President Abraham Lincoln was sitting in this Victorian rocking chair at Ford's Theater (no relation to Henry Ford) on April 14, 1865, when he was assassinated. After the assassination, many items from the theater, including the chair, were seized by the War Department as evidence. The War Department deposited the chair in the Smithsonian Institution in 1867. There it remained until 1929 when the widow of the Ford's Theater manager petitioned the War Department for return of the chair, which was legally hers. She sold the chair at a public auction in New York in December, 1929. It was purchased by the famous antique dealer Israel Sack, who immediately sold it to Henry Ford.
JOURNAL ENTRY - DAY 5 -

Uncle Tom's Cabin, Never call anyone an Uncle Tom again, here's why!

Off to the awesome Uncle Tom's Cabin. Stephen Cook and Barbara Carter and Gary McDonald greeted the bus. They were surprised when I walked in.

After hugs and more hugs we heard the presentation led by Stephen.

Oh, how much the site has changed. Everyone knows Josiah Henson, “Uncle Tom” was based on a character in the book Uncle Tom's Cabin by Harriet Beecher Stowe (earlier in the trip we were at her home in Cincinnati) that depicted him as a subservient person. Stowe had heard his awful story of how his father had his ear cut off for hitting the White overseer after the man beat Henson's mother.

No one believed slavery was as bad as Stowe said, but later people realized the story was based on Josiah Henson, “Uncle Tom” was based on a Black overseer after the man beat Henson's mother.

Carter, his great great granddaughter is trying in her lifetime to erase anyone using the term “Uncle Tom” in a negative way because Henson was not what minstrels in black face for 80 years depicted him to be. He was an abolitionist going back to bring others on the Underground Railroad, he is responsible for over 100 making it to freedom. He went further though, many were unskilled and needed training so he started the first vocational school in all of Canada, not the first Black school, but the first school of its kind in the country. He purchased 200 acres of land. He went to England three times and visited with Queen Victoria who was impressed with the products he took that were made by the students at his school.

He was also a preacher.

His pulpit and organ are still in the church. The log cabin is the original one that he and his wife lived in and he is buried out in front of the site.

The rest of the museum, a new addition is full of Henson mementos and interactive stations. There is a section with an exercise giving the participant a chance to lift the log cabin to freedom. The people loved him and to this day he is revered by the ancestors of the area. In the museum is his bedroom suit, made by the formerly enslaved Africans who would rather be dead and in his grave than to be a slave. With a few words the group ran with dogs sounds at their heels to the bridge of freedom. The ground in the woods was slippery and when Dr. Kumbula hit the bridge to freedom he fell, but just like others who probably fell in the past he just got up and kept on running on the flight and ran as though they were being chased by slave catchers a very real threat in the 1800's. Out into the clearing the group was further told the story of John and Jane Walls.

Walls.

The evening was growing colder and it began to mimic the weather conditions the enslaved endured and no one could believe that this site would compare to the others, I felt them they really want to move on and when they arrived they were not disappointed. They were met by Allen Walls, the Conductor who began telling the story about the drops of red cloth and how some of the Africans were enslaved by following the pieces of cloth right up to the ship. The family cemetery is located there and the Rosa Parks Chapel is named for the famous visitor who visits every year. The group then met Winston who told the story of an original false bottom wagon which was the start of a realistic re-enactment of a run made by an enslaved African who would rather be dead than to be a slave. With a few words the group ran with dogs sounds at their heels to the bridge of freedom. The ground in the woods was slippery and when Dr. Kumbula hit the bridge to freedom he fell, but just like others who probably fell in the past he just got up and kept on running on the flight and ran as though they were being chased by slave catchers a very real threat in the 1800's. Out into the clearing the group was further told the story of John and Jane Walls.

A fictionalized account based on their 102 year old aunt Stella recollection over the years "The Road That Led To Somewhere" tells the Walls story. She kept the oral history alive and Dr. Bryan Walls authored the book. The entire 25 acres is a wonderful example of what is possible when families work together. They want to have control of the site and do not believe in government intervention.

On the site is the original the log cabin that belonged to the settlers, John and Jane Walls. The Simcoe Educational Center is named for the

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Governor that abolished slavery in Canada in 1833. Once inside the group was turned over to Dr. Bryan Walls who showed a video of the story. He ended by naming all who took the trek “Conductors” on the Underground Railroad and told each to do as Harriet Tubman save people and work for peace and harmony among all races of people.

