A CINEMATIC TRIPTYCH

Two worlds. Three perspectives. One truth.

BEAR ME INTO FREEDOM

The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass

Walk where he walked.
Hear what he heard.
Dream what he dreamed.

PRESS KIT

bearmeintofreedom.com/press

DOWNLOAD HIGH RES FILES & DOCUMENTS via DropBox

CONTACT:

marie@bearmeintofreedom.com

MARIE THOMAS | COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

UPDATED 10.16.2026

A Bear Me Into Freedom Collaborative Production

www.bearmeintofreedom.com

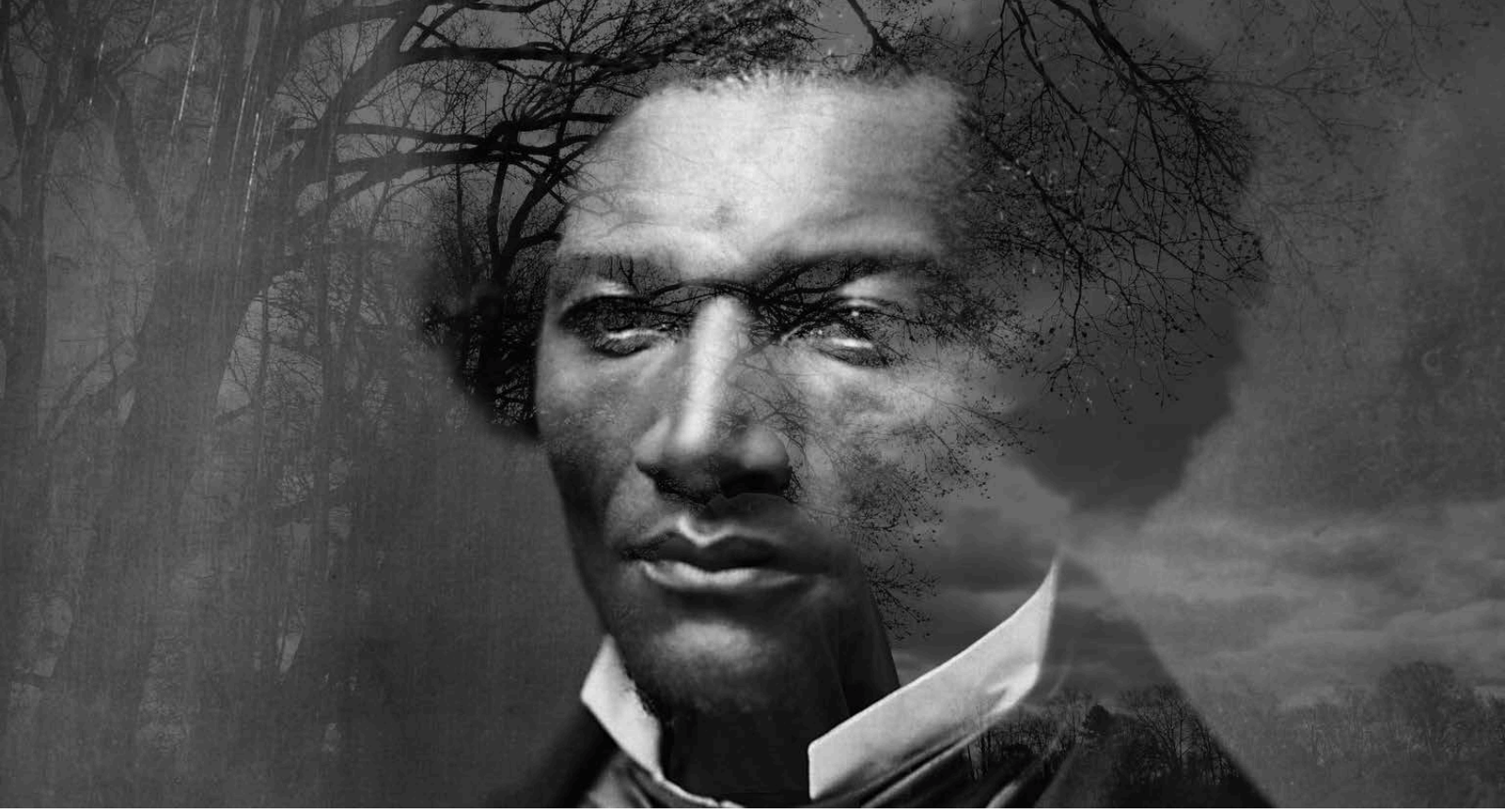


TABLE OF CONTENTS

Press Release

Project Overview & Messaging

Fact Sheet

Director & Producer Statement

Co-Writer's Statement

Principal Participants Biographies

Institutional Partners

Historical Consultants

Sample Posters & Promotional Graphics

Production Stills

Cast & Crew Photos

Featured Shot Locations

DOWNLOAD PRESS RELEASE

A New Kind of Documentary Brings the Chesapeake World of Frederick Douglass and His Timeless Message to Life

Bear Me Into Freedom uses Douglass's own words and a distinctive triptych-inspired visual canvas to immerse audiences in the landscape of his Maryland birthplace.

