

# about...time

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**CIVIL WAR**  
**USCT**

## MOSES MEMORIES

Harriet Tubman 200th Anniversary  
Spurs Hope for Family,  
Fortitude and Freedom

1972 - 2022

about...time  
MAGAZINE

**50**  
YEARS OF  
PUBLISHING  
EXCELLENCE

**CRT Debate**  
**Disguises**  
**Voting Rights**  
**Attacks**





**This 9-foot Harriet Tubman “The Journey to Freedom” sculpture by Wesley Wofford is installed in a private building in Dallas, Texas. A replica is being exhibited in a number of locations throughout the east coast, including Rochester, New York in Sept.-Oct. 2022.**

Almost anyone you speak with these days will admit that the nation faces tough times on race. A celebration of the 200th anniversary of the life of Harriet Tubman is almost eclipsed by concerns over the present turmoil. The economy, climate, international relations, infrastructure, elections, and police violence are far more often mentioned. Every one of those matters takes on a different perspective when viewed from a racial angle.

Even as the United States enters Tubman’s bicentennial year, the need to uncover the Black past becomes a crucial element to guarantee present African American progress. The current struggle is for more Americans to understand those ties to the nation’s strength and development. Blacks must come to grasp the importance of their American story, which is essential to shaping their futures.

According to a 2021 Pew Research Center report, one of the widest divides are people’s views on race. The majority of whites tend to feel serious racism is a 20th century relic. The *New York Times*’ “1619 Project,” which sought to look at the past and present effects of slavery, prompted some whites who embrace the relic viewpoint to raise staunch opposition. Many Americans of all races questioned whether highlighting past wrongs might ruin the present. At the same time, polls show most African Americans acknowledge progress toward Black equality under the law and in other aspects of U. S. society, yet they insist the

# MOSES MEMORIES

**Harriet Tubman’s 200th Spurs Hope for Family, Fortitude and Freedom**

An Analysis by Vincent F. A. Golphin



**Detroit artist Jonathan Harris’ critical race theory painting shares a powerful message that depicts a white woman holding a roller paintbrush and painting white over a mural filled with portraits of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, Harriet Tubman and more.**

struggles for equity are far from ended.

The Pew Center data shows the current debates and bans over Critical Race Theory (CRT), even the discussion of Black history and race in schools in Florida and other states, leaves Americans almost without hope for a bridge over the racial divide. Many Americans want to see an end to the disease of skin oppression that plagued the nation for nearly four centuries. Since 2016, a rise in white supremacist activism shows that some people are far from satisfied with efforts to let go of segregation and other remnants from the United States’ racist past.

The question often asked these days is how to wipe away elements like Confederate tributes and “The Stars and Bars,” without hurting feelings. There are fits and starts in the expansion of attempts to diversify education and employment. The debate has exploded into battles over the stories that are told.

Many conservative politicians and pundits have turned Critical Race Theory—a critical perspective of





**After negotiating her own escape to freedom in 1849, Harriet Tubman became an Underground Railroad conductor, making more than 19 trips back south to lead others to freedom. “Step on Board” by artist Fern Cunningham in Boston, MA.**

U.S. society that scholars insist is only taught and discussed in law schools—into a buzz word for African American culture.

The outrage shown by conservatives, particularly those enamored with the Trump administration, rolled down to the masses. Stories abound throughout northern and southern states over the debate about discussions of Black life, multiculturalism, pluralism, gender, and LGBTQIA issues. Politicians, parents, students, and teachers in several states challenge whose history needs to be discussed. Pew researchers report, “53% of adults say increased attention to that history is a good thing for society, while 26% say it is a bad thing and another 21% say it is neither good nor bad.”

In some cases, debates have whipped into a panic. For example, such a panic caused Dr. James Whitefield, the widely respected Black principal of Colleyville Heritage High School in the suburban Grapevine-Colleyville Independent School District, outside Dallas, Texas, to be

**Conservative politicians and pundits have turned Critical Race Theory into a buzz word for African American culture.**

fired. Press reports say without evidence someone who lost a bid for a seat on the school board alleged the educator pushed CRT in the largely white school. The superintendent asked the board not to renew Whitefield’s contract. The vote was unanimous.

