



UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FREE PRESS®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

urrFreePress.com

Long-time Underground Railroad Icon Blockson Honored on 80th Birthday



Charles Blockson with Pennsylvania State University Student Cheraine Stanford

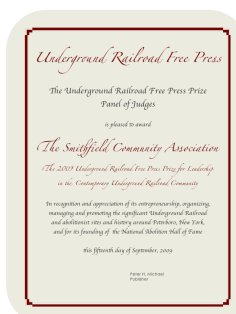
Charles L. Blockson, the legendary Underground Railroad historian, collector and donor, turned eighty on December 16. Blockson is best known for the large collections of African Americana and Underground Railroad items which he donated to Temple University in 1983 and more recently to Pennsylvania State University, his alma mater. A bibliophile since his early youth, Blockson for well over a half century methodically amassed one of the world's largest private collections of African Americana.

acquiring many kinds of materials including rare African, African American and Caribbean publications dating back to the sixteenth century. The Collection contains over a half million items including books, manuscripts, pamphlets, journals, broadsides, posters, photographs, rare ephemera, artifacts, statues and busts. The collection also contains prints, photographs, slave narratives, manuscripts, letters, Paul Robeson's sheet music, first-edition works by Phyllis Wheatly and W.E.B. DuBois, Afri-

Blockson traveled around the world

See Blockson, page 4, column 2

2014 Free Press Prizes and Survey



It's that time of year to think about whom you would like to nominate for a Free Press Prize and what questions you would like to see answered in our annual survey.

2014 Free Press Prize Nominations

For the seventh year since 2008, *Underground Railroad Free Press* will award prizes for contemporary Underground Railroad leadership, preservation and advancement of knowledge, the top honors in the international Underground Railroad community. Individuals and organizations from any country are eligible to be nominated. Nominations are easy. Just download a nomination form from our website, fill it in, and email it to us at Publisher@urrFreePress.com.

IN THIS ISSUE



The life-long bibliophile, star fullback and great collector of African Americana is still going strong at 80.

1



Nominate someone or an organization for a 2014 Free Press Prize

1



An important Underground Railroad first: a national book award goes to an Underground Railroad novel.

2



Two nicely managed Underground Railroad projects win grants.

2



Publix Super Markets stays lax on slavery and gets bold on gay-bashing.

3



A new book is out from Free Press Books, plus another prize arrives for one published last year.

3

Visit our website for more information and to view past winners. The nomination deadline is June 30.

The 2014 Free Press Survey

The annual *Free Press* surveys of today's international Underground Railroad community are the window on the knowledge, practices, economics and demographics of Underground Railroad practitioners. Survey results are posted permanently at our website each July and reports provided to top Underground Railroad executives around the country. If you have a question you'd like to see in the 2014 survey, email us at publisher@urrFreePress.com before May 1. The 2014 survey will be conducted in May or June. View or download past survey reports at our website.

Grants Awarded to Promote Slave Dwelling Project and Restore an Underground Railroad Safehouse

The 1816 Farmington Meeting House in upstate New York and South Carolina's Slave Dwelling Project have both received grants to further their work.

The Slave Dwelling Project has received a \$30,000 matching grant from The 1772 Foundation in support of the Project's first national conference to be held September 18 to 20. **Contact the Project at <http://slavedwellingproject.org/contact-us> to donate to help it meet its match.**

For more on the Project and founder Jo-

seph McGill, see the January 2012 issue *Underground Railroad Free Press* available at our website's archives page

The 1816 Farmington Quaker Meetinghouse has received a \$10,000 grant from Preserve New York, a program of the Preservation League of New York and the New York State Council on the Arts. The grant will help support the reconstruction of Farmington, New York's Quaker meeting house, a documented Underground Railroad safehouse.

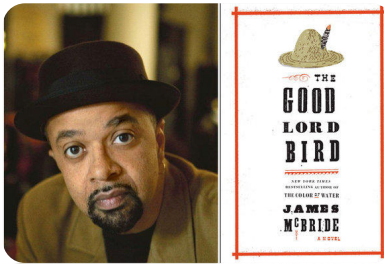


The Current Stabilized Meetinghouse

Underground Railroad Book Wins National Book Award, Vaults to Amazon Bestseller List

