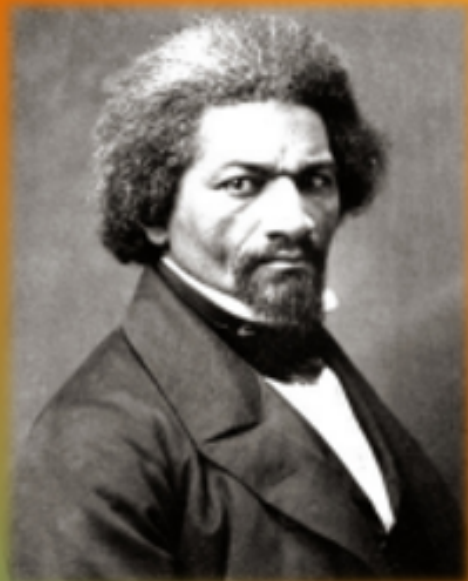


FREDERICK DOUGLASS MEMORIAL

VOL. 2 ISSUE NO. 2

JUNETEENTH SPECIAL EDITION

HISTORY



(IMAGE SOURCE: THE NEW YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY)

FREDERICK DOUGLASS MEMORIAL CEMETERY, LOCATED AT 1421 WILKES STREET IN ALEXANDRIA, VA DATES BACK TO THE EARLY 1800S. BLACK RESIDENTS OF ALEXANDRIA NAMED THIS BURIAL GROUND AFTER THE GREAT ACTIVIST FREDERICK DOUGLASS SOON AFTER HE DIED IN 1895.

WELL OVER 2000 AFRICAN AMERICANS ARE BURIED HERE WITH SEVERAL HUNDRED BORN INTO SLAVERY AND THEN FREED. TWO HUNDRED ARE CHILDREN, SOME WHO WERE STILLBORN AND SOME WHO ONLY LIVED VERY SHORT LIVES. RECORDS INDICATE THAT OF 2000 BURIED HERE, APPROXIMATELY SIX TO SEVEN HUNDRED HEADSTONES ARE PRESENT.

THIRD ANNUAL JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION



WELCOME TO THE FRIENDS OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS MEMORIAL CEMETERY NEWSLETTER. THIS QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER WILL INFORM ALL STAKEHOLDERS, DESCENDANTS, AND THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE SCOPE OF WORK AND ONGOING PROGRESS AT THE CEMETERY. IN THIS SPECIAL EDITION OF THE NEWSLETTER, WE ARE CELEBRATING JUNETEENTH. ON SATURDAY, JUNE 21ST, 2025, DESCENDANTS, STAKEHOLDERS, OFFICIALS, AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS GATHERED AT DOUGLASS TO CELEBRATE THE HOLIDAY.

SCHOLARS IN THE PARLOR



THESE THREE LOCAL ALEXANDRIANS HAVE ACQUIRED DEGREES FROM ILLUSTRIOUS HBCU'S AND UNIVERITIES WITHIN THE YEAR OF 2023. THE FREDERICK DOUGLASS CEMETERY CELEBRATES THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS. LEFT TO RIGHT: MICHAEL JOHNSON, DR. NELSON, DR. CHERYL LEWIS HAWKINS

Third Juneteenth Celebration



THE HISTORY OF JUNETEENTH

THE LEGACY OF JUNETEENTH has long been celebrated by Black Americans all over the country. This holiday represents the true independence day of the formerly enslaved African Americans freed from the shackles of chattel slavery. Every year we remember this turning point in American History since 1865 where freedom was no longer dependent on race in America, the bells of freedom officially rang true for every single African American in the south.

Contrary to President Abraham Lincoln's proclamation of freedom on January 1st, 1863 many plantation owners still enslaved African Americans within their confederate territory.

The loss of the war, impending financial havoc without their free labor, and bruised egos resulted in delayed suffrage for many in the deep south. News of these transgressions finally reached Union



General Gordon Granger two years later and with his troops they officially freed the last groups of bondaged slaves with General Order No. 3. Juneteenth is forever etched into our legacy as Black American people, we remember our ancestors who endured longer than necessary and admire their resilience in spite of unfounded cruelty.