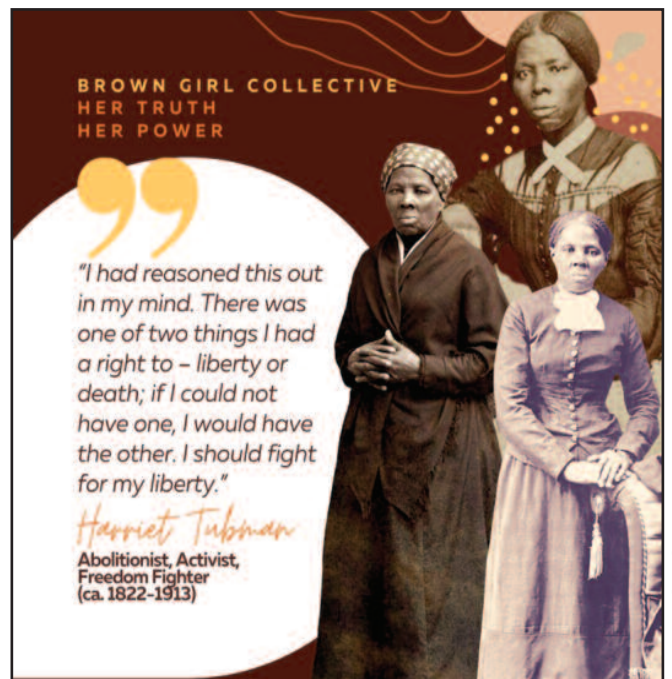
On the other side, the volatile debate inspired Detroit artist Johnathan Harris to push even harder to highlight African American struggles with, “Critical Race Theory,” a

portrait that captures the panic and ugliness of Black History censorship.

“The piece shows our historical figures like Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Harriet Tubman on a road together and a Caucasian person painting over those figures,” the artist told Scripps Media. “I just believe that history should be told. I know it’s not pretty and it’s very sad, but that’s the way you heal. You don’t say that it didn’t happen and cover it up. That’s all Black people want— is to address this and move forward.”

Even as he shared the artwork, in a different interview Harris said something happened that made him understand how truly ignorant some Americans are about African American history. Tubman is in the foreground of the trio and wears a scarf wrapped around her head. A woman who saw the painting asked the artist why “Aunt Jemima” was with Martin’s and Malcolm’s images in the work. Harris said the question surprised and slightly angered him, but he hopes his work provokes more discussions about Black life. He was pleased that the painting prompted a serious chance to talk about Tubman.

The late escaped slave and abolitionist, Civil War hero, nurse, businesswoman, and veterans benefactor is the subject of an outpouring of artistic and historical presenta-



Brown Girl Collective

tions. The bicentennial of her birth occurs on March 10, 2022. Events began in 2021, but by year’s end, the re-education of Americans about Harriet Tubman will spread across the land. The effort is more than recent history.

“Harriet Tubman remains one of America’s most beloved and respected icons, but little is publicly shared about the courage and conviction she had for her people and her country that made her such a legend,” said then-President Barack Obama in 2013 as he announced that the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad National Monument in Dorchester County, Maryland, would become the 399th National Park Service site. He said the center will, “enhance public understanding of her life.”



## COMBAHEE RIVER RAID

On June 1-2, 1863, a Federal force consisting of elements of the 2nd S. C. Volunteer Infantry (an African-American unit) and the 3rd Rhode Island Artillery conducted a raid up the Confederate-held Combahee River. Col. James Montgomery led the expedition. Harriet Tubman, already famous for her work with the Underground Railroad, accompanied Montgomery on the raid.



**COMBAHEE RIVER RAID**—During the Civil War, Harriet Tubman was commander of a team of scouts in charge of espionage, assigned to create lifelines and escape routes for trapped slaves. On the night of June 2, 1863, Tubman guided a troop of 150 Black soldiers of the Second South Carolina battalion on the Combahee River, liberating more than 750 slaves.



### THE FACTS OF LIFE

History only records that Araminta Ross—Harriet Tubman—was one of Harriet Green and Benjamin Ross' nine children born on a Dorchester County, Maryland plantation. Scholars are certain the day was in March, but debate whether the year was 1820 or 1822. Organizers pulled March 10 from the date she died in 1913 in Auburn, New York. Tubman's master rented her out to neighbors as a domestic servant at age 5.

Historians note that she lived with severe headaches and narcolepsy throughout her life, because at 12, Araminta's master smashed a two-pound weight into her head for trying to prevent the beating of a captured runaway. Illnesses aside, the beating and other experiences steeled her resolve to escape that existence. Tubman resolved to shed the chains that bound her despite the cost to her body or her heart. Slaves were not allowed to legally marry. At 20 in 1844, the slave woman entered a "jump the broom" union with John Tubman, a free black man. The ceremony was more symbolic than religious.

