



UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FREE PRESS®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

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North Carolina's Mendenhall Plantation

One of an occasional series on Underground Railroad sites

South of the Potomac and Ohio Rivers today, the Underground Railroad is hard to come by as it was in its day, making what can be found precious. More is known of freedom seekers from the South and from where they escaped than about who helped them and where on their journeys. The further south, the truer this is.

L. M. "Mac" Whatley maintains an informative blog on the North Carolina Underground Railroad in and around his native Randolph County.

This part of the state included a number of communities founded by Quakers including the Coffin family who became among history's best known Underground Railroad operators, first in North Carolina and then, after they had had to flee, in Indiana. Whatley has assembled what oral history and scant documentation that exists on the Coffins' Underground Railroad activities in North Carolina.

Writes Whatley, "The secrecy of it all makes it very difficult to document. There are very few direct sources of information on Underground Railroad activities in North Carolina, and only one makes tangential connection to Randolph County: that is the actual route taken by Elisha Coffin with his sister and his father in 1822, and described in detail in the autobiography of his first cousin Levi Coffin.

"From Levi Coffin's book it is clear that escaped slaves knew to head generally for the Quaker heart of North Carolina. Escaped slave advertisements collected by the University of North Carolina's Loren Schweniger



The False-Bottom Wagon

clearly show that eastern North Carolina slave owners assumed that escapees were headed west. Fugitives coming through Randolph County might have gone toward the Friends meeting houses or toward individual Quakers, but sooner or later ended up near New Garden where Quaker families descended from Nantucket emigrants of 1771 headed North Carolina's Underground Railroad."

Whatley tells of a prized Underground Railroad artifact at nearby Jamestown's Mendenhall Plantation Museum, a false-bottomed wagon from the Centre Friends Meeting community which existed 15 miles from Jamestown. The wagon was preserved by Centre historian Joshua Edgar Murrow, grandson of Andrew Murrow who with his foster brother Isaac Stanley transported freedom seekers in the wagon's false bottom.

The Museum's website states, "If the wagon could talk, it would tell of many exciting and sometimes perilous events, not least of which the several trips to Ohio with loads of runaways. The 'trains' crossed into free territory at Wheeling, West Vir-

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List your event or organization, subscribe to *Free Press*, give a free subscription, see a nationwide Underground Railroad map and more.

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Honor a Person or an Organization With a 2014 Free Press Prize

Since 2008, *Underground Railroad Free Press* has awarded prizes for contemporary Underground Railroad leadership, preservation and advancement of knowledge, the top honors in the international Underground Railroad community.

Past winners have been honored for discovering or preserving Underground Railroad sites and artifacts, founding or leading organizations, writing books, performing research, and Under-

ground Railroad promotion. Artistic accomplishment, official interest, legislation and financial support may also be considered.

Individuals and organizations from any country are eligible for nomination. **Nominations are easy.** Just download a nomination form from our website, complete it, and email it to us at Publisher@urrFreePress.com. Nomination deadline is June 30. Visit our [website](http://urrFreePress.com) for more information and to view past winners.

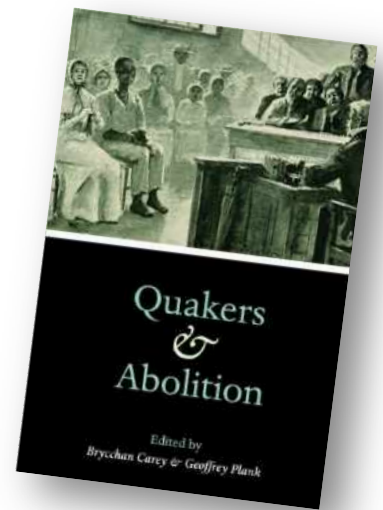
Trans-Atlantic Views on Quaker Abolitionism

This collection of insightful essays edited by Brycchan Carey and Geoffrey Plank examines the complexity and diversity of Quaker antislavery attitudes across three centuries, from 1658 when American Quakers began condemning slavery to 1890 well into the Jim Crow era. Fifteen contributors from varied faiths, disciplines and nations show Quaker beliefs to be far from monolithic, and that they often disagreed with one another and the general abolitionist movement about the morality of slaveholding and the best approach to abolition.