This was my third time to visit the museum and because of the work I have done, writing and presentations as a “Conductor” I was honored with a promotion, he bestowed the title of “Abolitionist” on me. The emotion I felt the first time I was there was replaced with the feeling of pride in the success of the Walls family both then and now.

It was getting dark, and the rain was getting heavier and Francine was back on cajoling us to get on the bus to prepare for the soul food dinner and the concert with a Billie Holiday concert by Leslie McCurry. Diversions were necessary because the subject was so intense so we toured the Casino Windsor, soon to be replaced by a larger one that will be six blocks. Petra, Cheri, Phill and some of the others stayed a little longer and the bus took many of us back to the hotel.

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Underground Railroad Experience
Black Voice News
Special Collectors Edition

4TH ANNUAL
INLAND EMPIRE
BLACK ARTS FESTIVAL
FEBRUARY 19-22

THURSDAY
FRANCIS AWE AND THE NIGERIAN TALKING DRUM ENSEMBLE AT 6:00PM

SPECTACULAR INTERNATIONAL FASHION SHOW AND CREATIVE HAIR DESIGN STARTS AT 6:45PM

FRIDAY
DR. ERIC WALSH, MD AT 4:00PM
Q&A ABOUT PREVENTIVE MEDICINE

GOSPEL FEST STARTS AT 6:00PM
FEATURING CHOIRS, GROUPS AND CHRISTIAN DANCE

SATURDAY & SUNDAY
MAGIC WITH THE GREAT RAGUZI AT NOON
PLUS ON SATURDAY POETRY READING

ALL EVENTS ON THE HARRIS’ COURT STAGE
Canada The North Star: The End of Enslavement

Freedom Oh Freedom, before I be a slave I'd be buried in my grave... Follow the Drinking Gourd... and Follow the Northern Star. Canada was the heaven in many spirituals sung by the enslaved people. The gourd was the big dipper, and the North Star to which its handle points, served as a map that pointed to Canada. The gourd was also a dried squash that when cut in half made the drinking gourd. These gourds were placed at the right side of the door as a signal of a safe house to fleeing Africans. Many of the enslaved Africans who sought freedom in Canada through Windsor, were still in danger if they had not travelled far enough away from the border once they arrived. The community of Sandwich in the southwestern section of Windsor is one such place. The first passengers on the Underground Railroad came in the 1820's and by the 1830's some became permanent residents of Sandwich, where they built the Sandwich First Baptist Church.

The original structure was a log cabin built in 1848 six years after its founding by few members who were very poor, and in 1851 a brick structure replaced it. Families were asked to donate a certain number of bricks and time to build the church. These bricks were hand-made and baked by the ex-slaves and their families. The beautiful hardwood floor, windows and ceiling were hand carved by the hands of the ex-slaves and their families. Inside the church the beautiful wood was redone using the original wood. It was simply turned around.

The church in Canada was and is a source of strength. I met no one who didn't attend a church. In fact, in every settlement we visited the church is the primary focus of the community. We began with prayer before the historical presentations were made and, it was noted in every presentation that most of the freed enslaved people were strong Christians.

After the presentation of all the activities the church is involved in today our group was taken on a tour of the 150 year old church. On the outside are still the bricks made by the ex-slaves.

What took my breath was the escape route in the aisle of the church. The fleeing Africans would be ushered through a trap door, down the steps, through a window in the bottom of the church and out into the woods surrounding the church. My ancestors ran for their lives where I was standing. An eerie feeling came over me.

Canada was not always free of slavery. According to The Freedom Seekers: Blacks In Early Canada, by Daniel G. Hill, the first Black to arrive there came in 1628, a ship carried a Black slave child from Madagascar. The area at this time was called New France which was a French colony, ruled for 35 years by the Company of New France, King Louis XIV tried to strengthen the colony and appointed a governor, Jean Talon. Talon and some of the community citizens complained to the King that they could not develop because of the shortage of servants and workers. French law forbade slavery but in 1689 limited approval was given to permit slavery there. After the approval was given, Blacks and Pawnee Indians were purchased to work as household servants and field hands. And by 1709 the King gave full permission for slave ownership. "Black slaves are certainly the only people to be depended upon..." said General James Murray, first British governor of Quebec in 1763. British Loyalists who left dissident territories and moved north to re-establish their families were offered generous grants and permission to bring their slaves.

