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Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

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Islam, An Early American Religion on the Underground Railroad

Free Press thanks *Port of Harlem* and its publisher, Wayne Young, for the biographical information below on Ayuba Sulieman Diallo and Omar ibn Said. Visit portofharlem.net/ to subscribe.

Islam appears to be the third religion to have arrived in North America after Native American religions and Christianity, probably first arriving at the Spanish colony of St. Augustine, Florida, in 1585 in the first known shipment of enslaved Africans to North America.

By that time, much of West Africa where most of the slave trade was originating was Muslim. Islam thus entered the nascent fabric of life of what was to become the United States.

Perhaps America's earliest notable Muslim was Ayuba Sulieman Diallo (1701-1773), also known as Job ben Solomon, a well-educated Senegalese nobleman who at age 29 was captured, enslaved, and shipped to Annapolis, Maryland.

Diallo, shown here, was born into a family of Muslim clerics in Bundu, Senegal, in 1701, was the son of a High Priest, and was fluent in Arabic. Upon landing, Diallo was bought off the auction block by a Kent Island, Maryland, slave owner from whom he escaped, making his way to Pennsylvania with aid from others along the way.

A chance meeting with future Georgia Governor James Oglethorpe who was impressed by Diallo's knowledge



of Arabic led to a series of events that landed Diallo in England where he was bought out of slavery by public subscription, mixed with high society, was inducted into the Gentleman's Society of Spalding, and wrote his memoirs.

In 1733 English portraitist William Hoare painted Diallo's portrait shown here which now hangs in the National Portrait Gallery in London.

After his four-year whirlwind in America and Britain, Diallo in 1734 sailed to The Gambia and made his way back to Bundu. He had two wives, Sahmbo and Fatima, and several children.

Omar ibn Said (1770-1864) was a writer and Islamic scholar born in present-day Futa Toro, Senegal. Educated in Bundu, he later made pilgrimage to Mecca before being brought to the United States in 1807, one month before the importation of

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See our page 3 editorial on how two presidential candidates have ignited a resurgence of religious persecution and xenophobia in the United States, and why it's time for Americans to push back.

IN THIS ISSUE



You wouldn't know it from certain politicians, but Islam has had a long and honored place in American life.

1



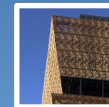
The public was stood up last year by unconscionable bureaucracy. Maybe 2016 will be different.

1



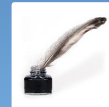
Man Cave Stuff: In 1854, the Underground Railroad sprang up in California when the Gold Spring Boys swung into action for their neighbor.

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What a debut: The National Museum of African American History and Culture will open this year. You can help.

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Our editorial: Donald Trump is an international embarrassment.

3



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After None in 2015, Maybe a 2016 Network to Freedom Conference

Too often bureaucracy makes no sense.

After planning and publicizing its 2015 annual conference, the National Park Service's Underground Railroad Network to Freedom program had its conference torpedoed when the United States Department of the Interior initiated a last-minute review and didn't complete it on time to approve the conference.

Network to Freedom Manager Diane Miller got the chore to notify host institutions, presenters and conference goers of the can-

cellation just days before the conference was to get under way.

Miller tells *Free Press* that last year's conference theme, "Into the Light: Striving for Freedom and an Equal Chance in the Battle of Life," will be reprised in 2016, and that "approval paperwork is in progress."

Department of the Interior, manage by exception and trust your program that knows most about the Underground Railroad to run its own conferences.

The Western-most Freedom Seeker?

One of an Occasional Series on Underground Railroad People, Safehouses and Routes

There wasn't much Underground Railroad west of the Missouri River but occasionally, even as far as the west coast, there were instances of freedom seekers, or in the following case, a freedom preserver, being aided in flight. Such was the case with Stephen Spencer Hill of the Sierra mining town of Sonora, California.

Hill had been brought to California from Arkansas by his enslaver, Wood Tucker. When Tucker returned to Arkansas in 1853, Hill purchased his freedom, remaining in the Sierra foothills. He bought 160 acres, grew wheat and barley, and continued mining to supplement his income.

Once back in Arkansas, Tucker hired slave-catcher Owen Rozier who in 1854 tracked down Hill. Taking Rozier's lie at face value that Tucker still owned Hill, the local sheriff jailed Hill. As an African American, Hill was deprived of the right to speak on his own behalf. Rozier had the law on his side, and Hill lost his case in court and was re-enslaved.

But not for long as Hill was well liked by some very helpful neighbors.



The Gold Spring Boys, whites with attitude, hired Hill an attorney and harvested his crops so Rozier couldn't profit from them. After months lobbying for their friend's freedom, the Gold Spring Boys went the extra measure to win the fight for Hill's freedom. On the September night before Rozier and Hill were to sail from California, the Gold Spring Boys got Rozier drunk and Hill "disappeared" from the dockside *Urilda* in San Francisco and then from California.

Hill and his wife Sallie both died April 6, 1907, in Traverse City, Michigan.

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slaves was outlawed, and sold in Charleston, South Carolina, to a cruel owner from whom he escaped. Headed north, Said got as far as North Carolina before being captured, re-enslaved and sold to a local plantation owner.



Although Said, shown here, converted to Christianity in 1820, he appears to have continued as a practicing Muslim based

on dedications to Muhammad written in his Bible. While enslaved, Said wrote a series of works on history, theology, his autobiography in 1831, and 14 manuscripts in Arabic.

Said lived into his nineties—some accounts say to 100—before his passing in 1864, missing freedom by a year. The University of North Carolina houses some of Said's writings, and Davidson College in North Carolina has archived his letters.

