



# UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FREE PRESS®

Independent reporting for today's Underground Railroad community

[urrFreePress.com](http://urrFreePress.com)

## Nobel Peace Prize Awarded to Former ISIS Slave Nadia Murad

Nadia Murad, a 25-year-old former ISIS sex slave, now a United Nations ambassador for human rights, won the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize. The prize was shared with Denis Mukwege, a Congolese physician who has pioneered the treatment of rape victims.

Murad, a Yazidi Iraqi, was kidnapped by ISIS in 2014, tortured and passed around among men until she escaped and made her way to a refugee camp in northern Iraq where she lived in a shipping container. At the time of her abduction, ISIS fighters rounded up the Yazidi religious community in her village, killed 600 including six of Nadia's brothers, and forced younger women into slavery.

In 2015, Murad briefed the United Nations Security Council on human trafficking, the first time the Council was ever briefed on the topic after much stalling.

In addition to the Nobel Prize, Nadia Murad has also been awarded the



Nadia Murad

Council of Europe Václav Havel Award for Human Rights and the Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, both in 2016. In 2017, her memoir, *The Last Girl: My Story of Captivity, and My Fight Against the Islamic State*, was published. That year she launched Nadia's Initiative, a program providing advocacy and assistance to victims of genocide. Visit <https://nadiasinitiative.org>.

Because of serious threats to her safety as a result of her work, today Nadia Murad lives as a refugee in Germany.

### IN THIS ISSUE



Her courageous lobbying against war rape and genocide wins a 25-year-old the Nobel Peace Prize.

1



Here we go again: why can't "developers" be pro-historic preservation?

1



Illinois celebrates the Lincoln-Douglas debate that turned the public policy-corner on slavery.

2



How many active Underground Railroad organizations are there? See our Lynx website page for over 160.

At [urrFreePress.com#\\_Links\\_1](http://urrFreePress.com#_Links_1)

## NAACP & Free Press Urge Protection for Underground Railroad Site

Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania's Abolition Hall began life in 1856 as a second-story addition to the carriage house of Martha and George Corson. Following in the footsteps of both George's and Martha's parents, the couple frequently used their 1795 home and then the newly expanded carriage house to shelter freedom seekers. The two generations did so from before 1820 through the Civil War. The expanded carriage house, large enough to hold 200 people, and soon the focal point of the large local Quaker abolitionist community, came to be known as Abolition Hall.

Today, the entire historic downtown of Plymouth Meeting, Pennsylvania, is on the National Register as the Plymouth Meeting Historic District, with the Corson Farm and Abolition Hall enjoying their own recognition on the National Register of Historic Places.

In 2015, enter K. Hovnanian Builders, a large national developer that has applied to Montgomery County, where Plymouth

Meeting is located, to construct 48 townhouses on the farm, lay down a road between the Corson home and Abolition Hall, and tear down the adjacent Plymouth Meeting General Store and Post Office, which are also listed on the National Register.

Opposition to Hovnanian's proposal was swift, strong and sustained, being vigorously opposed by the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Preservation Pennsylvania, Friends of Abolition Hall, the National Park Service, and now the NAACP and *Underground Railroad Free Press*. Says John Corson, an African-American descendant of the Corson family and President of the local chapter of the NAACP, "This history is America's history, and it's a history worth preserving for generations to come."

All of this was not enough to prevent the supine Whitemarsh Township Board of Supervisors on October 25 from giving



Abolition Hall

Hovnanian permission to build 67 townhouses, up from the 48 applied for. (Administratively, Plymouth Meeting is part of Whitemarsh Township.) But preservation advocates have two hopes remaining: the Montgomery County Historical Commission and the County Board of Supervisors, both of which must now review the proposal and which have veto power over it. In addition, Friends of Abolition Hall is considering an appeal of the Whitemarsh Township decision.

# Fifth Lincoln-Douglas Debate Drew the Battle Lines for Abolition

By Owen Muelder

This article was written for the Illinois bicentennial series and appeared in the Galesburg, Illinois, *Register-Mail*. Owen Muelder is Professor Emeritus of History at Knox College, Director of the college's Underground Railroad Freedom Station, and the 2014 winner of the Free Press Prize for Preservation. Reprinted with permission.

The Lincoln-Douglas Debates are among the most important events in the United States' history.

The seven debates were held throughout Illinois in the summer and fall of 1858. Not only significant in their own time, the debates have since been recognized as an ultimate example of our political process—which has continued throughout the centuries as most office seekers nationwide debate each other every campaign season.