In 1791, Upper Canada, which takes in the areas accessed through Detroit, was developed. Amherstburg accessed through the narrowest point in the river had been settled by 1784 when Colonel Matthew Elliott brought 60 slaves he captured during the American Revolution. And passage of the first anti-slavery law in 1787 that abolished slavery in the American Northwest territories, the law did not take hold until 1796. Detroit was both a free American territory and...
slave British territory at the same time. Some of the fleeing slaves swam across the River to freedom in Detroit. Opposition to slavery was being heard in England, William Wilberforce introduced a bill in the House of Commons to stop the importation of slaves. One of his supporters was John Graves Simcoe, who later became the Governor of Upper Canada. He was instrumental in a new law in 1793 that allowed the existing slaves, outlawed new ones and gave freedom to any child born to a slave mother at the age of 25.

The law helped to turn the tide of public opinion and by 1800 most enslaved Canadians were free. The short growing season, rendered slaves unproductive in the winter and it became expensive to keep cloth and feed them throughout the long winters. When the word trickled down in the United States that people would not be enslaved in Canada, American slaves slowly began to follow the North Star...the Drinking Gourd and a better life than the harsh slavery that existed in the United States. According to the Attorney General of Upper Canada, John Beverly Robinson, soon after the War of 1812 any Black reaching Canada was free forever.

At the North American Black Historical Museum and Cultural Centre, the African culture is deep. It is from Africa that much of the culture is derived and our history begins. Many of the utensils, and the lifestyles were directly from our native habitat. There is proven information about the lengths fleeing Africans went to escape. The history has been passed down and going to Amherstburg is just like going back in time to the 1800's.

My enslaved ancestors escaped anyway possible: in false bottom wagons, in tattered clothing, in the finest of finery, through a system of barns, attics and secret rooms, even in boxes, a coffin and trunks and using an array of signals. One 11 year old girl was shipped to Canada in a trunk with very small inconspicuous air holes. She arrived safely. The trunk is in the museum. Also in the museum is history of the churches, the schools, the military and life in general in the Amherstburg area. Next door, an AME (African Methodist Episcopal) Church is being restored. Although the AME Church was deemed too political in Canada because of the Abolitionist activities of the founder and members, many Canadian AME Churches became BME (British Methodist Episcopal), and remain BME today.

The fleeing enslaved people were ingenious they used a system that zigzagged and doubled back as well as changed courses. There were many ways to get to Canada. One of the most valuable tools carried by the fleeing enslaved Africans was a bag of black pepper. It was used to throw the dogs off the fleeing man/woman's scent and allow them time to escape.

First Baptist Church (called by some John Brown's Meeting House) is also a historic building located in Chatham. It was founded in 1841 by refugees who were formerly enslaved in the United States. This site is where one of the last of a series of meetings held by White abolitionist John Brown, and an integrated group of supporters in May of 1858 met prior to the planned raid at Harper's Ferry. John Brown was born into a religious family May 9, 1800. His father was a station master in the Underground Railroad and a Trustee at Oberlin College (Ohio). Their home was a haven for fleeing Africans. It was in Chatham that he developed his Master Plan to empower the enslaved people in his country. First Baptist is where the forty-eight article Constitution was completed. Part of his secret plan led him to the Federal Arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. He was hanged December 2, 1859, "I am very prosperous still and looking forward to a time when peace on earth and goodwill to men shall everywhere prevail," was his final note. Many brave people both White and Black gave their all for the cause.

Canada was heaven for the formerly enslaved African people. They were the artisans, the skilled craftsmen, the builders, and the businesspersons. They built a new life in a new land and many returned time after time to show others the way to the North Star and FREEDOM.
Although Canada had a history of enslavement, segregation, prejudice and cold weather, it was still heaven to the formerly enslaved Africans, who were many times brutally beaten and separated from their families.

The proud tradition of the African Canadians (they are torn between referring to themselves as Black, Colored or African Canadian) is catalogued in the centennial museum, the original site of the Elgin settlement. The Elgin settlement located in North Buxton in Raleigh County, Ontario, Canada, was a community where arriving refugees could become self-sufficient. Probably the first land use planning areas in Canada were here. The refugees were given an opportunity to own land, build a house and develop a self-sufficient community.

For many, the Elgin settlement was the last stop on the Underground Railroad. The settlement was founded by Rev. William King, a Presbyterian minister who was loved by the refugee settlers. He formed the idea of a plan for refugee settlement in 1846.