This moment of liberation was not merely a legal act; it was a crucial step to instilling humanity, dignity, and justice back into a compromised community. For the more than 250,000 enslaved people in Texas a blatant and generational system of torture collapsed. Juneteenth stands as a testament to Black tenacity and beauty, the long struggle for fre-

-edom, and the ongoing pursuit of equality in the face of enduring oppression. The first Juneteenth celebrations began in 1866, with formerly enslaved people and their descendants organizing prayer meetings, music, feasts, and parades to celebrate this momentous day. Despite systemic efforts to suppress the holiday during the Jim Crow era, Black communities preserved its memory and spirit. Through barbecues, songs, storytelling, and community gatherings, Juneteenth became not only a commemoration of emancipation but also a celebration of African American culture, heritage, and survival.

Over time, Juneteenth grew into a powerful symbol of freedom's promise and its unfinished work. It reminds us that emancipation was not an endpoint, but a beginning—a call to build justice, equality, and inclusion in

the face of persistent racism and inequality. In 2021, Juneteenth was officially recognized as a federal holiday, affirming its significance to the national story and acknowledging the pain, perseverance, and power of Black Americans.

Juneteenth is more than history—it is living memory. It invites us to reflect on the past, confront the present, and commit to a more just future. It is a day of remembrance and of resolve, celebrating the triumphs of the Black freedom struggle while challenging all Americans to carry forward the unfinished work of liberty and justice for all.



DID THE DMV JUST FUMBLE REPARATIONS?

By Evelyn Kennedy

IN LIEU OF JUNETEENTH—a holiday of remembrance and Black legacy—the news of the vetoed Senate Bill 587 was both unexpected and, frankly, ill-timed. The DMV region has long held a reputation for Black excellence, political leadership, and civic accomplishment. Virginia, for example, was home to L. Douglas Wilder, the first Black governor elected in the United States. A product of segregated schools, a Korean War veteran, and the grandson of enslaved ancestors, Wilder rose to the gubernatorial seat where he championed community restoration, fiscal responsibility, and medical research into sickle cell anemia—a disease that disproportionately affects Black Americans.

Wilder's achievements set a precedent for future Black leaders in public service and represented the realization of our Juneteenth ancestors' dreams of autonomy and access—dreams denied for generations in a nation that often equated Blackness with subordination. He was not alone. Many descendants of this region have accomplished historic firsts and contributed to a powerful legacy of Black leadership in the DMV. Because of this, political missteps in the region—especially those involving racial equity—can attract intense scrutiny. This was the case with Maryland's first Black governor, Wes Moore, and his recent vetoes,

including the rejection of the Reparations Commission bill. Sponsored by Senators Muse, Augustine, Brooks, and M. Washington—and supported by members of the Legislative Black Caucus—SB 587 sought to establish a commission to study reparations for descendants of enslaved African Americans in Maryland. The commission would have produced a preliminary report and an in-depth analysis of the systemic inequalities that continue to affect this community long after Reconstruction and Jim Crow.

Though the bill merely proposed a study, Governor Moore vetoed it, citing concerns over fiscal responsibility. In his veto letter, he wrote:

"I strongly believe now is not the time for another study. Now is the time for continued action that delivers results for the people we serve."

Moore's position has generated considerable controversy among Maryland residents who viewed the bill as a meaningful first step toward reparations. Members of the Black Caucus and the bill's sponsors criticized the veto as unnecessary and potentially politically motivated. Moore's support for reparations remains unclear. While his letter outlines alternative proposals for supporting marginalized communities, critics worry that this move could embolden conservative states already working to undermine diversity initiatives in education, government, and finance.