Contributors explain that it isn't surprising that this complicated and evolving antislavery sensibility left in its wake an equally complex legacy.

While Quaker antislavery influence was powerful in both the United States and Europe, present-day scholars usually tend to overlook this. *Quakers & Abolition* faithfully corrects the oversight, offering accessible provocative new insights on a key chapter of trans-Atlantic religious, political, and cultural history.

Brycchan Carey is a reader in English literature at Kingston University, London, and author of *Peace to Freedom: Quaker Rhetoric and The Birth of American Antislavery, 1658-1761*. Geoffrey Plank is Professor of History at the University of East Anglia and the author of *John Woolman's Path to the Peaceable Kingdom: A Quaker in the British Empire*.



Striking 2014 Free Press Survey Results on Economic Disparity

In a cross-country driving trip researching a forthcoming book on what is on Americans' minds these days, *Free Press* publisher Peter H. Michael heard loud and clear that economic disparity in the United States has risen to the fore. Michael's road book is first a travel adventure recording as a daily journal the very broad diversity of people, places and experiences that is America. He set out on his 12,000-mile, 27-state odyssey wondering what was on America's mind and, rather than ask, decided just to listen if any particular theme might present itself, not expecting that any would. But the drumbeat heard on people's pains from growing income and wealth disparity turned a road book into more than that.

Based on what people had to say along his way, Michael became very curious to know whether a broader sample of Americans had on their minds the national disparity malaise which so many people he had met had on theirs. In particular, he wanted to know the differences in opinions, experiences and awareness of disparity between lower-income Americans more likely to be bearing the brunt of disparity versus those more insulated economically from it. To find out, *Free Press*, in a departure from its previous surveys, used the 2014 Free Press Survey of the Underground Railroad Community to measure *Free Press* reader opinion on economic disparity coast-to-coast. *Free Press* thanks all who took the survey. Most survey questions dealt with the massive income and wealth shifts which have occurred over the last 30 years.

As there is no widely accepted standard definition of social class categorizations, respondents self-identified their social class according to choices of lower, lower middle, upper middle and upper class.

The resulting distribution of respondents' social class was closely representative of the overall United States class distribution. Respondents also identified their incomes according to United States personal income decile ranges. In the United States, there is only a loose correlation between class and income. For example, a well-bred but poor widow can be upper class, a wealthy criminal, lower class.

Aware of Disparity

On awareness of current American economic disparity, the survey found no marked differences on seven measures. All four respondent class groups were highly aware of the massive wealth shift from the middle class to the rich since 1982, extensive child poverty, and corporate offshoring of jobs. In all four groups strong majorities were aware of growing income disparity, and weaker majorities were unaware or not closely aware of corporate tax avoidance, and that more Americans live just above or just below the \$15,000-per-year minimum wage than in any other income range. Upper middle and upper class respondents were more aware of corporate tax avoidance and poverty wages than were others.

Strong Desire for Reform

Asked to render opinions on a one-to-ten agreement/disagreement scale, survey takers were overwhelmingly decisive, with social class making no statistically significant differences. In very heavy majorities, respondents believe that American economic disparity has become too great, tax loopholes should be eliminated, personal income tax rates should be fairer, the poor are poor despite hard work, those lacking health insurance are not at fault, current economic disparity endangers democracy, and campaign contributions buy influence and endanger

democracy. Lesser but still strong majorities believe that income disparity affects the average family and that their children will have a more difficult time than they did getting ahead economically.

Middle Class Erosion

In their life experiences, upper middle and upper class respondents said that after expenses they are able to save enough to fund retirement and children's college expense needs, while others say that they are able to save some but not enough, or they meet expenses but can't save, or they must do without some things to get by. All four class groups most often said that their incomes are now no higher than they were at the beginning of the Great Recession in 2008, but a third of lower middle and lower class respondents said their incomes are now lower and *none* in these two groups reported a significant income improvement since 2008. On changes in wealth, upper middle and upper class respondents most often reported no improvement since the Great Recession, but the most frequent outcome for other respondents was significantly lower net worth than before the recession. Well more than half of respondents reported either no employer retirement plan or health coverage, recent elimination or reduction in one or the other, or reclassification of employees from full time to part time to avoid providing benefits.