But Rev. King in 1848 inherited 14 enslaved Africans after the death of his father-in-law, (his wife and children preceded his father-in-law in death), causing him great embarrassment. He petitioned the church to allow him to step down until he could take care of this problem. It took about two years to settle the will with the rest of the family. He picked up a Black child along the way and when he returned to the Ohio farm he told all of the enslaved, they were free. Then he invited them to stay on the farm with him for the winter and then join him in Canada to live as free persons in his proposed settlement. All 15 went with him. During the winter the Blacks attended school to learn all they could about farming, carpentry and any other skills they needed in the new land.

According to Daniel Hill in The Freedom Seekers: Blacks In Early Canada, there were a considerable number of free Blacks settlers in the region due to first the loyalist movement before and after the American Revolution, in 1776, after the time of Black Codes. In the beginning of the 1800s midwestern states passed laws to limit the rights of free Blacks. Ohio's code banished Blacks and mulattoes unless they could show a certificate of freedom from the courts. Employers could be fined for hiring a Black with no certificate. Blacks could not settle in the state unless, within 20 days, they showed proof that they could support themselves, posted a $500 bond and gave other assurances of good behavior.

King was convinced Blacks could succeed if they could own land. The church gave approval and the plan moved forward. It was not, however, without opposition. Edwin Larwill, an influential member of the political community said Blacks were inferior, property would be devalued and respectable citizens would leave the area. He organized a vigilante committee. In 1849, three hundred people mostly in opposition, came together. A group of Blacks were also there to assure and support Rev. King. One other White man spoke out in favor of the Black settlement named Archibald McKellar.

Larwill protested to the Parliament and recommended that Blacks be barred from public schools, and public office, that they should pay a poll tax and the question of the Blacks voting should be examined. He additionally recommended Blacks be required to post bonds to stay in Canada. He lost community support with his unauthorized recommendations. The settlement was founded, November 28, 1849, with King and the 15 formerly enslaved persons, and Issac Riley and family, Elgin's first settlers.

The settlement was supported by the Presbyterian church who supervised the chapel, schools, and in Canada took up a collection to help the settlement. Restrictions, convenants and rules of land use were placed on each land owner. They purchased one acre, at $2.50 and had 10 years to pay it off. They had to build a log home, 18x24 ft. and 12 ft. high. There had to be no fewer than four rooms and it had to have a 33 ft. setback from the property line. They also had to plant flowers and vegetables.

King was determined to be successful. Blacks should own property and pass it down to their heirs. A clause in the deed was they could not sell to a White person for 10 years. The land could not be rented or sharecropped until it was paid off. King taught the residents to become self-sufficient and even though many were hired by the railroad, he'd warn them not to depend on the railroad money. They would earn more in the long run by developing their land, Rev. King even helped established the AME and Baptist Church, of which the Blacks were familiar.

By 1850 a post office, church/school were built and adults and children attended from Elgin and nearby communities. When the school opened there were fourteen Black children and two Whites. The parents of the White children sent them because of the excellent teachers. The education in the Buxton School in Elgin became so superior to the state run schools that by 1854 Blacks and Whites had to compete for spots in the school and another school had to be opened. Students were reciting long passages of Latin and Greek and the notion that Blacks could only do menial work was shattered as students began leaving the area to teach in other communities and countries. Elgin children began to teach the adults at night.

No liquor was allowed in Elgin, but a store was opened outside of the settlement. It was closed from a lack of business.

Business quickly developed and the settlement was very prosperous. By 1853, they attracted 30 families. They developed their own savings bank and kept the money in their own community. They owned cattle, developed a potash industry, sawmills, gristmills, a brickyard, a good country store, and they built a railroad line. They were governed by an arbitration board made up of local citizens. There was no crime.

People started to leave the settlement by the time of the Civil War, to help the United States war effort. Many returned to restart their lives, others went to Haiti, the U.S., and other Canadian cities.

As Elgin grew and thrived, the opposers, were by 1856, ready to acknowledge the settlement's
Popular jockeys were used as signals to fleeing enslaved persons.

And to further show their appreciation, the settlers, late in 1856 cast their votes to throw out Larwill in an overwhelming defeat, and elected McKellar. The prejudice in Chatham began to disappear when the settlers were able to cast over 200 votes and controlled the election.

