

Local Teachers Chosen To Participate In Workshop About Underground Railroad



Eleven SouthCoast school teachers selected from national pool of applicants to participate in “Sailing to Freedom” summer workshop

Eleven teachers from SouthCoast middle and high schools have been selected from hundreds of nationwide applicants to attend “Sailing to Freedom: New Bedford and the Underground Railroad,” a workshop series funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). They will learn about New Bedford’s critical but often-overlooked role in the Underground Railroad from nationally recognized experts at important historical sites throughout the region.

Jo-Anne Charette (Fairhaven High School), Christopher Donnelly (Normandin Middle School), Kellie Freitas (Keith Middle School), Frank Garcia (Greater New Bedford Vocational Technical High School), Nicholas Palumbo (New Bedford High School), Toni Teixeira (Keith Middle School), Amy DuBois (Dartmouth High School), Colin Everett (Old Rochester Regional

High School), Dominique Branco (Roosevelt Middle School), John Oldham (Old Colony Regional Vocational Technical High School), and Derek Michael (Global Learning Charter Public School) will participate in "Sailing to Freedom" along with teachers from across the nation. The eighty teachers selected to participate in the program each receive a \$1,200 stipend to help cover their travel, study, and living expenses.

The program is spearheaded by Director Dr. Timothy Walker, Associate Professor of History at UMass Dartmouth, and Project Administrator Lee Blake, Director of the UMass Dartmouth Campus Compact and President of the New Bedford Historical Society.

Walker notes that "New Bedford has an exceptionally rich history that provides a ready-made laboratory for studying key American social, political, and economic issues prior to the Civil War. Many traces of this seaport's bygone anti-slavery activities remain. New Bedford has unparalleled museum resources and extraordinary archival collections to aid investigation into the Abolition Movement and the Underground Railroad. It's the perfect place for this NEH program."

Blake echoes this sentiment, adding "We could not be more excited to once again have the chance to show educators the crucial role New Bedford played in the history of the Underground Railroad. We are proud to be able to highlight the courage and commitment of the city's abolitionist movement for teachers from across the nation."

The workshops will bring together scholars of the Underground Railroad, the antebellum Abolitionist Movement, and the role of African Americans in maritime trade. Participants will view historical documents and items alongside program faculty at locations including the New Bedford Whaling Museum, the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, the New Bedford Public Library, the Nathan and Mary Johnson House, the Rotch Jones Duff House Museum, the Boston Black Heritage Trail, and

the Museum of African American History.

The "Sailing to Freedom" series of workshops will be offered twice this summer: on July 14 – 19 and July 21 – 26. "Sailing to Freedom" is one of several such learning opportunities supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, a federal agency that funds Landmarks of American History and Culture Workshops during the summer so that teachers across the country can study with experts in humanities disciplines. Other workshop topics this summer include "But for Birmingham...The Rise of the Magic City and the Evolution of the Civil Rights Movement," "Frank Lloyd Wright and the Prairie School in the Midwest," "Gullah Voices: Traditions and Transformations," and "The Transcontinental Railroad: Transforming California and the Nation," among many others. The approximately 1,600 teachers who participate in these studies will teach over 200,000 American students the following year.