Plus One More New Release

The Good Lord Bird: A Novel

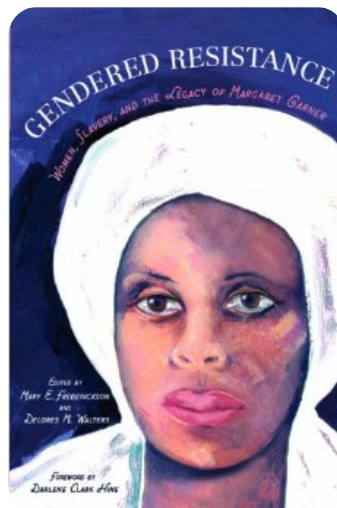


Acclaimed author James McBride's *The Good Lord Bird: A Novel* has been awarded the 2013 National Book Award for Fiction and cracked Amazon's Top 100 List overall and as the number three bestseller in African American literature and fiction. The book has been lauded by a *New York Times Book Review* as "magnificent."

Said Carol Haggas in a Booklist starred review, "Abolitionist John Brown calls her 'Little Onion,' but her real name is Henry. A slave in Kansas mistaken for a girl due to the sackcloth smock he was wearing when Brown shot his master, the light-skinned, curly-haired 12-year-old ends up living as a young woman, most often encamped with Brown's renegade band of freedom warriors as they traverse the country, raising arms and ammunition for their battle against slavery. Though they travel to Rochester, New York, to meet with Frederick Douglass and to Canada to enlist the help of Harriet Tubman, Brown and his ragtag army fail to muster sufficient support for their mission to liberate African Americans, heading inexorably to the infamously bloody and pathetic raid on Harper's Ferry. Dramatizing Brown's pursuit of racial freedom and insane belief in his own di-

vine infallibility through the eyes of a child fearful of becoming a man, best-selling McBride (*Song Yet Sung*, 2008) presents a sizzling historical novel, an evocative takeoff from William Styron's seminal insurrection masterpiece, *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967). McBride works Little Onion's low-down patois to great effect, using the savvy but scared innocent to bring a fresh immediacy to this sobering chapter in American history."

Gendered Resistance: Women, Slavery and the Legacy of Margaret Garner



Inspired by the searing story of Margaret Garner, the escaped slave who in 1856 slit her daughter's throat rather than have her forced back into slavery, Delores Walters' and Mary Frederickson's anthology focuses on examples of slavery and women's resistance to oppression from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first,

using Garner's example—the real-life narrative behind Toni Morrison's *Beloved* and the opera *Margaret Garner*—as a conversation about gendered resistance in Brazil, Yemen, India and the United States.

Says Walters, "*Gendered Resistance* preserves the resilience and survival strategies, especially of women, whose stories are unknown or have largely been lost from present-day consciousness." One of the contributors is Cheryl LaRoche below.



Free Black Communities and the Underground Railroad: The Geography of Resistance

A talk by Cheryl J. LaRoche, Professor of History, University of Maryland

Free to the Public

Saturday, February 8, 1 PM
Reginald F. Lewis Museum
830 East Pratt Street
Baltimore, Maryland, 21202

Professor LaRoche explores how free black communities along the Ohio River in Illinois, Indiana and Ohio assisted freedom seekers as they moved north from Kentucky and slavery.

Publix, Seller of Slave-Harvested Tomatoes, Blocks Petition Emails, LGBT Employees and LGBT Vendors

Publix Super Markets is blocking emails and deleting Facebook comments asking Publix to cease its support of slavery in Florida tomato fields, and refuses to extend its equal employment opportunity policies to gay employees or vendors.

In July 2013, we reported on Publix Super Markets' purchasing from Florida tomato growers who use slave labor to harvest tomatoes and Publix's refusal to join Fair Food Program which works to enforce a zero-tolerance policy for slavery on American tomato farms. Publix is a holdout on farm slave labor among major American supermarket chains.

Florida tomato farms supply half of all fresh tomatoes in the United States and have been called America's ground zero for slavery. Fair Food Program investigations show that some workers are held against their will, threatened with violence and forced to haul hundreds of heavy tomato buckets a day for little to no pay. Many enslaved Florida tomato pickers are immigrants tightly controlled by labor brokers with the blind-

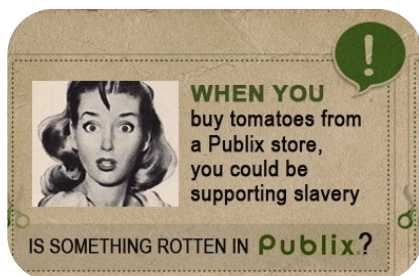
eye complicity of a few agribusinesses.

