



Editorial

The Graying of the Underground Railroad Community

Well, Underground Railroad community, have you looked in the mirror lately? We have and what we see is quite a bit of gray. Distinguished of course, but worrisome in considering the Underground Railroad's future.

The last ten years or so have seen a near miraculous resurgence of interest in the Underground Railroad with the founding of Cincinnati's splendid National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, two federal programs, an upswing in Underground Railroad education, books and a supportive press, a national Underground Railroad bicycle trail and more. Even *Underground Railroad Free Press*.

Lasting credit must go to the entrepreneurs, elected officials, site owners, preservationists, writers, teachers, historians and others who made this happen. Many kudos to them.

But, as we saw from the 2008 *Free Press* survey, only one person in six in the international Underground Railroad community is younger than fifty. More than forty percent are either past retirement age or close to it. This wouldn't be a problem if younger people were coming aboard but this does not appear to be happening to a great degree. You can view or download our annual survey reports from the *Free Press* website.

There is probable unanimity that this is not a desirable situation but it is harder to see what to do about the problem. Here are our suggestions.

Recruitment

Make it a point in your organization to recruit young entry-level people and more seasoned talent under 50 and turn them into Underground Railroad fans if they aren't already.

Mentoring, Tutoring, Shadowing

Take young (or not so young) people under your wing and enthuse them. Give them a close taste of your Underground Railroad work.

(continued on page two)

Underground Railroad Free Press®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

urrfreepress.com

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More Good Underground Railroad Reading

An occasional series of reviews of books on the Underground Railroad and related topics

Following her *Forbidden Fruit: Love Stories From the Underground Railroad* of 2005, Betty DeRamus's *Freedom By Any Means* is due out by Simon & Schuster on February 3.

Said Kirkus Reviews of *Freedom By Any Means*, "Journalist DeRamus depicts the various canny and courageous ways in which slaves outfoxed their circumstances to gain freedom. She follows her protagonists as much as she can into their later lives, to see where their acts led them . . . sometimes to great achievement." Among the most riveting is the story of Frank Wanzer, ancestor of Washington DC sculptor Allen Nelson. In 1855, Wanzer led three freedom seekers from Virginia to Canada and in 1856 went back and rescued three more.

Of *Forbidden Fruit*, DeRamus says, "My book is a collection of mostly little-known stories about enslaved and free black people who went to extraordinary lengths to stay together during the slavery era, fighting blood-

hounds, bounty hunters, wolves, mobs and traitors. It includes stories about slavery-era interracial couples who escaped to Canada so they could marry. I've always been fascinated by this period of turmoil, tragedy and triumph, the perfect backdrop for stories about the power of faith and love."

DeRamus, an award-winning *Detroit News* columnist, was previously an editorial writer with *The Detroit Free Press* (which is not affiliated with *Underground Railroad Free Press*) and finalist for the 1993 Pulitzer Prize for Commentary for her columns about the Los Angeles riots after the Rodney King verdict. DeRamus was one of a handful of journalists present to witness Nelson Mandela walk out of prison in 1990.



Call for 2009 Free Press Prize Nominations

Underground Railroad Free Press is again pleased to honor the international Underground Railroad community with the annual Underground Railroad Free Press Prizes.

Free Press encourages interested parties to submit nominations for the 2009 Prizes which will be awarded on September 15 by the *Free Press* Prize Panel of Judges for outstanding achievements in contemporary Underground Railroad leadership, preservation and the advancement of knowledge. The three prizes are the highest honors bestowed in the international Underground Railroad community.

As the Underground Railroad was international, *Free Press* encourages nominations of Canadians and others. The members of the *Free Press* Prize Panel of Judges are international.

Nominations submitted before June 1 will be judged for 2009 prizes; any submitted later will be considered for the 2010 prizes. **Persons or organizations nominated in a previous year are eligible to be nominated again.**

Nominees should not be made aware that they are being nominated, nor should nominators or others contact Prize judges. Except for the three Prize winners, names of nominees are not revealed by *Underground Railroad Free Press* or the judges. Please direct questions to publisher@urrfreepress.com.

Winners of the three 2009 prizes will be announced by *Underground Railroad Free Press* in the September 15, 2009, issue and prizes awarded soon afterward.

Please visit our web site at urrfreepress.com to download nomination forms and instructions or for more information on the prizes. Nominations may be completed only on these forms and are submitted via email.

The following 2008 *Free Press* Prize winners won against highly qualified competition.

David A. Anderson, Leadership

Dr. Anderson was cited for his lifelong contributions in reawakening the nation's memory of the Underground Railroad, dramatic portrayals of Frederick Douglass and other Underground Railroad figures, and founding of several educational organizations.

