

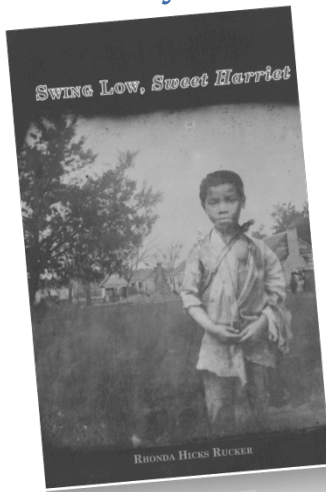


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Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

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Swing Low, Sweet Harriet - A Children's Book Any Adult Will Savor



Rhonda Rucker's fine debut novel, *Swing Low, Sweet Harriet*, is a page-turner with a gripping story line, smooth narrative, beckoning character development and plenty of suspense. A historical novel written as an introduction for middle-schoolers and older students, any adult reader also will find this book more than engaging.

Through the eyes of Ben, an enslaved boy, *Swing Low, Sweet Harriet* tells the story of Harriet Tubman's foray leading Union troops up South Carolina's Combahee River in 1863 and freeing over 700 enslaved people in under a week.

Both blacks and whites on the Lowndes plantation have heard of a woman called Moses freeing slaves and leading them to safety and freedom. When Moses starts showing up at meetings, some of the Lowndes slaves are curious to know more, while others think it's safer to keep their distance. The war is now all around since Union soldiers have captured the South Carolina coast, so can a stranger be trusted? Still, no one, including Ben, can ignore her message: "Be ready. Freedom is at hand." But wise Uncle Minus, the 88-year-old sage of the slave cabins, says things are different now. Though Ben doesn't know Moses' true identity of Harriet Tubman, he does know a dangerous secret about the local Confederate soldiers that he wants to tell her. Then Ben's sister, who works in the Big House, learns another important secret: the plantation owners have learned about Moses and are laying plans to keep her from moving about the area and spreading her new ideas. What the plantation owners don't know is that there will soon be a raid that will attempt to liberate Ben and all of his family and friends.

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Sparky & Rhonda Rucker: Underground Railroad Minstrels



Sparky and Rhonda Rucker

This article first appeared in the January 2007 issue of *Underground Railroad Free Press*.

For nearly a half century, Sparky Rucker has made a career of researching and presenting the songs and lore of the Underground Railroad, the Civil War and the nineteenth century. Since the 1980s when they met, he and wife Rhonda have toured at home and abroad with their one-of-a-kind Underground Railroad historical presentations.

Internationally acclaimed James "Sparky" Rucker, a leading Underground Railroad historian, folklorist, musician, storyteller and author, sings songs and tells stories from a deep American tradition. The Ruckers, with a dozen albums to their credit, are accompanied by piano, guitar, banjo, harmonica and spoons.

Dr. Rhonda Rucker practiced medicine for five years before the couple married and she became a full-time folk musician. A versatile performer on blues harmonica, piano and banjo, and a talented vocal harmonist, she appears on recordings with her husband.

The couple has appeared at the National Folk Festival of Scotland, Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Smithsonian Folklife Festival, Mississippi Valley Blues Festival, National Storytelling Festival and 1982 World's Fair, and on PBS and NPR among a long list of venues. The couple has performed at hundreds of university and school programs.

Sparky and Rhonda Rucker also publish historical pieces and give storytelling performances including *Please see Ruckers*, page 5, column 2

Film Review: 12 Years a Slave

This review by Monika Chawla is reprinted with permission from the November 4, 2013, issue of *The Review*, the student newspaper founded in 1882 at the University of Delaware. Chawla is a nineteen-year-old political science major, journalism minor and *Review* copy editor. Her review was chosen to appear here as the best on the Internet over several written by film critics of major American newspapers.

Garnering a solid 30 seconds of applause after its finish, Steve McQueen's "12 Years a Slave"—a movie depicting one man's harrowing experience of captivity—puts audiences in an emotional frenzy. What struck me most about the film was its unrelenting, brave and terri-

fyingly true depiction of slavery. Our idea of slavery is more or less mere concept—a facet of history that we choose to imagine without the excruciating details.

But this film is a rude awakening. It brings light to the very practices and cruelties that define the term, all told through a captivating story. In his signature style of open and relatively provocative filmmaking, McQueen succeeds in creating "12 Years a Slave." Although it may be overlooked in the current array of commercial and crowd-pleasing films, this may perhaps be one of the best hidden gems of the year.