Fair Food Program is a project of Walk Free, an international organization based in Australia, and an initiative of the Minderoo Foundation founded in 2001 by Andrew and Nicola Forrest, owners of major Australian mining and ranching interests.

Last year, Fair Food Program launched a petition drive asking Publix to halt its purchase of tomatoes from Florida growers using slave labor. Petitioners around the nation had attempted to email William Crenshaw, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at Publix Super Markets, the following appeal.

"I was disappointed to learn that Publix Super Markets has refused to join the Fair Food Program. By continuing to do business with tomato farms that do not enforce the Program's principles, you could be supporting slavery. Please take the first steps to ensure your products are free of slave labor by signing the Fair Food Agreement."

See Publix, page 4, column 3



Anti-slavery Campaign Coupon

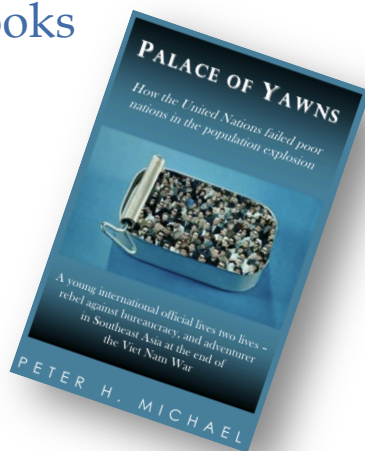


Publix CEO William Crenshaw

New from Free Press Books

Free Press Books has released award-winning author Peter H. Michael's latest book, *Palace of Yawns*, an account of his year in Southeast Asia as the Viet Nam War drew to its stunning climax.

Bangkok diplomatic nightlife, Soviet spies, tranquil Buddhist monks, Thai princesses, Khmer Rouge, cave temples, cobras, a Nobel Prize and more fill the pages of *Palace of Yawns*. The United Nations recruited Michael and from Bangkok he directed a UN program to assist eight Asian governments in more rapidly lowering the population growth rates of their crowded nations. *Palace of Yawns* recounts the amazing year which the adventurous young advisor spent roaming Southeast Asia as the Viet Nam War reached its historic end.



In November, Michael's *Remembering John Hanson* was awarded a USA Best Book Award in Biography, the book's second 2013 national book award.

THINGS YOU CAN DO AT FREE PRESS

Click on links at urFreePress.com to do any of the following.

Subscribe

View or Add to Datebook

Send News, Letters, Articles or Ads

Join the Community or View Lynx

Make a Free Press Prize Nomination

Rate an Underground Railroad Site

List an Underground Railroad Site

Read Underground Railroad Surveys

Your Ad Here (but any size)

Free Press accepts paid advertising to promote your site, program, event, publication and more. Call or email us.

Underground Railroad Free Press® Independent Reporting on Today's Underground Railroad

Peter H. Michael, Publisher
publisher@urfreepress.com
301 | 874 | 0235

Underground Railroad Free Press is a free newsletter published by Underground Railroad Free Press, 2455 Ballenger Creek Pike, Adamstown, Maryland, 21710. Back issues are available free at our web site. *Free Press* is distributed by email. Send email address changes and new subscriber email addresses to publisher@urfreepress.com.

We welcome news articles and letters to the editor. All rights to submissions including emails and letters will be treated as unconditionally assigned to *Free Press* for publication and copyright purposes, and subject to our unrestricted right to edit and comment editorially unless otherwise agreed with authors.

Free Press accepts tasteful nonpolitical advertising which we reserve the right to reject for any reason which in our sole judgment is not acceptable. Submit advertising in pdf, jpg or text formats. Visit our website for rates and layout specifications.

Contents of any *Free Press* issue are protected by copyright and may not be reproduced in whole or in part for any reason without prior approval of the publisher. *Underground Railroad Free Press* is a registered trademark.

Free Press Editorial



An Enslaved Immigrant
Tomato Picker in Florida

Utterly disgusting.

Publix Super Market's mission states that Publix aspires to be the world's "premier quality food retailer," and to get there commits to customer value, intolerance of waste, employee dignity, highest stewardship standards for stockholders, and as responsible citizens in its communities.

As in this issue's article, while Publix makes these promises, it has dug in its heels by continuing to buy tomatoes harvested by people held in slavery, and at Wikipedia boldly proclaims systematic institutional gay-bashing against both its employees and its vendors.