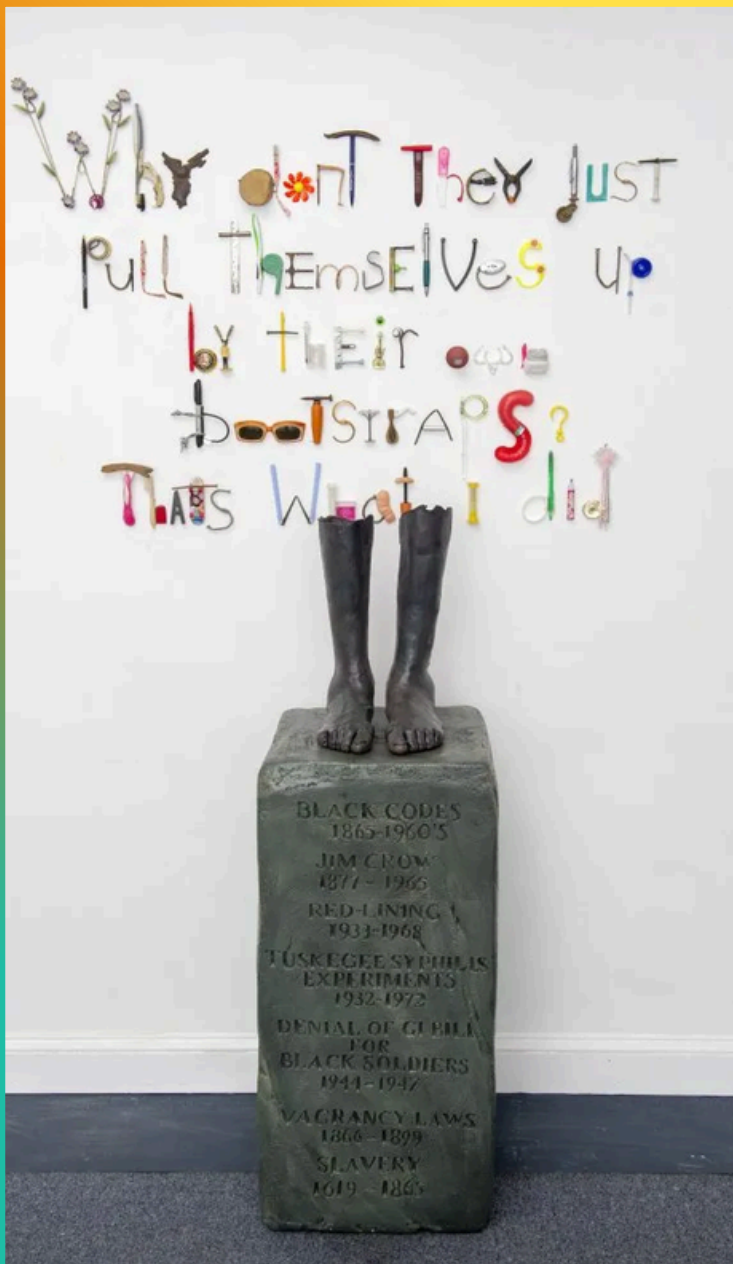
Some ask whether Moore's decision reflects pressure from right-wing agendas promoting cultural erasure, or whether it is a calculated step toward political ascension. Others, like Roger House, opinion editor at *The Hill*, see potential in Moore's position. House argues that instead of further studies on well-documented inequalities, Moore could implement a reparations bank for descendants of enslaved individuals and Jim Crow victims. This alternative, House suggests, would "reframe the issue's politics and enhance Black community self-governance"—a bold and unprecedented step from either party.

If Moore follows through with a comprehensive and tangible plan, he could align himself with the DMV's long legacy of transformative Black leadership. For now, Maryland residents must wait to see the full implications of the SB 587 veto.

As we celebrate the 159th Juneteenth—our fifth year recognizing it as a national holiday—let us remain both informed and hopeful. May we honor the endurance and sacrifices of our ancestors, who were denied restitution but deserve full memorialization by the country they helped build.



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CURRENT SITUATIONS

THIS PAST FALL, EFFORTS TO REPAIR AND CONSERVE THE GRAVESTONES AT DOUGLASS CEMETERY BEGAN. GRAVESTONE CONSERVATORS HOWARD WELLMAN AND DEVLIN MCDONALD TREATED 18 GRAVESTONES ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE CEMETERY. THIS IS THE PART OF THE CEMETERY THAT WILL NOT BE AFFECTED BY THE UPCOMING STORMWATER DRAINAGE PROJECT. THE STONES THAT WERE TREATED DURING THIS ROUND OF WORK WERE HIGH PRIORITY AND HAD FALLEN OR WERE BROKEN. THE DATES ON THE STONES RANGED FROM 1898 TO 1973. THE DETERMINATION ABOUT WHICH STONES NEED CONSERVATION WAS MADE AS PART OF THE 2022 DOUGLASS MEMORIAL CEMETERY PRESERVATION PLAN. MANY OF THE GRAVESTONES THAT WERE CONSERVED WERE THE DIE-ON-BASE TYPE

Before treatment. This is an example of a die-on-base type gravestone. The gravestone of Willie T. Mangum had toppled off its base.



