



Underground Railroad Free Press®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

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Anderson, Stewarts, Calarco Named 2008 *Free Press* Prize Winners

The Prizes

The *Underground Railroad Free Press* Prizes are awarded each September by *Underground Railroad Free Press* in the fields of leadership, preservation and advancement of knowledge in the international Underground Railroad community. Judging is conducted by an expertly qualified international panel of impartial judges from various disciplines. To submit a 2009 nomination, download a nomination form from the *Free Press* web site, complete it and email it to publisher@urrfreepress.com.

The Panel of Judges

Authors Karolyn Smardz Frost and Fergus Bordewich, journalists Lawrence Hall and Wayne Young, Professors Hortense Simmons, William Switala and Judith Wellman, and Ambassador Ronald Palmer

The 2008 Free Press Prize for Leadership In the Contemporary Underground Railroad Community



Dr. David A. Anderson

Long-time Underground Railroad entrepreneur David A. Anderson, founder of a number of key Underground Railroad institutions and programs over the last 40 years, has been named by the *Underground Railroad Free Press* Prize Panel of Judges as the 2008 winner of the *Underground Railroad Free Press* Prize for Leadership In the Contemporary Underground Railroad Community.

In describing Dr. Anderson's impact on the Underground Railroad community, one of his colleagues states, "The courage of his powerful voice, the focused dedication on the performance, the correction of the historical record, the accurate portrayal of the feelings and the environments of those who sought freedom on the Underground Railroad and of those who helped them, fed them, spoke for them and provided them shelter have been his life's mission."

Among his many Underground Railroad accomplishments, Dr. Anderson, Scholar In Residence at New York's Nazareth College, chairs the Rochester/Monroe

County Freedom Trail Commission, is Senior Fellow at the United States Colored Troops Institute and chaired the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center's 2007 International Underground Railroad Conference.

David Anderson has testified before Congress on Underground Railroad matters, represented the United States Department of State abroad and been featured on National Public Radio.

Beside his contributions to the Underground Railroad community through his administrative acumen, David Anderson has done as much as anyone to re-awaken the world to the story of the Underground Railroad. Anderson is a founder of the Black Storytelling League of Rochester and of Akwaaba Heritage Associates, Inc., interpreters of African-American cultural heritage. For decades, he has been a featured Underground Railroad re-enactor and storyteller at schools, colleges and other settings throughout the United States and in West Africa, often acting the role of West African storyteller Sankofa. He has long specialized in telling and acting the life story of Frederick Douglass. In 2000, David Anderson directed the 18th Annual National Black Storytelling Festival and Conference and was the recipient of its Zora Neale Hurston Award.

Dr. Anderson is an award-winning author of African-Americana and an exhibited photographer, and has long been active in the identification, preservation and interpretation of Underground Railroad sites.

Among the highly deserving 2008 candidates for the Free Press Prize in Leadership of the Contemporary Underground Railroad Community, the Panel of Judges concluded that, based on the cumulation of his life's work, none was more deserving than David A. Anderson.

The 2008 Free Press Prize for Underground Railroad Preservation



Maryliz and Paul Stewart

For their inspiring detective work in uncovering the location of the Stephen Myers home and Underground Railroad safe-house and restoration of the building, preservationists Maryliz and Paul Stewart have been named by the *Underground Railroad Free Press* Prize Panel of Judges as the 2008 winners of the *Underground Railroad Free Press* Prize for Underground Railroad Preservation.

Paul and Maryliz Stewart are the founders of the Underground Railroad History Project of the Capitol Region in Albany, New York, one of the nation's most successful regional Underground Railroad organizations.

Following years of exhaustive research into historical archives and Albany property records, the Stewarts discovered the long-lost home of Stephen Myers, African-American leader of the Albany Vigilance Committee during the 1840s and 1850s and one of the area's most important Underground Railroad operators of the time. Albany was a key Underground Railroad depot, annually receiving hundreds of fugitives from New York City and routing them to central New York, Vermont and Massachusetts. Myers worked with other prominent

conductors and safe-house operators, among them Judge William Jay, David Ruggles and Gerritt Smith. Countless fugitives found refuge and hope at Myers' home before being sent on by Myers to safer havens.

As a colleague said, "While difficult to match, the Stewarts have set an inspiring example of perseverance in modern revelation of the Underground Railroad. Theirs was an especially difficult challenge."

Long believed to have been demolished, the Myers home's location had been lost to time. Undertaking years of long detective work, the Stewarts discovered that Albany's street names and house numbering had been changed repeatedly for over 150 years. Painstakingly combing through old deeds, they were able to pinpoint the site of the Myers home and then discovered the building, a brick row-house still intact but derelict.

Maryliz and Paul Stewart then set about raising money from grants and donations to purchase the house and for several years have been carrying out a community-based restoration using young volunteers from the surrounding mostly African-American community. Pictures of the house are at ugrworkshop.com.

The Stewarts' work in rediscovering and preserving Myers House saved a key Underground Railroad safe-house and demonstrates the central role that African-Americans had in organization and management of the Underground Railroad. Myers House is slated to become an Underground Railroad museum in 2009.

The Stewarts have also conducted wide-ranging research into Albany's pivotal Underground Railroad roles and have organized five nationally recognized annual conferences on diverse Underground Railroad topics. Recent conferences focused on the Underground Railroad in New York's Hudson Valley, abolitionist and philanthropist Gerrit Smith, the Solomon Northrup saga and African-American graveyards. Conference keynote speakers have included former Freedom Center chief executive officer Spencer Crew, Professor David Blight of Yale's Gilder-Lehrman Center and other notables. Conference attendance has now grown into the hundreds.

As if they are not busy enough, Maryliz and Paul Stewart also lead walking tours of Albany's Underground Railroad and abolitionist historic sites, and provide guidance to other Underground Railroad researchers free of charge.

The 2008 Free Press Prize for the Advancement of Knowledge



Thomas P. Calarco

For his ground-breaking research and publications revealing the Underground Railroad in eastern New York state, especially the state's hard-to-research Adirondack region, author Thomas P. Calarco has been named by the *Underground Railroad Free Press* Prize Panel of Judges as the 2008 winner of the *Underground Railroad Free Press* Prize for the Advancement of Knowledge.

The judges especially noted that Calarco's work serves as an inspiration and procedural model for the growing number of Underground Railroad enthusiasts in the United States and Canada who stand to benefit from a good example of how to go about researching, rating and cataloguing Underground Railroad sites in their own areas.

Mr. Calarco's books cover easternmost New York state from New York City to the Canadian border, and wisely include not only Underground Railroad sites which he has been able to document but the larger number known from oral tradition. Calarco says that what he most seeks to illuminate is that the Underground Railroad was an early, enduring and inspiring international example of racial cooperation.

As a prominent Underground Railroad author said, "Without Calarco's work, a significant portion of the Underground Railroad map in New York State would still be blank." Much of Mr. Calarco's Underground Railroad work appears in his three books, *The Underground Railroad in the Adirondack Region*, *The Underground Railroad Conductor: A Guide for Eastern New York* and *Abel Brown: Abolitionist*, all available at Amazon and through book stores, and through the author's web site, undergroundrailroad-conductor.com.

Calarco is now working on an international encyclopedia of the Underground

Railroad scheduled for publication in 2009 or 2010 in two volumes, the first a comprehensive listing of Underground Railroad sites, the second on Underground Railroad personages.

Mr. Calarco lives in Cincinnati not far from the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center.

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