Tom Calarco, Advancement of Knowledge

Mr. Calarco was cited for his ground-breaking research and books revealing the Underground Railroad along the eastern tier of New York state from New York City to Canada.

Maryliz and Paul Stewart, Preservation

The couple was honored for their discovery and preservation of the Stephen Myers home, an Underground Railroad safe-house in Albany, New York, and for their founding of an Underground Railroad historical group there.

Family Legacies

Be sure to pass on your prized legacy. Site owners and descendants of Underground Railroad figures have a special opportunity and responsibility in getting their children and grandchildren involved.

Continue Expanding Awareness

And keep doing what you've been so successful at: start new organizations, open sites to the public, write, publicize, research, gather and let us know how we can help.

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Free Press Prize Nominations

Visit urrfreepress.com to learn more about these annual prizes and to download a nomination form

Underground Railroad Free Press®

Independent Reporting On
Today's Underground Railroad

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Tubman Home Overrun By Transmission Line

These days, what energy companies want, energy companies usually get, especially putting power plants and electric transmission lines in the wrong places.

The Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged, a registered National Historic Landmark, sits well back from Auburn, New York's South Street on the way out of town. Its grounds comprise 26 acres surrounded by woods and but for one intrusion are the picture of pastoral tranquility. Cleaving the park-like setting it in two are the towering high-voltage transmission lines shown here.



The Home for the Aged and Tubman's own home next door are owned by Auburn's Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Federal law enacted during the Bush administration gave all decision-making over siting of electric transmission and gas pipe lines to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) which has been rightly accused of being too friendly with the energy industry and its lobbyists. Lobbying expenditures by the energy industry came to more than \$286 million in 2008 and over \$2 billion in the last ten years. Energy firms donated more than \$68 million in "campaign contributions" in 2008.

This largesse paid for what the energy industry wanted: FERC decisions now pre-empt all

Updates

Bicycle Route Wins Award

We earlier reported on the Adventure Cycling Association's 2,028-mile Underground Railroad Bicycle Route from the Gulf of Mexico to Canada. The Route has been honored with the American Trails National Partnership Award. Visit AdventureCycling.org for more.

Underground Railroad Educational Film

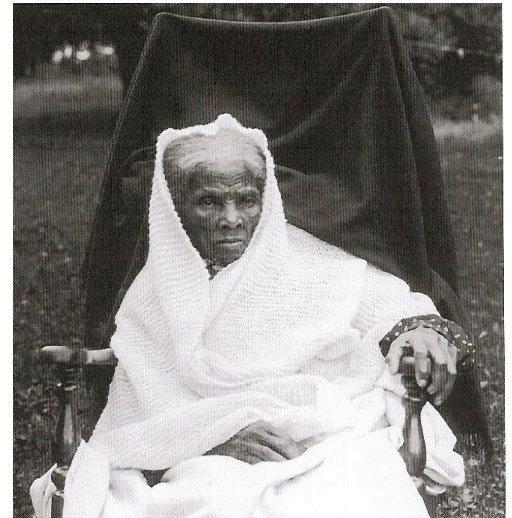
Mattie, Johnny and Smooth White Stones, a award-winning, three-part film by director Cassandra Hollis, about two freedom seekers' flight to Canada has been released. See HollyHillProductions.com for more.

Harriet Tubman Park Bill Reintroduced

A bill funding Harriet Tubman parks in Maryland and New York has been reintroduced by the four Senators of these states.

state and local preferences regarding the siting of transmission corridors. FERC has even overruled the National Park Service on energy companies' behalf when the Park Service has objected to national parks and their viewsheds being spoiled by transmission lines.

Tubman purchased her 25-acre Home for the Aged site for \$1,450 in 1896, the year after finally receiving her Civil War Army pension of \$20 per month after 30 years of petitioning. She began raising funds to build a home for indigent women, but when unable to raise sufficient money on her own, she deeded the property to the Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in 1903. Finally, in 1908, when Harriet Tubman was 88 years old, the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged opened housing 12 to 15 elderly women. The Home operated until 1928. Harriet Tubman died there in 1913 at age 93, the last major Underground Railroad figure to pass on. She is shown here late in life at her Home for the Aged.



Calls to the City of Auburn and the site owner to determine ownership of the power lines were not returned.

Did You Know?

... that the Underground Railroad began before Jamestown?

Often cited as the start of the Underground Railroad is the year 1619 when enslaved Africans first arrived at the English colony at Jamestown, Virginia, established in 1607.

However, the first recorded shipment of enslaved people from Africa to the Americas occurred in 1585 to the Spanish colony of St. Augustine, Florida. Though it would not have a name for another 250 years, the Underground Railroad began the first time an enslaved person escaped from St. Augustine and was aided by any other person, most likely a Native American.

Email us your factoids for *Did You Know*.