

UMass Dartmouth professor featured in upcoming Library of Congress Black History Month tribute

History Professor Timothy Walker will appear on a panel to discuss his research on the maritime aspects of the Underground Railroad.

Professor Timothy Walker, Ph.D. (History), will lead a panel titled, "The Maritime Underground Railroad" to be broadcasted Wednesday, Feb. 23 from 7 to 7:45 p.m. as part of a Black History Month tribute sponsored by the Library of Congress. The panel will discuss how enslaved people achieved their freedom by sea and what the waterborne journey looked like for many African Americans.

"Long distance, overland escapes from the deep south were virtually impossible, and nearly all documented successful escapes from the far coastal south were achieved by water," said Walker. "Seaborne escapes were faster, safer, and less logistically complicated than attempting to run away from enslavement by land."

Walker, who edited, "Sailing to Freedom: Maritime Dimensions of the Underground Railroad" (University of Massachusetts Press, 2021), will be joined by two of the book's nine contributors: Cheryl Janifer LaRoche, a lecturer in the Department of American Studies for the University of Maryland College Park, and Cassandra Newby-Alexander, dean at the College of Liberal Arts at Norfolk State University. Sailing to Freedom documents hundreds of seaborne flights from enslavement, including Mary Millburn's successful 1858 escape of Norfolk, Virginia, to Philadelphia aboard an express

steamship.

“This book aims to change the way people think about the Underground Railroad; to shift the dominant narrative to include the profoundly important maritime side of the story,” said Walker.

This event is moderated by former Kluge Center Director John Haskell, and will premiere live on the Library of Congress’ YouTube channel, where it will also be available for viewing afterward.

Walker is also guest-curating an exhibition on the same topic at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, which will open May 19, and run through November of this year.