Many Christian slave owners' consciences could not cope with the thought that when they sold off spouses they would tear apart a bond sanctioned by God. Despite the lack of ties to any church tradition, Araminta took John's surname, then changed her first name to Harriet.

Tubman did not create the Underground Railroad, as some say, but she rode it. Kate Clifford Larson, Ph.D., author of *Bound For the Promised Land: Harriet Tubman, Portrait of an American Hero*, cites the slave woman's clever business acumen for the route to freedom.

"As a young, enslaved woman, she negotiated with her enslaver to pay him a yearly fee so she could work for whomever she wanted. She hired herself out, earning enough extra money to buy two oxen with which she

increased her income and brought her closer to her dream of buying her freedom." Five years later, in 1849, Harriet and her two brothers ran to freedom in the North. Her husband would not leave Maryland.

Tubman used what she learned in her escape to free others. The majority of experts can document the rescue of dozens. That led biographer Sarah Hopkins Bradford to dub her "Moses." She would lead the runaways off the plantations on Saturdays when the work halted for Sundays as a day of rest. Masters and overseers were not likely to notice missing workers until Monday. That gave Tubman and her followers a two-day head start. She said the shorter winter days were ideal. Some historians say she might have freed as many as 3,000 people. Slave owners offered large rewards for her capture or death. White and Black abolitionists such as Frederick Douglass, called her, "Moses," a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad. She never lost a "passenger," but the legend also includes her threats to shoot runaways that wanted to change their minds.

Largely overshadowed by the national preoccupation with Douglass' story and personality, Tubman's abolitionist activities were less emphasized than her role as a "conductor." For example, many people never knew about her ties to John Brown's 1859 raid on the then-Harpers Ferry, Virginia federal arsenal. The plan was to seize rifles, pikes and other weapons to arm massive slave uprisings throughout the South. The raid failed, but Tubman continued to speak and act for the freedom of slaves.

Her great-great grandniece, Michele Jones Galvin, co-author of *Beyond the Underground: Aunt Harriet, Moses of Her People*, spent years with her mother, Joyce Stokes Jones, researching and writing what the publisher describes as, "an intricate mix of family lore, memoir, and historical reconstruction."





**THE HARRIET TUBMAN NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK**— As of January 10, 2017, the Auburn, New York 25-acre homestead of Harriet Tubman that includes the Tubman Home for the Aged established in 1896 near her brick home residence, is now operated as a partnership between the National Park Service and the Harriet Tubman Home, Inc. non-profit established by the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. The site is charged with sharing her core values with visitors through guided tours of the museum and property.

Raised in Auburn during the 1930s, Stokes learned about her tie to Tubman from family. Questions remained, so she interviewed relatives, and others in Maryland, St. Catherines in Ontario, Canada, and Ghana in West Africa. The authors say the work offers the most complete portrait of the Green Ross Tubman Stewart Gaskin Stokes lineage.

During the Civil War, the Union Army used her knowledge of the plantation South and her nursing skills in its cause. Tubman wandered behind enemy lines to find out from slaves about Confederate troops and supplies. Many historians cite her as the first African American woman to serve in the military. Ironically, the government denied her a military pension. That aside, at her death in 1913, Tubman was buried with semi-military honors at Fort Hill Cemetery in Auburn, New York. Last year, 2021, the U.S. Army Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame at Fort Huachuca, Arizona, inducted her as a full member for her extraordinary intelligence work during the war.

Her most adventurous exploit was the Combahee River Raid. In six hours, spurred on by a fiery speech Tubman gave at the Tabernacle Baptist Church in Beaufort, South Carolina, more than 150 ex-slaves joined Union Col. James Montgomery's Second Carolina volunteers to plunder eight rice plantations along the waterway. Carnegie Mellon University associate history professor, Dr. Edda Fields-Black, has discussed the impact of Tubman's Civil War espionage and the Union Army's action in her upcoming work titled, *Combee: Harriet Tubman, the Combahee River Raid, and the Construction of Gullah Geechee Identity*. That Raid liberated more than 750 people.

After the war, Tubman raised funds to aid freedmen. She remained committed and supported efforts to win freedom and equality for all people. As part of that effort, Tubman, like Douglass, joined Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony in the struggle for Women's Suffrage, ironic because that right would not be secured for Black citizens until the 1965 Voting Rights Act. White women gained the right to electoral enfranchisement with passage of the 19th Amendment to the U. S. Constitution on June 4, 1919. The states ratified it on Aug. 18, 1920. Blacks' rights to vote remain unsecured even today.