Elgin produced some of the finest citizens in Canada and the world. It was the hope of a proud people: Canada's first Black doctor Anderson Ruffin Abbott Canadian born and an American Congressman; James T. Rapier, who fought for and won the passage of 1895 Civil Rights Act; Abraham Shadd, one of the very few Blacks to become a commissioned officer in the Union Army; and Artis Lane the only Black artist commissioned to do art for the celebration of the Statue of Liberty, but was dismissed by the committee when she refused to remove the tear from the eye of a Black man draped in an American Flag.

After Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation many of the settlers began to move back to the southern states in the U.S.

Today North Buxton is still home to the descendants of the original settlers who stayed. It is active but does not flourish as it once did. They continue to remember and preserve their roots through the Raleigh Township Centennial Museum. It is home to a bedroom suite handmade by the grateful people freed by Rev. King with whom he started the Elgin Settlement. It includes his diary, as well as many implements used by the settlers in everyday life.

In the second school built, an original classroom remains as it was last used. It includes many maps and charts that showed the way for the fleeing enslaved people of America. A gourd sits by the door of a house to show how fleeing Africans actually followed the drinking gourd. It was not only symbolic of the Big Dipper but was an actual gourd that if sat by the right side of the door, was a signal of a safe house on the UGRR. The jockey who is offensive to Blacks today was a warm sight for those on the UGRR. If the lamp he was holding was lit or there was a red rag tied to it, that meant safety to those fleeing from enslavement.

North Buxton remains one of a very few pre-civil war Black communities in existence today. The lives of the people who remain reflect the same determination, dedication and tenacity as their ancestors.
Uncle Tom of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* was not a fictional character. He was as real as we are, and if Josiah Henson’s grand-daughter, Barbara Carter has anything to say about it she will make it unacceptable to use her great great grandfather’s name in a derogatory way. According to his own writings and of information passed down, Josiah Henson was a genius.

"My great great grandfather was a visionary," she said. He could not read or write but he narrated a book about his life. He fled slavery and escaped to Canada in 1830. He established the FIRST vocational school in Canada. He taught the arriving refugees how to survive in the cold climate. He even made several trips back (to the United States) to show the way (to Canada) to our enslaved ancestors who wanted freedom.

"Our family does not appreciate the way he is now depicted. If you knew him you would know calling someone an Uncle Tom should mean a person would have some pretty big shoes to fill."

When Harriet Beecher Stowe published her book *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in 1851, she used incidents in the life of Rev. Josiah Henson, whose book was published in 1849 and of other enslaved Africans to tell of the horrors of the institution of slavery. She was the daughter of a Quaker Minister and grew up detesting slavery. Before writing the book she interviewed Henson who related the story about his father.

Henson, who was born in Charles County, Maryland on June 15, 1789, said his father’s right ear was cut off and had received 100 lashes on his back for beating the White overseer who had brutally beaten Henson’s mother. His father changed after that (according to his autobiography, *The Life of Josiah Henson*) and was sold. The master shortly thereafter died in an accident, brought on by drinking and fighting. The family was sold individually, and so heart broken was his mother to lose her children that she begged her new owner to purchase her youngest son. He didn’t and Henson took sick with the new master. He was not expected to live and was sold at a loss to the owner of his mother. Her nurturing proved to be what the doctor ordered and Henson fully recovered.

It was his mother who first taught him the Lord’s Prayer and a smattering of religion. This instilled in him a insatiable desire to know more about Christianity. He was standing near a church one day when he heard a preacher speak about Jesus and how He died for everyone, “He died for the rich, the poor and even the slave in chains.” He committed to memory what he heard that day.

Henson’s master, Isaac Riley, lived a life of drinking, gambling, and fighting with other farmers on Saturday nights. It was the duty of the enslaved Africans to break up the fights and take the masters home. Once this led to Henson being brutally beaten for hitting an overseer. His arm and collar bone was so badly damaged that he could never again raise them normally. This master took the matter to court and won. This act along with Henson’s desire to please his master endeared him and made him very loyal to Riley. Henson handled the business of the plantation. He was successful at doubling the crops and was trusted with the management of the farm. He became the overseer. However the riotous living caught up with Riley, he lost the farm and the slaves were to be sold.

In 1825 Riley went to Henson and begged him to flee with the other slaves to his brother’s plantation in Kentucky. Please with the confidence Riley placed in him, Henson journeyed, 1000 miles to Kentucky, he his wife, two children and 18 other enslaved people. He arrived after having to sell the horse and wagon to buy a boat to finish the journey. Along the way he ran across people in Cincinnati who encouraged him to break for freedom but he had given his word and in April of 1825 he arrived at the brothers farm. The enslaved people at Amos Riley’s farm numbered 80 to 100, Henson’s ability of farm management was recognized and soon he was serving in the same capacity, this gave him time to improve his learning about the word of God. He began preaching throughout the area and was accepted as a Methodist Episcopal preacher. His preaching netted him over $200 and he was ready to buy his freedom.