See 12 Years, page 5, column 2



Worst Countries In Modern Slavery

This article is adapted from two on modern slavery published by BBC News, the online outlet of the British Broadcasting Corporation. The articles are "New Global Index Exposes Modern Slavery Worldwide" in the October 17, 2013, issue, and "US Trafficking Report Reveals Modern Slavery Toll" by Adam Blenford in the June 19, 2012, issue.

Over 29 million people around the world are living as slaves according to a new index ranking 162 countries.

The Global Slavery Index 2013 says India has the highest number of people living in slavery at 14 million, but Mauritania has the highest proportion, 4 percent, of its population enslaved. The report's authors hope it will help governments tackle what they call a "hidden crime".

The index was compiled by Australian-based rights organisation Walk Free Foundation using a definition of modern slavery that includes debt bondage, forced marriage and human trafficking. "A lot of governments won't like hearing what we have to say," WFF chief executive Nick Grono told the French news agency Agence France-Presse. "Those governments that want to engage with us, we will be very open to engaging and looking at ways in which we can better measure the issue of modern slavery."

India, China, Pakistan and Nigeria have the highest numbers of people enslaved, the charity said. With five other countries, they account for three-quarters of the total number of people enslaved worldwide. The report said India's ranking worst was mostly due to exploitation of Indian citizens within the country itself.

The highest proportion of slaves is in Mauritania, with many people inheriting

slave status from their ancestors. Haiti is second in the index and Pakistan third.

The new survey has the backing of world figures including former US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and ex-British Prime Minister Tony Blair. Mrs. Clinton said that although the index was not perfect, it provided a starting point, according to the Associated Press. "I urge leaders around the world to view this index as a call to action, and to stay focused on the work of responding to this crime."

A 2010 US government report showed more than 42,000 adults and children found in forced prostitution, labour, slavery or armed conflict in the US. Some 9,000 more were identified around the world than in 2010, the state department report said. But the number is just a fraction of the estimated 800,000 people trafficked across borders every year.

Conflict-wracked Syria was among the worst offenders, while seven other states came off that list. Lebanon and Burma were among those judged to have improved their efforts to combat what the US State Department terms "modern-day slavery." Syria was identified as a transit country for Iraqi women and girls, South East Asians and East Africans being trafficked for a life of prostitution in Europe, the report said. In addition, thousands of women from several nations have been left working as forced domestic servants inside Syria as the conflict there escalates. At least 95 Filipina women remained trapped inside the cities of Homs and Hama at the end of 2011, the International Organization for Migration said. Syria's government was making "no discernible effort" to identify and protect victims of trafficking, the report said, and could

Far the Worst, India Alone Accounts for Nearly Half of All Slaves Worldwide . . .

Slave Populations, Ten Worst Offenders

India	13,956,010
China	2,949,243
Pakistan	2,127,132
Nigeria	701,032
Ethiopia	651,110
Russia	516,217
Thailand	472,811
The Congo	462,327
Burma	384,037
Bangladesh	343,192

. . . But Mauritania Where One In Every 25 People Is a Slave Is Worst In Prevalence of Slavery

Proportion Ranks, Ten Worst Offenders

Mauritania	Saharan Africa
Haiti	Caribbean
Pakistan	South Asia
India	South Asia
Nepal	South Asia
Moldova	Eastern Europe
Benin	Sub-Saharan Africa
The Ivory Coast	Sub-Saharan Africa
The Gambia	Sub-Saharan Africa
Gabon	Sub-Saharan Africa

now be subject to US sanctions for dropping into the bottom tier.

Describing the report as a "clear and honest assessment," Secretary Clinton said, "The end of legal slavery in the United States and around the world has not meant the end of slavery." Where the trade in persons was once labeled as human trafficking, Mrs. Clinton said, "I think labeling this for what it is - slavery - has brought it to another dimension." The stories of those enslaved "remind us of what kind of inhumane treatment we are still capable of as human beings. They are living, breathing reminders that the war

See Modern Slavery, page 4, column 1

Knox College Underground Railroad Freedom Station

One of a series on Underground Railroad sites, programs and people

This article accompanies an interview of Center CEO Owen Muelder on page 4.

The Underground Railroad Freedom Center of Illinois' Knox College was founded through a unique pedigree of its college's and an entire town's steadfast abolitionism.