After treatment. The gravestone was reset on the base using a gantry and the foundation of the gravestone was fixed.

Before treatment. The gravestone of Jannie Ross had broken into three pieces.



During treatment. The three pieces had to be re-assembled using pins and epoxy and then set in back in place by hand.



After treatment. Born in 1886, Jannie Ross' gravestone reads, "At rest."





CHERYL LEWIS HAWKINS

projects include, “Ruby @100,” a three-day celebration of the 100th birthday of Actor, Artist and Activist Miss Ruby Dee presented at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library in DC, and Producer of the teleplay “RS/24” which screened at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and at the historic Parkway Theatre in Baltimore.

CHERYL LEWIS HAWKINS, Ph.D. is a historian, media producer, and educator. She produces award-winning fiction and nonfiction content for stage, screens and internet platforms. She is a Senior Producer with UDC-TV, at the University of the District of Columbia, where for over 20 years she produced and hosted “UDC Books,” one of the longest running cable TV book talk shows in the country.

She is co-founder and CEO of Prosperity Media Enterprise, Inc., a nonprofit media arts organization founded in Washington, DC, where she develops programs for other nonprofits, youth, and adults “and produces cultural and historical films, video programs and theatrical productions to tell stories that help people of different cultural backgrounds understand each other better. Hawkins is also co-owner and Executive Producer of Koalaty (Ko-wal-a-tee) Entertainment, LLC, a for-profit media production company also founded in DC.

Ms. Hawkins’ acclaimed media productions include - Segment Writer and Performer in the WHMM-TV production of the four-time Emmy award winning PBS Special, “All Things Considered Black;” Producer and Director of “Sis Anna,” a documentary short highlighting the life and career of groundbreaking educator, activist, and author Dr. Anna Julia Cooper. Sis Anna,” premiered at the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives in Washington, DC and was selected for screenings in North Carolina at the International Black Theatre and Film Festival, The African American Women’s Film Festival in New York City, and the Peach Tree Film festival in Atlanta, Georgia. Other film works and media

For Black History Month 2025, through Prosperity Media, Hawkins collaborated with The Zhanra Group, a media content company in the DMV, to initiate the screening of the little known historic film Countdown at Kusini. The film was produced and funded by the women of Delta Sigma Theta, along with Ossie Davis, and Ruby Dee to offset negative images portrayed of Blacks in films during the 1970s. The film was presented in a special screening in the Pickford Theatre at the Library of Congress. Hawkins is currently spearheading a campaign to preserve the film and have it selected for entry into the Library of Congress’ prestigious Film Registry.

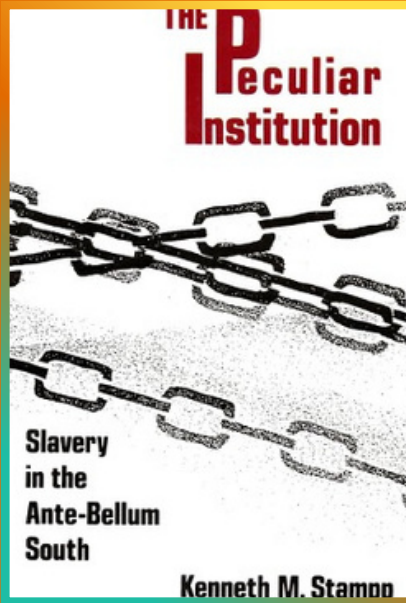
Ms. Hawkins is a Native Alexandrian and received her education from the Alexandria Public School System at Charles Houston Elementary School, Parker-Gray Junior High School, and George Washington, HS. She has a BA in Mass Media Arts from the University of the District of Columbia, an MA in Communications from American University, certificates from the Hollywood Film School, and the National Conservatory of Dramatic Arts. She recently received her Ph.D. in United States History with a minor in Public History from Howard University. Her dissertation “The Enduring Legacy of Parker-Gray” focused on the 20th century history of the African American Community in Alexandria, Virginia and their struggle for Public Education. Ms. Hawkins’ life mission and service has been dedicated to using arts to reverence history and to uplift, youth, women, and minority groups. She advocates by seeing the need and creating space that advances the culture and mitigates the divide.

