



# UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FREE PRESS®

Independent reporting on today's Underground Railroad

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## Miller, Mull and Papsons Are Named 2012 Free Press Prizes Laureates

*Four Entrepreneur/Advocates Sweep 2012 Prizes*



Caroline Miller



Carol Mull



Vivian & Donald Papson

In the fifth annual awarding of the Underground Railroad Free Press prizes, the Free Press Panel of Judges has named Caroline Miller, Carol Mull, and Vivian and Donald Papson as the 2012 winners.

Miller was awarded the Free Press Prize in Preservation for her long work in Underground Railroad advocacy and education but especially for arranging for the acquisition of the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center's signature artifact, a slave pen, among the major existing artifacts of the slavery era, rescued from a Kentucky farm. The log pen was reassembled piece by piece in the Freedom Center lobby.

The judges named Carol Mull winner of the Hortense Simmons Prize

for the Advancement of Knowledge for founding the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission, authoring *The Underground Railroad in Michigan*, and advising the Adventure Cycling Association on its Detroit Alternate Underground Railroad Bicycle Route. (See the May 2012 *Free Press* article on the route.)

Vivian and Donald Papson received the 2012 Free Press Prize in Leadership for founding and operating several major Underground Railroad institutions including a new museum in the northern panhandle of New York state.

Backgrounds of the 2012 laureates and their accomplishments are provided on page five here.

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## Curaçao's Museo Tula Joins Underground Railroad Community

There are well documented accounts of Underground Railroad freedom seekers reaching the British Caribbean, Mexico, Europe, Africa and, of course, Canada. Gradually, the contemporary Underground Railroad community is becoming as international as the Underground Railroad once was.

Since its inception in 2006, *Underground Railroad Free Press* readership has spread to include subscribers in Canada, the Caribbean, and Europe. Now with Museo Tula comes the nation of Curaçao off the Caribbean coast of Venezuela.

In 2010 when the Netherlands Antilles were dissolved, Curaçao attained nationhood, becoming a constituent country of the Neth-

erlands. Curaçao's heritage, mixed for nearly 400 years, is exemplified in its Native Caribbean, Creole and Dutch languages.

Museo Tula exhibits Afro-Curaçao history and culture including history on the immigration of American Underground Railroad freedom seekers to the island. The museum takes its name from a slave uprising led by Captain Tula in 1795, and occupies the restored home of Kenapa Plantation, founded in 1693 and the main site of the 1795 rebellion.

Museo Tula, open year round, offers exhibits, historical and cultural activities, tours, workshops, children's courses and research. Visit [museotula.com](http://museotula.com) for more.

## Jerry Gore Receives 2012 Carter G. Woodson Memorial Award

The National Education Association and the Association for the Study of African American Life and History have jointly presented the 2012 Carter G. Woodson Memorial Award to long-time Kentucky Underground Railroad educator and activist Jerry Gore.

The award is given annually for "leadership and creativity in promoting Black History Month, for furthering the understanding of black Americans' heritage, and for making significant positive changes in a local community."

His award citation states that, "Jerry Gore helps us hear the voices of slaves who risked everything to achieve their freedom, and helps us bear witness to those who helped slaves on the Underground Railroad. In West Africa, the storyteller, or griot, is a revered figure who links the past with the present, enriching people's everyday lives. Jerry Gore is an African American griot."

After retiring from Kentucky's Morehead State University where he taught Black History, Gore founded Freedom

Time, an Underground Railroad Museum, and Freedom Time Tours in Maysville, Kentucky. Gore has unearthed much Underground Railroad history of Maysville and Ripley, Ohio, across the Ohio River. The Freedom Tour, which a Kentucky Education Association official describes as changing lives, has had a major impact on students and adults who may never have heard of the Underground Railroad.

Gore has served as a consultant on Underground Railroad history to the National Park Service and coordinated a binational Underground Railroad field study for the Park Service and Parks Canada.

Cited as the father of black history, Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1875-1950) was an African American historian, journalist, author and founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. One of the first scholars to study African American history, Woodson founded *The Journal of African-American History*. The son of slaves, Carter Woodson earned his Ph.D. at Harvard in 1912.

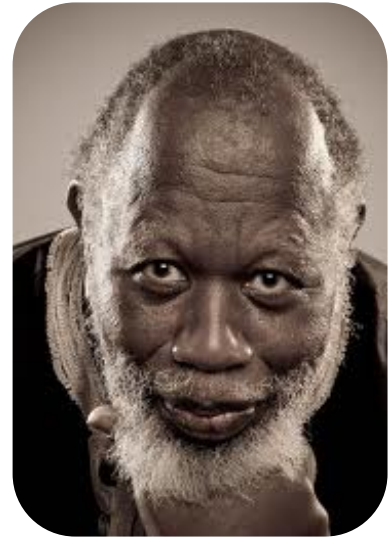


PHOTO BY WILLIAM COLLINS

Jerry Gore

## Frederick Douglass Statue Finally Heads for the Capitol



National Statuary Hall of the United States Capitol

Though completed in 2007, a statue of Frederick Douglass intended for the United States Capitol has languished in a warehouse since. On June 21, New York Senator Charles Schumer introduced a resolution directing Congress to accept the statue for prominent display in the U.S. Capitol. Schumer's resolution cuts through legislative red tape that has left the statue neglected in a government building a few blocks from the Capitol.