During the post-war years, Tubman moved to Auburn,



New York to care for her aging parents. The home, bought with a \$1,200 loan from Lincoln's Secretary of State and U.S. Senator William Henry Seward (R-NY), and other temporal matters took up much of her time. To earn money, historians say, Tubman took in boarders, made bricks, raised and sold pigs, cream, butter, eggs, and vegetables, and bartered with neighbors and Native American women for household items. Even so, the former slave rescuer continued to fight for freedom, and was in the right place to continue a dedication to reform.

Auburn, a small Central New York town, was among many in the region that between 1820 and 1840 became known as, the "Burned-Over District." The area was a cauldron for social causes, that included abolition, women's suffrage, temperance, spiritualism and health care. The first Women's Rights Convention in Seneca Falls was less than 15 miles away.

For money, she was inspired by longtime friend, Sarah Hopkins Bradford, to tell the story of her life. Bradford



worked as a Sunday School teacher at Central Presbyterian Church, which broke from the larger, anti-abolition Second Presbyterian congregation in the city. She gleaned threads of Tubman's exploits from various interviews, and knitted them into, *Scenes from the Life of Harriet Tubman*.

The 1869 book sustained the ex-slave, as well as her marriage that year to Charles Nelson Davis, an ex-slave and Union veteran, more than twenty years her junior. Unlike the "jump the broom" 1844 marriage to freedman John Tubman, the March 18, 1869 ceremony was conducted by the Rev. Dr. Samuel Miles Hopkins in a traditional ceremony at Central Presbyterian Church. They adopted a daughter in 1874.

Tubman continued to care for the elderly, and maintained an involvement in a range of reform efforts. A second work, *Harriet Tubman, Moses of Her People* (1886), funded the 1896 establishment of the Harriet Tubman Home for the Aged in Auburn on land near her residence. Bradford's brother, the Rev. Dr. Samuel M. Hopkins, a church history professor at the Presbyterian Auburn Seminary, wrote the preface. The book, re-issued over twenty times, is still in print.

Sarah Hopkins Bradford helped America to see Harriet Tubman as an American hero. Despite the statue erected at Columbus Street and Hancock in South Boston, or the remembrance of her rallying 1863 speech at Beaufort, South Carolina's Tabernacle Baptist Church, the woman reformer remains largely unknown. The 2022 centennial has re-ignited calls to celebrate and educate about her legacy. According to Jones Galvin, her niece and biographer, the pillars of that are family, fortitude and freedom.

Auburn and Cayuga County, New York will be at the center in a broad



**ABOVE:** Tubman statue by Brian Hanlon in Auburn, NY.  
**BELOW:** The "Swing Low" sculpture of Harriet Tubman by Allison Saar in Harlem.



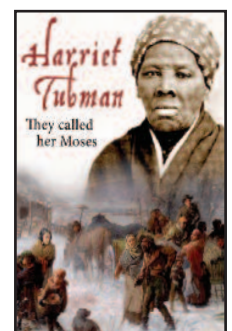
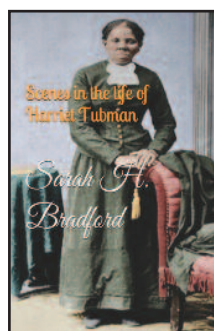
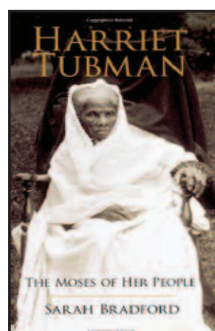
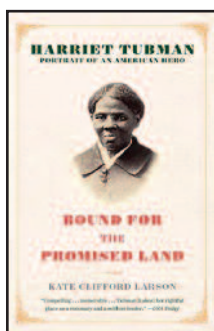
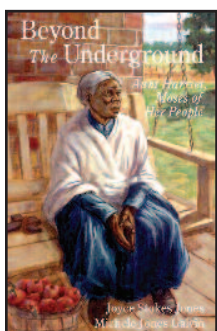
NYS Equal Rights Heritage Center

range of Tubman activity. A campaign invites tourists to #BeLikeHarriet in visits to sites that include The Harriet Tubman Home, Seward House Museum, Fort Hill Cemetery, Westminster Presbyterian Church, the Howland Stone Store Museum, and the New York State Equal Rights Heritage Center. The New York State Equal Rights Heritage Center and the City of Auburn's Historic and Cultural Sites Commission plan a local bicentennial celebration to begin March 10 on Harriet Tubman's birthday and continue throughout International Underground Railroad Month in September.