A MESSAGE FROM THE DMV'S FAVORITE BISHOP ROBERT LEWIS TAYLOR



Bishop Robert Lewis Taylor was compelled into the gospel ministry in April 1980 and Ordained in 1982. He graduated from the Washington Bible College in Lanham, MD earning a Bachelor of Science degree in Religious Education. He was consecrated as Bishop in 1998 by Ekklesia International College of Bishop. He is the former pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, Alexandria, VA and Greater Shiloh Baptist [now Victory Temple Missionary Baptist Church] in Alexandria, VA – as well as Up Where We Belong Family Ministry in Temple Hills, MD. Currently, Bishop Taylor assists Rev. Richard Dickens at the New Metropolitan Baptist Church, Baltimore, MD. Bishop Taylor is founder and leader of Win at Life Ministry. His daughters are working professionals in Northern Virginia. He has one grandson: C.K. Bishop Robert Lewis Taylor is a member of the Missionary Baptist Ministers' Conference of Washington, DC, as well as the Baptist Ministers' Conference of Northern Virginia, and a lifetime member of the NAACP. A positive teacher of the power of the American African Church who imparts the crucial need for all of us to give back and protect our community. He demonstrates the spiritual truth of living your blessed life here and now. Bishop Taylor teaches everyone to enjoy your salvation, exercise your faith and let the GOD in YOU arise!

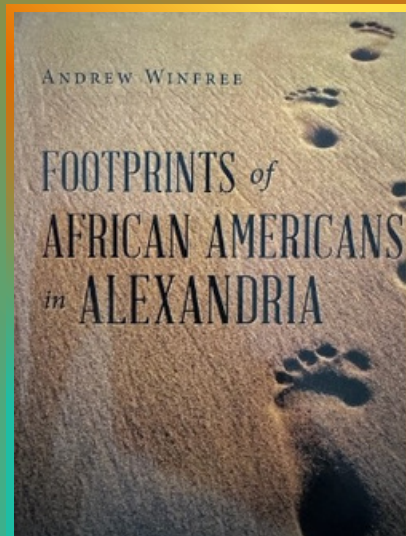
RECOMMENDED READING IN HONOR OF JUNETEETH:



The Peculiar Institution, Slavery in the Ante-Bellum South Kenneth M. Stampp

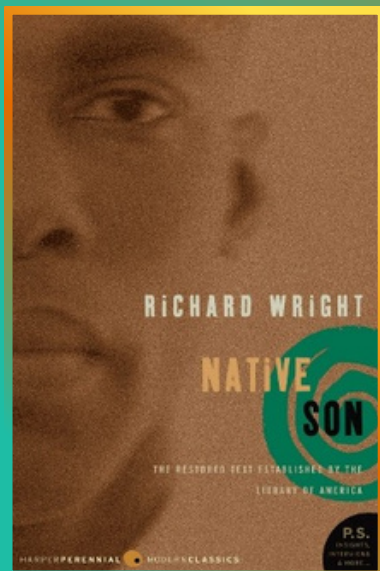
Kenneth M. Stampp's *The Peculiar Institution* redefined the historical understanding of slavery in the antebellum South by exposing it as a harsh, profit-driven system rooted in exploitation and control—not paternalism. He details how slaveholders maintained dominance through violence, religious manipulation, legal restrictions, and psychological tactics, all designed to suppress resistance and preserve their economic interests. Stampp also centers the voices and actions of enslaved people. By rejecting the myth of the “contented slave,” he highlights the daily hardships, broken families, and emotional trauma endured under slavery. The book additionally explores the ideology of white Southerners who, in order to justify slavery, crafted elaborate social, religious, and pseudo-scientific arguments that rationalized the institution while denying the humanity of the enslaved. The book critically examines the pro-slavery ideology of Southern whites and helped shift American historiography toward a more realistic, morally honest portrayal of slavery.