Galesburg and its Knox College, located in west central Illinois, were founded in 1837 by anti-slavery advocates from up-state New York. At their inception, the town and College became the leading center of abolitionism and Underground Railroad activity in Illinois. Making Galesburg unique from its founding, the majority of its citizens were anti-slavery



Knox College's Old Jail, home of its Underground Railroad Center

which soon affected numerous people and communities in a wide circle surrounding the college town.

The town and college were founded by George Washington Gale who in 1843 was indicted for aiding the escape of slaves. In 1837, Gale and local anti-slavery advocates established a local anti-slavery society and in 1839, a youth anti-slavery society in Galesburg.

Jonathan Blanchard, the second President of Knox College, was nationally recognized for his contributions to the anti-slavery crusade. Shortly after arriving in Galesburg, he aided the escape of fugitive Bill Casey. In 1854, Blanchard engaged United States Senator Stephen Douglas in a heated debate about Douglas' sponsorship of the Kansas-Nebraska Act which sought to mollify enslavers.

Runaway slave Susan Richardson found her freedom in Galesburg in the fall of 1842, resided there for nearly 60 years, was involved in the Galesburg Underground Railroad and helped establish the first black church in town.

College trustees Samuel G. Wright and William J. Phelps were safe-house operators with Phelps' barn used as an Underground Railroad signal station. When lanterns were lit in the barn's attic, the glowing cross he had carved there signified that it was safe for fugitive slaves to head northward.

In 1863, Barnabas Root enrolled in Knox College and was one of the first blacks to receive a bachelor's degree in Illinois.

Network to Freedom Back in Business

As with the national parks and other National Park Service programs, the Service's Network to Freedom Underground Railroad program was prohibited from operating during last month's federal government shutdown.

States Diane Miller who runs the Network to Freedom, "Staff were unable to participate in an Underground Railroad Youth Summit that we had helped to plan in partnership with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Indiana Freedom Trails, and Indiana Landmarks. The Youth Summit was held in anticipation of the annual conference of the National Trust for Historic Preservation which was at the end of October in Indianapolis."

Private and state Underground Railroad sites and programs affiliated with the Network to Freedom but not operated by it were not affected and remained open during the shutdown. *Underground Railroad Free Press* was not affected by the shutdown.

Most operations of the federal government including the Network to Freedom remain negatively affected by the federal budget sequestration which began March 1 when the United States Congress could not coordinate itself well enough to stave off automatic cuts. Says Miller, "We are still determining the effects of the ongoing sequestration as we refine our plans for the 2014 fiscal year" which began October 1.

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Interview: Program Head Owen Muelder

Knox College Underground Railroad Freedom Center

Owen Muelder has directed Knox College's Underground Railroad Freedom Center since its founding in 2004. Previously he served in senior administrative capacities at the college. He has written books on the Underground Railroad in Western Illinois and on abolitionist Theodore Dwight Weld.

This article accompanies one on the Center on page 3.

What are the main challenges in founding an Underground Railroad Program?

In order to stimulate local interest, you need to have sites, stories, and accounts that are not based on myth and half-truths but are historically verifiable. Also required is a group of genuinely motivated people who are willing to do the work that is necessary to put a program on its feet. In the best circumstance, support would come from an already established organization interested in such a project. Finally, and rather obviously, a program must have ongoing funding to sustain itself once it's up and running.

Underground Railroad Free Press research shows that a third of Underground Railroad programs operate with no revenues and another third on less than \$25,000 annually. While this is a tribute to volunteers, low funding crimps recognition of the Underground Railroad. What are the most promising avenues for improved Underground Railroad program funding?

I suspect that improved Underground Railroad funding will have to be primarily generated by local entities—schools, civic organizations, county and city historical societies, and even by individuals who have the time, interest, and resources to do so. In addition, the creation of black studies programs at many colleges and universities in the last few decades will most likely aid the establishment of Underground Railroad research programs. It is important, as part of your question suggests, to never lose sight of the fact that volunteers are frequently the backbone of a program's operation.

The average age of those in the international Underground Railroad community is about sixty. How should the community get more young and middle-aged people interested in the Underground Railroad?

One never knows, of course, when someone of any age might become fascinated

with a subject like the Underground Railroad. However, I do believe that interest in the history of the Underground Railroad is being significantly addressed by elementary school and high school teachers. If young people are introduced to the subject in school, it might motivate them to pursue the subject more seriously when they are older. I have been pleased by the number of teachers who have contacted me with questions about the Underground Railroad. These queries tend to be centered on the history of the Underground Railroad in their own locales.