Currently, only two out of more than 180 statues and busts of prominent American figures on display in the Capitol, including the 100 in the Capitol's National Statuary Hall, portray African Americans. Schumer's bill pushes Congress to finally take action and accept the Douglass statue for the Capitol. The statue depicts a standing Douglass on a pedestal engraved with his 1857 speech quote that reads, "Without struggle, there is no progress."

"It's inexcusable to let a statue of one of the greatest heroes in the history of our nation collect cobwebs in a city government building less than a mile from the U.S. Capitol where it belongs," said Schumer. "Frederick Douglass fought his entire life to promote equality for African Americans and women. This is more than a statue of a great American; this is a message that our government celebrates Douglass's legacy of always striving to fight on the side of equal rights."

# Underground Railroad Freedom Trail Planned for New York City

This article is adapted from "A New Freedom Trail" by Jennifer Maloney which appeared in *The Wall Street Journal* July 2, 2012.

After the state abolished slavery in 1827, New York City became both a sanctuary and a trap for slaves who had escaped from their owners.

By day, freed men and women could live and work here. But by night, they could be snatched off the street by bounty hunters.

Jacob Morris, the head of the Harlem Historical Society, has a vision for Lower Manhattan: he wants to establish a trail linking sites associated with the Underground Railroad, the 19th-century network of safe-houses and routes used by slaves escaping to freedom.

The landmarks of this chapter of New York's history—the homes, churches, printing presses and businesses of the city's abolitionist leaders—are all but gone. But Jacob Morris is on a determined quest to mark them nonetheless, a one-man mission to develop New York's own Freedom Trail of slavery, the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad.

"It's a uniquely New York story," he said on a recent afternoon, walking the streets of Lower Manhattan. "This is a hidden New York City. You walk by and don't know."

Mr. Morris, director of the Harlem Historical Society, first dreamed up the idea in 2007, when he successfully lobbied for a small stretch of Chambers Street to be named after Frederick Douglass. He envisions about 20 sites, tracing the story of emancipation from the slave market that opened in 1711 at Wall and Water Streets to spots associated with the country's first black newspaper, black theater and licensed black doctor. Also highlighted is the place where Elizabeth Jennings, a black schoolteacher, was forced off a streetcar at Pearl and Chatham streets in 1854. She sued, forcing the desegregation of streetcars.

Mr. Morris has highlighted locations such as the site of the pharmacy owned by James McCune Smith, the nation's first African-American to obtain a medical license.

Mr. Morris estimates the cost at less than \$200,000 for a path of historical markers, along with a map and podcast or smartphone app that visitors can listen to as they walk the route. He hasn't secured funding for the project, but this past spring he gained support from Community Board 1 and the Downtown Alliance, groups that say the project could lure tourists to Lower Manhattan and highlight a period in the city's history that many know little about.

"The Freedom Trail is absolutely something we need to have in New York City," said Julie Menin, chair of Community Board 1.

The trail would be fashioned after historical trails in other cities: the most famous, Boston's Freedom Trail, is a 2.5-mile, brick-lined route commemorating the city's Revolutionary War history. Philadelphia has a Constitutional Walking Tour. Trails in Syracuse and Portland, Maine, highlight figures associated with the Underground Railroad and antislavery movement.

In colonial times, more than 40 percent of New York households had slaves and New York's economy depended on slavery, said Valerie Paley, historian for special projects at the New York Historical Society. When the practice was abolished here, blacks from all over the country headed for New York, she said.



Slave catchers did, too, tracking runaways but also kidnapping black people for ransom.

The New York Committee of Vigilance, headed by the African-American publisher David Ruggles, was formed to protect them and used the city's legal system to keep them on free soil.

The site of Mr. Ruggles's home and bookstore at 36 Lispenard St.—now an apartment building with a coffee shop on the ground floor—already has a plaque noting its history as a station on the Underground Railroad. There, one of the country's most important abolitionist figures sought refuge in 1838.

Frederick Douglass, 20 years old and not yet a renowned orator, had stepped off a ferry from New Jersey a few days earlier and become a free man. He later wrote of his arrival in New York: "A new world had opened upon me. If life is more than breath, and the 'quick round of blood,' I lived more in one day than in a year of my slave life."