Dignity for employees? Stewardship? Responsible corporate citizenship? Intolerant of waste but boastfully tolerant of slavery and bigotry?

It is conspicuous that a Deep South company flouts the Emancipation Proclamation 150 years later and the swelling national tide of acceptance of LGBT people. While no region has come further on race and antislavery over the last half century than the South, we think Publix shames its region and nation. This is 2014, Publix.

We asked Publix why it doesn't support supplier selection on the basis of anti-slavery, why its diversity program excludes LGBT-owned businesses, and why its non-discrimination and equal employment policies don't extend to LGBT people. We got a fuzzy off-topic reply.

We encourage our readers to swell the tide. Email maria.brous@publix.com urging Publix to put a stop to its shameful anti-American practices.

Blockson

can Bibles, correspondence of Haitian Revolutionaries, narratives by Sojourner Truth and Frederick Douglass, thousands of taped interviews and radio programs on African and African American history and culture, and over 500,000 photographs.

With Blockson's donation, Temple University's Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection became overnight one of the world's foremost research facilities on African American and African history and culture. The Collection provides materials, programs and services for the full range of researchers, from high school students to senior scholars.

Charles L. Blockson was born December 16, 1933, in Norristown, Pennsylvania, and graduated from Penn State University in 1956 where he played fullback on a football team that included football greats Lenny Moore and Roosevelt Grier. For his football exploits, the Pennsylvania State Quarterback Club honored him in 1984. Upon graduation, he turned down an offer to play professional football for the New York Giants to serve in the United States Army. In his early career, Blockson taught multicultural history for the Norristown Area School District, served as its human relations advisor, and taught seminars and workshops for teachers and other school employees, all the while rapidly expanding his collection. With the donation of the collection, Temple University hired Blockson as Curator.

Today Blockson is Curator Emeritus at Temple, lectures internationally and organizes exhibitions and black studies programs across the country. He chaired the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Advisory Committee.

He has served as President of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society, Commissioner of the Governor's Heritage Program, Director of the Pennsylvania Black History Committee, Director of the Pennsylvania Afro-American History Board, Director of the State Historical and Record Advisory Board and its Black History Advisory Board, and member of the Pennsylvania State University Alumni Council.

Blockson has been awarded honorary doctorates from Villanova University and Lincoln University, is listed in *Who's Who Among Black Americans* and received a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Before Columbus Foundation.

Well done, Charles Blockson, congratulations on your 80th birthday, and keep up your splendid work.

Publix

By November 26, Publix had blocked 364,068 petitioner emails. In response, Fair Food Program hand-delivered petitioners' names to Crenshaw at Publix headquarters in Lakeland, Florida.

Walk Free supporters posted over 4,700 comments and posts to Publix's "Food for Sharing" Facebook wall. Mika Leandro of Walk Free states that Publix deleted hundreds of the messages. States Leandro, "This came as a surprise as Publix Social Media Director Shannon Patten had previously told us that Publix rarely removes comments, doing so only when someone breaks 'house rules' such as cursing or personal attacks. Fair Food Program clearly has not broken any rules."

In addition to refusing to adopt an anti-slavery policy, Publix brags of discrimination based on sexual preference.

Publix's Wikipedia page states, "Publix declines to participate in the annual survey of the Human Rights Campaign [and] HRC's Corporate Equality Index. For 2014, HRC estimates that Publix scores 0. The company's non-discrimination and Equal Employment Opportunity policies do not extend to LGBT [lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender] people. The company's supplier diversity program does not include LGBT-owned businesses."

Responding to a *Free Press* inquiry, Publix's Maria Brous claimed no dispute with Walk Free and that Publix protects sexual preference in its "inclusive work environment." Publix did not respond to our follow-up asking about the explicitness of its Wikipedia statement.

Its practices make Publix's slogan, "Where Shopping is a Pleasure," beyond ironic.

The privately held Publix Super Markets, Inc. is the nation's 8th largest food retailer, 14th largest retailer, and 106th largest company. Publix operates with more than 166,000 employees in over 1,000 Deep South locations. Publix's 2012 income was \$27.71 billion and profit, \$1.55 billion. Publix's Chairman is Howard M. Jenkins, a descendant of the founder.

As of *Free Press* publication on January 15, Publix had not relented on email blocking. Walk Free reports no change in Publix's positions, and that Walk Free plans to turn up the heat on Publix in 2014.