In 1828, he secured a pass from Amos Riley to visit his former master Isaac Riley in Maryland to secure his freedom. Henson was tricked, the stated price of $350 was increased to $1000 and because he could not read or write what he signed, he was once again in the same situation; enslaved. He returned to Kentucky and was told a
Marker in front of Josiah Henson House erected by Ontario Heritage Foundation, Ministry of Culture and Recreation that reads:

“In this house lived the Reverend Josiah Henson (1789 - 1883) whose early life in slavery provided much of the material for Harriet Beecher Stowe’s novel, "Uncle Tom’s Cabin." Born in Maryland, Henson escaped in 1830 to Upper Canada. In 1841, he and a group of abolitionists purchased 200 acres in this vicinity and established a vocational school known as the British American Institute, for fugitive slaves. A saw-mill and grist-mill were built, and a considerable number of former slaves settled here. After emancipation was proclaimed in 1863, many returned to the United States, but Henson continued to occupy this house until his death, and is buried nearby.”

year later to accompany the owner’s son Amos, Jr. to New Orleans. Henson found out there was a plan to sell him in New Orleans. While on the trip Amos, Jr. became ill and nearly died. Henson nursed him and took him back to the plantation but received no thanks. He woke up! There was no intention to do right by him and after discussing it with his wife, the family took off for Canada. They arrived after a difficult journey and because of his skills immediately got a decent job and a place to stay.

He acquired some livestock and soon became a leader among the formerly enslaved Africans. He preached and encouraged the Blacks to save their money to buy land. Meanwhile he made return trips to the south and organized groups of people who wanted freedom. In 1834 he found land to purchase. As a result of his fund-raising efforts in England £1,500 was raised and with it he purchased 200 acres of land which contained white wood and black walnut trees. From that a saw mill, a blacksmith shop, a carpenter shop and other necessary businesses were developed. But the need was for the refugees to learn trades and skills so that their community would be self-sufficient. Henson, who could not read or write then founded a school. Boys were taught trades and girls were taught to cook and sew.

According to The Freedom-Seekers, Blacks in Early Canada by Daniel G. Hill, Henson met a Congressional minister and abolitionist named Hiram Wilson and began the plan for the Dawn Settlement near Dresden, Canada, in an area where many Blacks had already settled. Wilson wrote to James C. Fuller, a Quaker philanthropist in New York and invited him to the area to see for himself the desperate needs of the Black refugees. He accepted and became convinced that this could be successful. He had contacts in England and was able to raise money for the settlement.

The group had purchased some land and The British American Institute was born. It was a boarding school offering elementary education with an emphasis on industrial and manual training. Property around the school was reserved for families connected with it. Students were taught free of charge over the age of fifteen. They were to pay $1.00 for food and lodging and they would be paid 5 cents an hour for work performed.

Henson visited towns in New England to study lumber operations because of the excellent timber on their property.

Henson also traveled to England to raise money for the institute. On his first visit in 1850 he took walnut products which he displayed at the Crystal Palace, the Queen and her attendants took notice of his great exhibition at that time.

On his second visit in 1852 he was called home because of the illness of his wife who died shortly after he arrived and by 1876 on his third visit Henson was received by Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle.

Jealousy, arguments, and accusations of mismanagement, which were later proved to be false, took its toll on the reputation of Dawn. Some Blacks in Chatham argued that the segregated town encouraged prejudice and said Whites and Natives should be included in the school and on the governing board (State run schools were inferior). They said the goal should be to integrate with other Canadians. Articles in the Provincial Freeman, a Black newspaper, written by the former secretary-treasurer of the institute Rev. William P. Newman further damaged the institute’s name and the morale of its staff.

After the circulation of an embarrassing document, a committee of Henson’s friends sent John Scoble, (a former friend of Henson’s) secretary of his own board and began using it for his own benefit. The area became rundown and Canadian Blacks were offended. They stepped in and Newman, and the editors of Provincial Freeman all attacked Scoble and to a lesser degree Henson. By 1860 the board of trustees who had not turned their powers over to Scoble began legal action against him. Scoble left, and a new board of trustees sold the land and assets and used the $40,000 proceeds to set up the Wilberforce Educational Institute in Chatham, Ontario Canada.