The Educated Poor

Median annual income of upper middle class respondents was \$84,082 and of the lower middle class, \$47,289. Every seventh respondent had an income lower than the \$23,850 federal poverty line for a family of four, and every sixteenth respondent reported lowest-decile, deep-poverty annual income of zero to \$9,234.

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Carolinas

ginia, continuing to Friends' Ohio homes. The drivers were two young men, selected because they were eager for adventure and because no one would be likely to suspect such young men of "slave-running." The two youths were Andrew Murrow and Isaac Stanley who grew up in the home of their foster parents, Joshua and Abigail Stanley, after they had been orphaned." The two transported their freedom seeker charges from North Carolina to Ohio along the old Kanawha Road.

Whatley wonders, given the abundant documentation confirming the Kanawha Road route from the North Carolina Piedmont to Ohio and Indiana, and confirmation of its regular use in the Underground Railroad, why is it not listed by the National Park Service Underground Railroad Network to Freedom (NTF)? The answer is that, even when the NTF is aware of a documented Underground Railroad safe-house or route, it refuses to go ahead and list it unless a member of the public nominates it. *Free Press* has editorialized against this restrictive practice and recommended in writing to the NTF to change the practice, all to no avail. A *Free Press* survey of the international Underground Railroad community showed overwhelming community support for the change.

Mr. Whatley concludes that, "Neither is it common knowledge here in North Carolina, and I think both omissions stem from a common source—the fact that the antebellum history of Guilford and Randolph Counties, and its Quaker inhabitants, does not follow the popular 'Gone with the Wind' narrative of the antebellum South. Our region was another story, not the romantic lost world of the plantation gentry, but a Shadow South of abolition and manumission activities, of industry and internal improvements, and steady moral and political opposition to the status quo. Our history is much more nuanced and interesting than the standard black and white (or blue and gray) textbook version, and our culture is lessened when we forget and ignore the work and sacrifices of the men and women who fought against heavy odds to change the fundamental basis of the society they lived in." Nicely put, Mr. Whatley.

Whatley is an arts conservationist and attorney. His home in Franklinville was built by Elisha Coffin. Visit randolphhistory.wordpress.com for more.

Book Preview



Peter H. Michael's forthcoming road book recounts in the vivid descriptive style of this prize-winning author his cross-continent road trip taking in the expansive variety of people and places that is the United States. Michael set out not to fathom the country "in search of America" as Steinbeck, Kerouac and Least Heat-Moon had but to listen and let America tell him whatever it might.

And tell it did. Ranch hands, park staff, telephone linemen, nurses, executives, college faculty, trailer park pensioners, couples with upside-down mortgages, the poorest county, the wealthiest county, and Americans of all races sang verses of the same song: widening economic disparity.

Michael hears that Americans are finally awakened to the income and wealth gaps which over the past 30 years have eroded the middle class and hit the poor hardest of all. Using his economics and demography background, he demolishes arguments of the nation's one-pencers and their apologists in an eminently readable exposé on economic inequality and how the very wealthy and largest corporations have purchased it with "campaign contributions."

Those met speak their minds along the long American road with a banquet of uniquely American vignettes, personal stories, yesteryear small towns and local history while the full range of the continent's majestic geography unfolds each day—a mysterious desert amidst Great Plains grasslands, crossing Lake Michigan, Yellowstone splendor, the largest volcano, languid rivers, red rock Great Basin vistas, the High Sierra, Nevada ghost towns, an inland delta, a rustic lodge in the Cascades and much more. The book's razor-sharp ability to evoke mood, place and people is captivating.

If you would like to be notified when the book is published, just email us at publisher@urfreepress.com.

Survey

Those under the poverty line showed an unusual profile with most having at least some college education, many with a graduate degree, 91 percent aged 60 or older, most of the very poorest having never had health insurance, a slight majority somewhat or very liberal, and a third considering themselves upper middle class despite poverty. The most typical very poor person in this survey was an elderly, self-employed woman with some college identifying as upper middle class.

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