Footprints of African Americans in Alexandria by Andrew Winfree



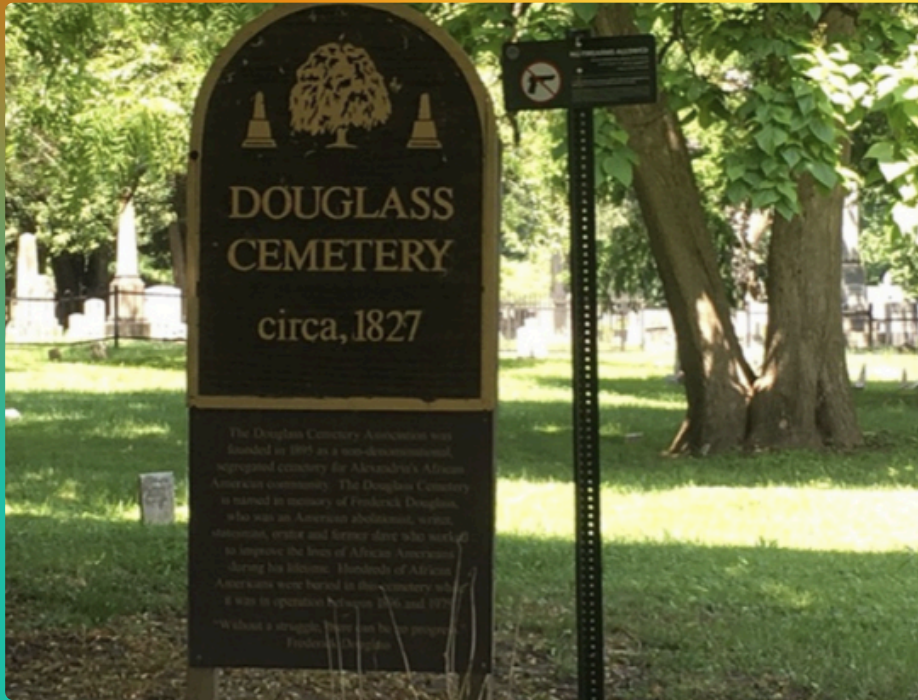
Andrew Winfree's comprehensive 2019 volume covers the lives and legacies of over 200 African American individuals connected to Alexandria, Virginia—spanning from the colonial era to the present—forging a mosaic of achievements in areas such as education, politics, religion, business, arts, and civil rights. The book emphasizes both collective and individual agency, detailing how Black leaders and everyday residents shaped the city's development through founding schools, churches, newspapers, and civic institutions—often under challenging conditions of segregation and inequality. Winfree organizes these stories to highlight recurring themes of resilience, community-building, and social progress, underscoring the continued relevance of Alexandria's Black heritage. More than a biographical compendium, the work seeks to educate, inspire, and fill gaps in local and national historical narratives by acknowledging the profound, yet often overlooked, contributions of African Americans in shaping the city's identity.

Native Son: The Restored Text Established by The Library of America by Richard Wright



Richard Wright's *Native Son* follows Bigger Thomas, a young Black man in 1930s Chicago, whose life is shaped by poverty, fear, and systemic racism. After accidentally killing Mary Dalton, a white woman he works for, and later murdering his girlfriend Bessie, Bigger is consumed by guilt and desperation. The novel explores how society's racial oppression and lack of opportunity drive Bigger to violence, portraying him as a product of a dehumanizing system rather than a simple criminal. Through his trial and inner turmoil, Wright delivers a powerful critique of racism, justice, and social inequality in America. The novel is divided into three parts—Fear, Flight, and Fate—chronicling Bigger's actions, his eventual capture, and his trial, where his lawyer argues that society created the conditions that shaped him. Wright uses Bigger's story to explore how systemic racism, economic exploitation, and social isolation lead to psychological damage and violent outcomes.

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