Stephen A. Douglas and Abraham Lincoln were respectively the Democratic and Republican party candidates for the U.S. Senate. The primary question these men discussed was whether slavery should be extended into the nation's territories.

Lincoln was not an abolitionist, but he loathed slavery and looked forward to a time when it would disappear. He also maintained that it should be forbidden from being established in new states that desired to join the Union. Douglas defended the concept of "Popular Sovereignty," whereby the people who resided in western territories should have the right to decide if slavery would be allowed.

The slavery question was so important that no other political issue was raised by either candidate during the debates.

Public oratory was popular in the 19th century; both candidates often used harsh language and outspoken mud-slinging to characterize each other. People attending these contests also shouted out derogatory comments and catcalls toward both men. Spectators came from every part of Illinois to hear the speakers, and newspapers throughout the country published detailed accounts.

The first debate, in Ottawa, was held on a blisteringly hot day in the third week of August. Most historians agree Douglas put Lincoln on the defensive; consequently, the "Little Giant" appeared to be the winner.

However, at the second contest in Freeport, Douglas was put on the defensive. Lincoln asked Douglas how he could reconcile his

"Popular Sovereignty" stance with the Supreme Court's Dred Scott decision, which ruled that slaveholders had the right to introduce slavery into the territories. If Douglas responded that he supported the Dred Scott decision he would please Southerners, but if he stood by his "Popular Sovereignty" position, most Southerners would never forgive him.

His reply that day has since been dubbed the "Freeport Doctrine." Douglas responded to Lincoln's query by saying the people who settled a territory would determine whether or not slavery could exist there. Put back on his heels, he hoped his answer would satisfy all parties, but it failed.

The third debate, in mid-September in downstate Jonesboro, was poorly attended. In southern Illinois, slavery was popular with many citizens. Lincoln finally came out more forcefully in Jonesboro, but he faced a hostile crowd and was characterized by Douglas as a radical. This debate is considered by most scholars a somewhat inglorious affair. The fourth debate, in Charleston, was on neutral ground for both men and is remembered as a stalemate.

On a chilly day at Knox College's Old Main in Galesburg, the fifth debate on Oct. 7 drew more spectators than any of the other six contests. Lincoln scholars are nearly unanimous in describing this debate as the one where Lincoln found his legs, displaying a confidence he had not shown before.

Lincoln knew Galesburg was an abolitionist town, known for harboring fugitives on the Underground Railroad. Standing erect and self-assured on a stage above the crowd, Lincoln spoke for the first time at length about the immorality of slavery.

"I confess myself as belonging to that class in the country that contemplates slavery as a moral, social and political evil," he said. Paraphrasing Henry Clay, he accused Douglas of "blowing out the moral lights around us."

Lincoln biographer Benjamin Thomas described the Galesburg contest as the turning point for Lincoln. One Boston newspaper reporter described Lincoln as "eloquent and bold." Lincoln was so successful emphasizing this moral theme in Galesburg that he repeated it at the sixth debate in Quincy.

Douglas, often a heavy drinker, was described as "tight" and spoke slowly, hammering home his contention that decisions about slavery should be left to local and state governments. In the final debate, at

Alton, which was a rehashing of the previous points, Douglas, his voice fraying, seemed worn down. An energetic Lincoln said the Declaration of Independence applied to all men, not just some, and the slavery question was between right and wrong.

In November, the state Legislature re-elected Douglas by 54 to 46, but the debates catapulted Lincoln's name and reputation across the nation; the Republican Party nominated him for the presidency two years later. His election victory proved to be a significant watershed in American history.

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

Peter H. Michael, Publisher  
info@urrfreepress.com  
301 | 874 | 0235

*Underground Railroad Free Press* serves as the nexus of the international Underground Railroad community, maintains its central registry, calendar and surveys, and publishes its free eponymous newsletter at Underground Railroad Free Press, 2455 Ballenger Creek Pike, Adamstown, Maryland, 21710.

*Free Press* is distributed by email. Send new subscriber email addresses and changes to the email address above. Back issues are available free at our web site.

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 that in our sole judgment is not acceptable. Submit advertising in pdf, jpg or text formats. Visit our website for rates and layout specifications.

## THINGS YOU CAN DO AT FREE PRESS

Click on links at [urrfreepress.com](http://urrfreepress.com) to:

Subscribe

Join the Community or View Lynx

Make a Free Press Prize Nomination

Read Underground Railroad Surveys

View or Add to Datebook

Submit News, Letters, Articles or Ads

List an Underground Railroad Site

Rate an Underground Railroad Site