Few states, even east of the Mississippi River, have state-sponsored Underground Railroad programs. What can be done to get more states interested in their Underground Railroad legacy?

I'm not very optimistic about state governments giving significant support to the legacy of the Underground Railroad. This is the case due to the large deficits of most state governments across the country these days. There are a few states that do support Underground Railroad programs but, for the vast majority, I don't see this happening, at least in the near future.

There is a growing bookshelf of Underground Railroad books including your excellent *The Underground Railroad in Western Illinois*. To which publishers should Underground Railroad authors look to get books in front of readers?

I'm impressed with the number of Underground Railroad books that have come out over the last ten years. My publisher, McFarland & Company, Inc., has published several books about the Underground Railroad that target the topic in various states. If a historical subject is well written, researched and edited, publishers will usually give serious consideration to such a book. HarperCollins, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, University of North Carolina Press, and Simon & Schuster have all published books on the Underground Railroad in recent years.

What prompted Knox College to create its Underground Railroad Center?

Almost immediately after their founding, Galesburg and Knox College gained a reputation as a leading center of the Illinois antislavery movement, and by the 1840s more Underground Railroad lines crossed in Galesburg than any other town

See Muelder, page 5, column 2

Modern Slavery

against slavery remains unfinished."

The report ranks each nation on its compliance with global anti-trafficking laws aimed at tackling a global trade in humanity. Much of Western Europe and North America is regarded as "Tier 1" territory - countries whose governments fully comply with minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. But even top-tier nations face problems. The US, which faces an ongoing struggle with sex traffickers smuggling women into prostitution from Mexico and Latin America, saw government funding for anti-trafficking measures cut during 2011. Among the countries promoted to Tier 1, Nicaragua made its first appearance, one that US anti-trafficking chief Luis C. de-Baca said was evidence of a positive anti-trafficking trend in Latin America.

More money was needed for victim support, the report said, along with improved data analysis and identification services, and a push to help businesses understand how to avoid employing victims of trafficking. "Treating victims as victims and not as criminals is important," said Bradley Myles of Polaris Project, a US-based anti-trafficking operation. "These are crime victims with human rights and they should be protected."

Seventeen nations mainly in Asia and Africa were placed in the lowest tier of the 2012 report. Syria's entry to that group places it with the likes of Cuba, Iran, North Korea and Zimbabwe in clear violation of anti-trafficking laws. Other unstable nations including Libya, Yemen, Sudan, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait and the Congo remain non-compliers.

Burma climbed out of the bottom tier to a 42-nation-strong "watch list", mainly as a result of new effort by its government to address forced labour and conscription of child soldiers. Lebanon made the fight against human trafficking a national priority, the report said, passing a new law that helped it climb a peg. China and Russia remained on the "watch list," with the State Department remarking that China continues to practise a "systematic form of repression" known as "re-education through labour".

Most countries on the list, 93, were ranked in Tier 2 - judged to be in breach of anti-trafficking laws but making notable efforts to end those breaches.

Swing Low

Ben's scouting for strange devices laid in the river by the Confederates and daring outing to warn Moses when she visits a nearby plantation get him caught and lashed but he keeps his silence. Families broken by human sales, long back-breaking hours picking cotton, cruel overseers, the hopelessness of slavery Rucker etches in vivid mounting style in her book.

This historical fiction is closer to history than fiction. In addition to using Tubman's well documented action along the Combahee, the book pays close attention to the account of Minus Hamilton – the story's uncle Minus – 88 at the time of his liberation, whose story of Tubman's raid on the Lowndes Plantation was recorded by Union Colonel Thomas Higgins, commander of a black regiment which had a major role in the Combahee action.

There is too little fiction in Underground Railroad literature and *Swing Low, Sweet Harriet* joins David Durham's *Walk Through Darkness* in starting to fill a still thin shelf. As soon as the children you buy this for finish reading it, enjoy it yourself.

Rhonda Rucker, MD, is a Grammy-nominated musician who with her husband Sparky travels extensively in North America and abroad presenting music of the Underground Railroad, abolitionism and civil rights. They are recognized as among the foremost artists of the genre ever. Their album *Treasures and Tears* was a nominee for the W. C. Handy Award for Best Traditional Recording. She is a frequent author of articles and a contributing author of *The Encyclopedia of Appalachia*.