Of the half million Africans who had arrived in the United States by 1800, 15 to 30 percent are estimated to have been Muslim. No fewer than 200,000 slaves imported to North America came from areas in Africa where Islam was followed to some degree.

When the legal importation of slaves was outlawed in 1808, so did most of the influx of Islam, though some illegal importation continued. During the American slavery era, many from Africa and their descendants adopted Christianity and its hopeful tenet of salvation, but some Afri-

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Editorial

You're un-American, Mr. Trump.

It is hard to think of anything more American than immigration, as every American is either an immigrant or the descendant of one, including Native Americans whose immigrant ancestors walked across the frozen Bering Strait to get here, perhaps the ultimate immigration story.

With his xenophobic calls singling out specific immigrant groups for exclusion based on religion or region of origin, presidential candidate Donald Trump taints the American ideal of welcoming inclusion of all peoples.

But Mr. Trump is following in the footsteps of angry fringe predecessors who throughout United States history have repeatedly had their ugly xenophobia thwarted. In early colonial days, Catholics were welcome only in Maryland. Later, Scots-Irish newcomers were so disdained by British colonists that they elected to keep going all the way to the Appalachians, at the almost entirely unsettled. German immigrants arriving in the late colonial era encountered a less than welcoming attitude from British Americans. In the mid-1800s, it was common to see "No Irish need apply" signs in Boston. A century ago, Italians and eastern Europeans took their lumps. Chinese Americans, after building the Transcontinental Railroad, were slapped with the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. Japanese Americans, not a one of whom was ever convicted of a seditious act, were corralled into concentration camps in World War II.

Now Mr. Trump wants to deal with illegal immigration by creating the spectacle of one of the most massive involuntary migrations in world history, and deal with a few rogue Muslims by banning the 99+ percent of them who are peaceful and law-abiding. What you have already created, Mr. Trump, is quaking fear in millions of American homes and, according to polls, profound disgust with you in a majority of the rest.

The American way, Mr. Trump, is to fight your kind of fringe bigotry as our country has done successfully, if sometimes too slowly, for over 200 years, and never to foster it. Only your brown-shirt roughs are ready for your moral bankruptcy. America will never be. And the same goes for you, Senator Cruz.

Home Stretch for the National Museum of African American History and Culture

Harriet Tubman's bible. The handsewn dress that Rosa Parks held on her lap the day she refused to move to the back of the bus. An segregated railroad car from the Jim Crow era. A restored plane used by the Tuskegee Airmen. Political memorabilia from President Obama's historic campaign. And a growing treasure trove of more than 33,800 paintings, sculptures, costumes, music, films, African American works of art, and other items.

For more than a dozen years, the staff of the National Museum of African American History and Culture has been assembling the unsurpassed collection of African Americana which will make its debut in September when the Museum, located on the National Mall in Washington, DC, will be officially opened and dedicated.

But the work isn't done. Under the widely praised leadership of Founding Director Lonnie Bunch, the Museum has raised 84 percent of its \$270 million budget to launch itself and needs to close the gap.

Islam

can Americans retained Islam, passing it down even into the 21st century. Thus many Underground Railroad travelers in addition to Ayuba Sulieman Diallo and Omar ibn Said were Muslim.

The first foreign nation to recognize the United States diplomatically was the Muslim Kingdom of Morocco in 1787.

Migration of free Muslims to America, mainly from Yemen and Turkey, began in the 1840s, with immigration slowly growing until the Ottoman Empire's dissolution following World War I significantly increased the numbers of Muslims arriving in the United States.

During the 20th century Islam, Judaism and Buddhism established themselves as mainline religions alongside Christianity in the United States. The 1960s saw splits within American Islam, with factions headed by Louis Farrakhan and Malcolm X drawing the disapproval of many traditional American Muslims.

The distribution of origins of American Muslims is as in the chart here. Of Americans who convert to Islam, nearly two-thirds are African American, and more than a quarter are white.

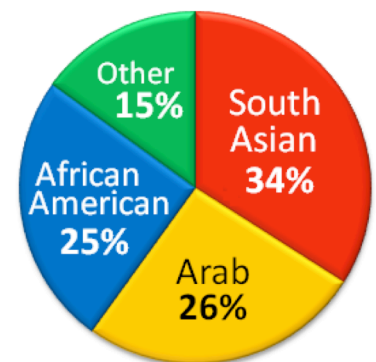
You can help.

A few weeks ago, Mr. Bunch announced creation of the Museum's North Star Society, a new tier of giving designed to attract widest possible attraction of new members who will commit to make small monthly gifts by credit card to ensure that the Museum continues moving forward.

As Bunch says, "For as little as \$8 a month charged to your credit card, you can provide ongoing funding the Museum needs to complete our building, add to our growing collection, create thought-provoking exhibitions, and provide a lens into an inspiring story that unites us all."

Or give more in the North Star Society or other donation programs. Whatever your level of support, you will become a Museum member. Click on (or copy and paste into your browser address bar) <http://s.si.edu/1P3eP0X>.

Underground Railroad Free Press is a Charter Member of the Museum.



The list of Muslim Americans occupying prominent positions is long and includes Members of Congress, scientists, Fortune 500 CEOs, philanthropists, writers, entertainers, professional athletes and artists.

Some American Muslims who have become especially distinguished are Representatives Keith Ellison and Andre Carson, *Newsweek International* Editor Fareed Zakaria, jazz musicians Ahmad Jamal, Art Blakey and Yusef Lateef, at least 20 NBA and NFL players including all-time basketball scoring leader Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, heavyweight boxing champions Muhammad Ali and Mike Tyson, six other boxing champions, supermodel Iman and PIMCO CEO Mohamed El-Erian.