Rochester, New York also plans to hold celebrations September-October 2022. Jacqueline Sprague, the Rochester Harriet Tubman strategy consultant, said the group plans to host an exhibit of the 9-foot, "Journey to Freedom" sculpture at the city's Washington Square Park, following its display in Auburn, New York in July-August.

The image is crafted by North Carolina sculptor Wesley Wofford. According to *Impacto*, the city's Latin newspaper, Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney told listeners at the statue's temporary installation in January 2022, that Tubman's "incredible legacy, heroism, resilience, hope, and activism is a story that we all learn from..." He went on to state that stories told through public art are important for "learning and reflecting" on our "mutual histories."

From June 7 to Sept. 17, 2021, "Journey to Freedom" was part of the Harriet Tubman Museum opening in Cape May, New Jersey. Historians believe the abolitionist spent many summers working in the city's hotels to fund her rescue trips. Since then, the statue has been to Newburgh and Peekskill, New York; Cambridge, Maryland; Montgomery, Alabama; and







**“Take My Hand” is a powerful image by artist Michael Rosato, inviting the viewer to join Harriet Tubman on her journey to freedom. The mural is on the Harriet Tubman Museum & Educational Center in downtown Cambridge, Maryland.**

Halifax, North Carolina, among other places. In April, the sculpture will travel to White Plains, New York. Ultimately, it will be shown in Kingston, Auburn and Rochester, New York.

Susan Taylor-Brown, originally from Auburn, saw a picture of “Journey to Freedom” in 2020, fell in love with it and knew it needed to visit Auburn, she explained. In reaching out to contacts there, the decision was made to bring the statue to Auburn for July-August 2022. Since the statue was going to be so close to Rochester, Taylor-Brown decided to reserve it for Rochester, confident that many in the community would rally to celebrate Harriet and other abolitionists through educational, cultural and other events.

The Rochester group is proceeding to rally volunteers to design and raise funds for educational events that teach about Tubman’s life and struggles, while promoting racial equity and literacy. The central focus is to engage diverse youth through programming that will include guided tours of underground railroad sites, re-enactments on canal escape routes, production of artworks, and performances of dance, plays and songs at park events and other meeting places throughout Rochester and Monroe County. Participants will then design a celebratory closing ceremony to send Harriet off to her next stop for the “Journey to Freedom.”

Bob and Pat Kill in South Bend, Indiana have started a similar but different campaign. They are part of a group that wants to buy and install a statue by Utah sculptor Gary Lee Price in the city’s public space. “The artistry is very impressive, and even more impressive is the story of

Harriet Tubman,” Bob Kill declared in a Feb. 20 article in the city’s major paper, *The Journal Gazette*. Kill and his wife showed the sculpture to Alfred Guillaume, a retired Indiana University South Bend professor, and his wife, Melanie Smith-Guillaume. Guillaume referred to the Underground Railroad activities that occurred in their area that were similar to those in Maryland with Tubman. He said such resistance to the owners’ efforts to recapture run-away slaves led to passage of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act.

Organizers say the fundraising is about half complete. They needed another \$60,000 to succeed. Aaron Perri, director of South Bend’s Venues, Parks and Arts department, said the Board of Park Commissioners is likely to favor the idea to place such “public art” in the city.

Near the border of New York City’s upper west side and Harlem already sits a 13-foot tribute to Tubman as the Underground Railroad conductor. The memorial, “Swing Low,” sculpted by the painter, sculptor, and installation artist Allison Saar, who said it depicts her bravest act—going back South to help others to freedom. The image of Tubman moves forward like a train with faces embroidered on her skirt to represent the many people she saved. The powerful symbol erected in 2017 sits on a triangle, at the intersections of Frederick Douglass Blvd, St. Nicholas Ave, and 122nd Street. Despite reported acts of vandalism, the sculpture remains an important sight in a vibrant community with numerous coffee shops and restaurants.

Programs throughout the world that seek to promote unity and educate about Tubman’s legacy of family, fortitude and freedom are too varied to capture. One thing is that reflections on her life will highlight the current struggles to reach equity in the United States. As more states enact laws like Florida’s “Stop Woke Act” to limit discussions about race in schools and ban racial sensitivity training in workplaces, it will become even more clear that Africans are not truly free in America. What is most clear is that after all the events set for 2022, it will be hard to look at Johnathan Harris’ “Critical Race Theory” painting and ask why “Aunt Jemima” stands in the foreground. 📺