Before his (Henson’s) death in 1883, he desired to return to the Isaac Riley Plantation in Maryland. When he did, he was shocked by the dilapidated condition of the place. Riley had died many years before but his widow greeted him. According to The Story of Uncle Tom by William Chapple, she said to him, “you are dressed like a gentleman.” “Ma’am,” said Henson respectfully, “I always was.”

He turned away from the miserable conditions and went to visit his mother’s grave where he made new resolutions to live and to honor her name throughout the rest of his life.

He died at the age of 94, after a three day illness.

His grave is located in front of his log cabin home. His pulpit now stands in a replicated church of the same period because his church burned down. There are other structures of that time period and a newly built beautiful museum and multipurpose building which houses a conference room, a store, and other rooms. It is run by his great great grand-daughter and their family.

“Tell the story of Uncle Tom. Remember for 85 years minstrels traveled the world in blackface making fun of Uncle Tom and distorting our history. They were so successful that we (Blacks) all over the world bought into it. This is not true and I hope in my lifetime to change it,” said Barbara G. Carter.

For information call, (519) 862-2291.
The Underground Terminus

The terminus of the UGR in this part of Canada was Maidstone Township, the location of the John Freeman Wells Historic Site and Underground Railroad Museum.

Each site we visited was unique and special and it was an experience I will never forget. This museum traced the journey of African Canadians from Africa across the Atlantic Ocean through the United States and on into Canada and freedom. It realistically portrayed what our ancestors had to endure. My trip through the woods, with the sound of dogs at my heels, seemed so real that it caused me to have an emotional release. The tears flowed and one of the organizers, concerned about my reaction, was quick to pat me on the shoulder and have an emotional release. The tears with the sound of dogs at my heels, say it was alright. Oh, but what my ancestors had to endure!

We were met by a train whistle and a Walls family member. Allen Walls, who took his job very seriously, greeted us dressed in a conductor's uniform, and waited in front of what appeared to be a railroad depot. This dramatic site is not your typical museum. In our sight were markers highlighting the distance of various states from which the enslaved Africans escaped. Some escaped in false bottom wagons, and one greets you with a person still hiding inside.

The 20 acre property is heavily wooded. And the trip, simulating the journey of a fleeing enslaved Black, took us through the woods over a creek and into freedom on the other side. On the site, which is owned by the family of John and Jane Walls, is their log cabin, barn, the Rosa Parks Peace Chapel, the Sir John Simcoe Educational Resource Log Cabin, and Clifford E. Walls Dinner Theater One, (a dinner house, and a restaurant). Also are railroad cars full of family mementos including those of famous Boxing Hall of Famer, Earl Walls.

However, the museum is mainly a tribute to John and Jane Walls who came to Canada to find peace and to bring enslaved persons to freedom. The fictionalized but historical story of the Walls family, is found in the book The Road That Led To Somewhere, by Dr. Bryan Walls, a retired dentist and member of the Walls' fourth generation.

In the early 1800's, John was the property of Eli Walls and then his son, Daniel, of North Carolina. John's mother raised Daniel because his mother died during childbirth. Hannibal was John's father, and was killed by plantation owners who caught him during a daring escape to freedom. John's mother was sold after the escape, and John remained on the plantation because of his excellent skills at carpentry and running the tobacco farm. Additionally, Daniel had grown up with John as a brother. It was Daniel who gave words of wisdom to his father, Eli, who died shortly after Hannibal's escape. Daniel understood that keeping John would benefit the plantation. John was torn between his loyalty to Daniel and his insatiable desire to be free in Canada. John always remembered his father's words, "remember, the side of the tree the moss grows on and the north star, is the way to freedom to Canada, like my native Africa."

The desire to be free was so strong that, he gave himself the middle name "Freeman." Years passed and his master Daniel was dying and called in his wife Jane, and his slave John. His first order of business was to sign John's manumission papers making him a free man. The second was to ask John to take care of his wife Jane and their four children. The three had grown very close, and neither Daniel or Jane believed in slavery. Before long John and Jane fell in love. This was surely a death sentence for John and probably Jane as well, whose family was so famous they named a mountain: after them. She came from the King family and was of Scottish and Irish lineage. Before anyone could find out about their relationship, they left Rockingham County, North Carolina (near Raleigh).