But he feared slave catchers. Mr. Ruggles took him in. He was married there to his fiancée, Anna Murray, a free black woman, and the couple set out for Massachusetts with a letter of recommendation from Mr. Ruggles and a \$5 bill.

New York was home to many African-American firsts: *Freedom's Journal*, the first black-owned and -operated newspaper, at 236 Church St., and the pharmacy of James McCune Smith, the country's first African-American to obtain a medical license, at 93 W. Broadway. The first black theater, the African Grove Theater, presented Shakespeare at 165 Mercer St. Downing's Oyster House, a black-owned restaurant, sheltered [fugitive] slaves in the basement while power brokers dined above.

One of the few original structures still standing on the route is the home of the Rev. Theodore Wright, another conductor on the Underground Railroad. The Rev. Wright was the first black graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary and spoke out against slavery from the pulpit of his church on Prince Street. His three-story home is at 235 W. Broadway. Stepping into its store on a recent afternoon, Mr. Morris asked the manager and a sales associate if they knew about the building's past life as a station on the Underground Railroad.

The manager did. The sales associate, Derrick Harden, didn't.

Mr. Morris showed him an image of the Rev. Wright, and Mr. Harden, who is black, mused that it could be his uncle. "I love that!" Mr. Harden said. "Free slaves used to be under the floor. Just think about that energy." He stomped his feet on the broad wooden floorboards.



## Editorial: How Racism Didn't Take Hold

As a young gadabout bumming around Asia in 1967, I was passing through Malaysia when I witnessed a nasty race riot between the nation's two major groups, ethnic Malays who comprise 60 percent of the population and descendants of Chinese (25 percent) who had been recruited to the former Malaya as laborers by the British during colonial days.

From my hotel window, I saw shops burn, innocents yanked off their motorbikes, and others fleeing down the alleys of old-town Penang. (The following year, cities in my own country would burn after the assassinations of 1968.)

Tensions stemmed from the industrious Chinese dominating the economy in a nation at the time claimed by Malays as exclusively their own. Large populations of Indians and Europeans were too often swept along in Malaysia's turmoil.

As my own country made great racial strides since the 1960s, I never forgot the sad sights I saw in Malaysia and wondered in the years since what kind of racial healing that country might have made.

Then along came a video, now a YouTube sensation, of two Malaysian school children who seem to have been immunized against what is ebbing but still all too frequent racial tension in their country.

In a filmed interview, Tan Hong Ming, an endearing Chinese Malaysian third-grader, confesses his crush on his Malay classmate Umi Qazrina, but bemoans that this must remain a secret because, alas, he thinks she couldn't like him, the racial divide apparent even at age eight.

Umi, equally endearing, then enters left before the camera whereupon the interviewer asks if she has a boyfriend to which the tot replies, yes, Tan Hong Ming. The priceless, stirring wordless reaction of the two teaches adults everywhere all they need to learn of race.

The 90-second film was one of eight of Malaysian children produced by megad agency Leo Burnett in 2008 for the Malaysian government to promote racial harmony. This public service ad has since won 13 awards including a gold medal at the Cannes Film Festival.



Umi Qazrina and Tan Hong Ming

The ad was developed by the Burnett agency's Yasmin Ahmad and Tan Yew Leong, a Malay and a Chinese working in Burnett's Kuala Lumpur office. The ad was funded by the state-run oil giant Petronas. There is an element of irony in an oil company and an ad agency, more often the target of brickbats, eliciting a perfect statement on race that has received worldwide acclaim.

All *Free Press* readers will be uplifted by what you will learn from the two Malaysian third-graders who now as seventh-graders are, yes, still best friends.

Don't miss this: go to YouTube.com and search on Tan Hong Ming.

Peter H. Michael

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## The 2012 Free Press Prize Winners

### Caroline Miller

Caroline Miller of Augusta, Kentucky, is a researcher at the Bracken County Historical Society. Her decades of preserving local Underground Railroad lore and sites gained her the 2012 Free Press Prize for Preservation. Miller's work with Northern Kentucky University's Institute for Freedom Studies did much to let Cincinnati's National Underground Railroad Freedom Center advance research and knowledge of the Underground Railroad in the Ohio-Kentucky border area.

It was Miller who came across an intact slave pen in an old Kentucky barn and was instrumental in the Freedom Center's acquisition of it which became the Center's and the contemporary Underground Railroad community's signature artifact, now on display at the Center in Cincinnati. Along with the 2006 rediscovery of a Maryland farm where Josiah Henson was enslaved, the slave pen is one of the top Underground Railroad finds ever. Though, of course, the pen was antithetical to the Underground Railroad, it now serves as the centerpiece of the world's top Underground Railroad institution.