Ruckers

their much lauded Blue and Gray in Black and White, a Civil War show.

Sparky, great-grandson of a slave, Rhonda, descendant of a Confederate Army officer, and their son James, a college senior studying screen writing, are bright examples of how far their country has come in healing old wounds and giving life to the nation's founding promise that all are created equal.

For more on the Ruckers, their tour schedule or to book them, visit sparkyandronda.com.

Knox

One of the seven debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas in their campaign for a United States Senate seat in 1858 was held on the front steps of Old Main at Knox College. Because the founders of Knox and Galesburg were profoundly anti-slavery, the Knox debate presented a fitting time and place for Lincoln to make an issue of the immorality of Douglas' position on slavery. Though Douglas won the Senate seat, Lincoln's reputation following the Knox debate catapulted his fame throughout the United States and set the stage for his election as President in 1860.

To illuminate the College's proud legacy, its Underground Railroad center was founded in 2004 with long-time College administrator Owen Muelder appointed to head it. Displays include a memorial to escaped slave Susan Richardson, exhibits on Old Main, the Lincoln-Douglas debate, a slave block, regional Underground Railroad activities, and Center news stories, and maps detailing Underground Railroad routes around Galesburg and Western Illinois.

The Center is housed in the old Galesburg jail, cells and all, now owned by the College. The Center is listed by the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center as a partner and verified Underground Railroad site. Visit knox.edu for more.

12 years

Based on a true story, the film revolves around Solomon Northup, played by Chiwetel Ejiofor, a free man living in Saratoga Springs, New York, in 1841. With a supportive family, home and burgeoning career as a violinist, Northup seems to have a rather prosperous life—until he gets tricked and sold into slavery by two seemingly harmless strangers. What happens hereafter is a tale of complete oppression, changing Northup's life in the worst possible way.

Northup is brought to New Orleans under the name of "Platt" and is purchased by a owner named William Ford, played by Benedict Cumberbatch. Although he remains on good terms with Ford, Northup gets into several fights with one of the ruthless plantation overseers, which ends up putting him through a great deal of pain. Eventually, he is transferred to the infamous, sadistic slave driver named Edwin Epps, played by Michael Fassbender. Here, Northup goes through a frightening journey of coercion and cruelty.

Among those facing the most violence is a young slave named Patsy, played by Lupita Nyong'o, a cotton picker whom Epps is also in love with. Because of this affection that Epps himself does not understand, he chooses to beat and rape Patsy, thinking that it will help him repress his desire for her. His treatment of his slaves is almost unbearable to watch—stomach-churning at times and tear-inducing toward the end.

Slavery is often difficult to portray in film, but McQueen does it effortlessly, mostly because he chooses not to filter out any aspect. The actors in the film are equally as pivotal in the storytelling process. Because he is able to make the audience so furious, Fassbender does a brilliant job in portraying Edwin Epps. He seizes control of every scene he is in, immersing himself in the psychotic, misguided character—and without holding back, he represents the horror and monstrosity of the time.

Chiwetel Ejiofor also does a commendable job portraying Solomon Northup, as he has the depth and acting chops to portray a learned man—a man who has freedom but is forced to give it up for no reason. The greatest performance is Lupita Nyong'o's, whose scenes are most painful to watch. As the object of Epps' affection, but a slave nonetheless, the character of Patsy suffers the most cruelty—violence from Epps, who feels guilty for being attracted to her, and on the other side, punishment from his jealous and conniving wife. One of the few redeeming characters in the movie is Samuel Bass, a Canadian carpenter who challenges Epps' philosophy of treating slaves as his property (played by Brad Pitt, who is also the producer of the movie).

Overall, "12 Years a Slave" is a movie of great tribulations—it is dramatic in its retelling of slavery but rightly so. It is the truth. If you are not affected by the beautiful filmmaking, you will at least come out a more compassionate person, with a more fundamental awareness of the crimes inflicted at the time, the lives it grappled with and the inhumane acts that took place. That said, it is a movie that everyone must watch once—and once is just enough to understand its immense power.

Muelder

in Illinois. The fifth Lincoln-Douglas debate was held in Galesburg where Abraham Lincoln, on friendly ground, delivered his first strong condemnation of the immorality of slavery.

Proud of its long history of ties to abolitionism, Knox College in 2004 established the Galesburg Colony Underground Railroad Freedom Center.