For a period of time they stayed in Indiana with Ephriam and Mary Stout, a Quaker couple who was active in the UGR. Meanwhile, Jane returned to the North Carolina plantation to bring back others who were still enslaved. She was successful and before long, the couple was married in a civil ceremony as well as a broom jumping ceremony (the only way slaves were allowed to marry).

Interracial marriages were unheard of at that time and even the most liberal persons objected. They were able to get away with it because one of the women on the plantation who escaped with them pretended to be John's wife, while Jane acted as their master.

John and Jane traveled on to Canada before long. As they had done before, when they were stopped by Slave Catchers he became her slave who was sent with her by her husband to visit relatives. They would explain that he was accompanying her as protection. At one point she had to whip him in front of Slave Catchers to...
save his life. The deception didn't last long, soon there was a hefty bounty out for both of them as they found out when they pulled a notice describing them off a tree.

The family, Jane, and her children by Daniel and John arrived in Canada in the summer of 1845. The family settled in Amerthurstberg for a year and finally moved a good 20 miles, as far away from others as possible. It was deep in the woods away from Windsor where the Slave Catchers and roving bands would not travel. By 1858 census records found that they owned a log cabin, two oxen, eight cows, three sheep, six horses, two dogs, and twenty-five acres of land. Their home became a haven for enslaved people fleeing from the hideous Fugitive Slave Law of 1850. The law made it a crime for ordinary citizens to refuse to assist a slave catcher.

The Walls were safe and their home became the final terminal on the UGR.

The museum is in receipt of a letter from the Stout's dated December 19, 1854. It was in response to a letter Jane sent telling them they would help anyone fleeing slavery. The Stout's gave fleeing Africans a map to the Walls home. Many found their way and brought greetings from the Stout's.

John and Jane had six children, Henry, the firstborn of their union married a native Parthena, daughter of an Indian, White Cloud. It was Martha one of the twins, who was the mother of Aunt Stella, the family griot.

Aunt Stella lived to be 102, and died in 1986. Aunt Stella was 23 years old when Jane and John died, one year apart, she was 88 and he was 96 years. Blacks, one never married, and Daniel Jr. died from an illness when the family moved to the final homestead.

Members of the Walls family taught peace, harmony, love, and tolerance for all people. They feel the world would be a better place if only people showed the love for each other that Jane and John showed. They are God fearing Christians and working hard to preserve the heritage of the family. “This generation, my uncles, brothers, sisters and others are doing what we can. When we die our children will take it to another level,” said Bryan Walls.
The Duff-Baby House, Harris

The next morning we were off to more in Canada. The Duff-Baby House, housed a runaway (Andrew) and his master came looking for him. A diary from 1830 tells the story. He waited until everyone went to church and tried to abduct him. It just so happened the man of the house remained behind and he confronted the slave catching slave master, who explained he wanted his property back and Baby gave the runaway a choice.

Driving on we stopped a short distance at the historical Sandwich Baptist Church, the first stop for many enslaved Africans. It was so strategically place that slave catchers regularly interrupted services to catch a runaway. The church had a plan. When someone arrived the preacher began singing there is a stranger in The House, and the members went into their mode, taking the floorboard up to reveal a tunnel that led to the outside a window and freedom.

The church was build over 100 years ago in 1851. It remains the very heart of the community and the bricks which were hand made from the clay in the Detroit River by the founding families of the church still hold the up the building. They are known by the coloration and the special flare taken by each family to make their bricks.

After a lucrative trip to the Tunnel Duty Free Shopper it was back to the United States. We were warned not to play with the Boarder Patrol and we didn't. Francine didn't leave us but there was a smooth transition when we arrived back in Detroit. The mantle was passed on to Cheri.

The next place to go there was the new Museum of African American History. This very beautiful building housed an outstanding exhibit. It was here where Petra had her awakening. Diana came and said she thought she needed a shoulder to cry on. When I found her she was crying her eyes out. She boo hooed about the lynchings she read about there. She was devastated. It wasn't that she didn't believe the lynchings occurred it was an all too real reminder of the history of where and what she lived.

Cynthia, Phill, Julia, Terry, the Hannahs, and Petra wanted to go visit the Motown Museum and after seeing the centerpiece of the first one, a slave ship complete with 50 life size models of school children chained on the ship. Each statue took on a life of its own. The museum is the largest one of its kind in the world.

At dinner later that evening we were treated to a professional storyteller Ivory Williams who kept us on our toes with little communication games.

Sandwich Baptist Church, the first stop for many enslaved Africans

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