Caroline Miller was an early advocate for the preservation and restoration of John Parker House, a prime extant Underground Railroad safe-house in Ripley, Ohio. She has also worked with many groups in Ripley and Cincinnati, and in Maysville, Old Washington, and Augusta, Kentucky, to advance local Underground Railroad history. Before retiring as a public high school English teacher, Miller taught the Underground Railroad and continues to do so with the Freedom Center and public.

Miller's landmark work, her recently published *Grapevine Dispatch: The Voice of Antislavery Messages* (Little Miami Publishing Company, 2011), makes available to a wider audience the fruits of her decades of extensive research into her region's history of the Underground Railroad, slavery and abolition. In an invaluable effort to retain history that might otherwise have been lost, Caroline Miller has self-published huge compendia of historical documents on Kentucky's African American history.

Miller has also written *Capitol Murder or Capital Mayhem: The Death of U. S. Congressman William Preston Taulbee, An American Nurse Ascending the Alps in Albania, Dachau Album*, eight compilations of slave records, five volumes of World War II letters, and a recent yearbook, *Veterans of Bracken County, Kentucky*. Caroline Miller leads Underground Railroad site tours in Kentucky, Ohio and elsewhere.

### Carol Mull

Carol Mull of Ann Arbor, Michigan, authored *The Underground Railroad in Michigan* and founded the Michigan Freedom Trail Commission. With a master's degree in historic preservation, Mull focuses on the history of networking for freedom, pioneer migration and settlement in southeastern Michigan.

In 2011 Mull led Adventure Cycling Association in laying out its new Detroit Alternate Underground Railroad Bicycle Route. In 2007, Adventure Cycling developed its first Underground Railroad route, a 2,000-mile path from Mobile, Alabama, to Owen Sound, Canada. Adventure Cycling's new 518-mile Alternate Route, launched in February 2012, lets cyclists split from the main route at Oberlin, Ohio, travel northwest to Underground Railroad sites of Sandusky and Toledo, cross southern Michigan to Detroit, and go on into Canada to follow the Lake Huron shoreline to Owen Sound. An option is a ferry ride

across Lake Huron to experience sites in southern Ontario.

The plethora of history and sites which could have been included in the Alternate Route, many of which rely primarily on oral tradition, became both gift and complication for Adventure Cycling route researchers and cartographers. In deciding what and what not to include in laying out the route, the need was to immerse cyclists in a manageable amount of Underground Railroad history while laying out a smooth bicycle journey.

Mull expertly guided Adventure Cycling through the many Underground Railroad site possibilities suggested by a number of local historians who served on Adventure Cycling's advisory team. Through her knowledge and experience from writing *The Underground Railroad in Michigan*, Mull provided the expertise that led Adventure Cycling to incorporate the right number of sites and infuse the right amount of history into Adventure Cycling's route map and supplemental on-line content.

### Vivian and Donald Papson

After years investigating Underground Railroad lore in New York state's Adirondacks, the Papsons, husband and wife, founded the North Country Underground Railroad Historical Association in 2005. The couple have since illuminated the Champlain Line of the Underground Railroad now reseen as a major fugitive passageway to Canada. The couple began their Underground Railroad work by researching 400 years of African American history of the Champlain Valley, then writing dramatic readings based on their discoveries, and delivering presentations to conferences, schools and historical societies.

The Champlain Line includes the Hudson River, Champlain Canal and Lake Champlain. Fugitives reaching there took water transport on their northward journeys or stagecoach or rail lines from New York City and New England to the region. Lake Champlain, straddling the United States and Canada, was the gateway to freedom. It was the Papsons who revealed much of the area's Underground Railroad history to 2008 Free Press Prize winner Tom Calarco for his *The Underground Railroad in the Adirondack Region* (McFarland, 2011).

To further the Adirondacks' Underground Railroad story, the Papsons led the formation of the North Star Underground Railroad Museum which opened in 2011 in the town of Chesterfield Heritage Center near Ausable Chasm. The Museum researches, preserves, interprets and promotes Underground Railroad history of northeastern New York's Waterways to Freedom area, and celebrates its relevance and significance to our own time.

The North Star Underground Railroad Museum has become a magnet for descendants of Underground Railroad freedom seekers and abolitionists, and the general public. In its first year, the museum had over 4,000 visitors from 23 nations, a seldom-matched performance for museums of similar size.

Understanding that resonating stories sustain an Underground Railroad museum, Vivian and Donald Papson schooled themselves in mission formulation, board development, fundraising, succession planning, grant writing, staff training and interpretive use of collections to incorporate and launch the museum, and gathered advice of every museum in their region to learn what works and what doesn't for small rural organizations.

Donald Papson is soon stepping down as chair of the museum board to work on two Underground Railroad books which he is coauthoring with Tom Calarco.