TALBOT COUNTY, MD — *Bear Me Into Freedom: The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass* is a new documentary film that invites audiences to experience the world that shaped one of America's most powerful voices for freedom and equality. Created on location in Talbot County on Maryland's Eastern Shore, the one-hour film brings together Douglass's extraordinary language, evocative Chesapeake imagery, and an immersive soundscape in a distinctive cinematic interpretation of his early life and journey toward freedom using a specially designed format.

Told primarily through Douglass's autobiographies and speeches, *Bear Me Into Freedom* follows his odyssey from Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey, born into enslavement in Talbot County, through his pursuit of freedom and emergence as Frederick Douglass, the celebrated writer, orator, abolitionist, and advocate for emancipation and equal justice. Rather than relying on conventional documentary structures to tell his story, *Bear Me Into Freedom* strikes off in a different direction. It uses a panoramic canvas that mirrors the poetic style that Douglass employed—powerful statements in sets of three. In it, Douglass speaks for himself. His own words form the foundation of the script, brought to life by co-writer and Douglass interpreter **Lance Morris**, a Talbot County performer and communications professional.

The imagery, gathered over ten years, captures the fields, forests, roads, rivers, creeks, and wetlands of the landscape Douglass knew. These images are accompanied by a soundscape drawn from the birds, insects, winds, and waters of the Chesapeake, together with the voices of people who live in the community where his remarkable journey began.

"The scholarship surrounding Frederick Douglass is extensive. Dozens of extraordinary biographies, scholarly studies, and documentaries exist, but I have long believed that if you don't have a visual sense of where someone is from, you can't fully understand who that person truly is," said **Jeffrey McGuiness**, the film's director and producer. "That led to a decision to create a visual panorama that would embrace audiences with the words of Frederick Douglass and the Talbot County world in which he lived."

PRESS RELEASE CONTINUED

Produced by Bay Photographic Works, the film is a true community collaboration, with virtually all of those involved living and working in Talbot County. They want to give their perspective of the place they call home and its complicated past.

Prominent local historian and community leader **Harriette Lowery** serves as the principal narrator. She is a seventh-generation descendant of enslaved people in Talbot County and has dedicated much of her life to educating the public and preserving the region's rich Black history. Alongside her late husband Eric, she was a founding member of the Frederick Douglass Honor Society, which was instrumental in erecting the landmark Frederick Douglass statue at the Talbot County Courthouse in Easton.

The creative team also features **Jimmy Maguire** as videographer and editor, and **Dana Bowser**—Board Vice President of Building African American Minds (BAAM)—serving as the principal vocal artist and music coordinator. Appearing on screen is **Marshall Bailey IV**, a sixth-generation Douglass descendant who portrays the young Frederick Douglass. **Vickie Wilson**, who spent 37 years teaching and counseling students in Talbot County schools, takes on several roles, including Douglass's cherished grandmother, Betsy Bailey.

“It’s been very gratifying to see so many people connect with *Bear Me Into Freedom* in its many forms,” stated Morris. “I am happy to be a part of something that involves so many people who live in Talbot County. It’s been a real labor of love for all of us across the years, and it’s wonderful to share that collaboration with everyone.”

The full cast list, biographies, high-resolution images, and press materials can be downloaded at bearmeintofreedom.com/press. The trailer can be found here. For information about scheduling a screening, please contact Marie Thomas at marie@bearmeintofreedom.com or call 410-829-4042.



Jeff McGuiness (left) and Lance Morris (right).



VIEW TRAILER

DOWNLOAD PROJECT OVERVIEW & MESSAGING

Media Summaries:

Official Title and Subtitle

Bear Me Into Freedom: The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass

Tagline

Walk where he walked. Hear what he heard. Dream what he dreamed.

One Sentence Logline

Told in Frederick Douglass's own words and filmed in the Chesapeake landscape where he was enslaved, Bear Me Into Freedom calls audiences to walk beside him on his journey from bondage to freedom—and into his lifelong struggle to make America's promise of equality a lived reality.

50-Word Description

A cinematic triptych filmed in his birthplace, viewers are immersed in the world Frederick Douglass experienced. His words are the script. The imagery is the actual place of his bondage. The soundscape is the sounds of nature he heard. Walk beside him in his journey to freedom, experience his struggle to secure equality for all Americans.

100-Word Description

A cinematic triptych filmed by storytellers from his birthplace on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Bear Me Into Freedom immerses viewers in the world Frederick Douglass experienced in his odyssey from enslaved youth to the 19th century's most celebrated civil rights leader. The words of his autobiographies and speeches are the script. Imagery of the fields, wetlands, roads, and forests that once held him in bondage sweep across a panoramic screen. The soundscape is the sounds of nature he heard. Audiences walk where he walked in his journey to freedom, witness his struggle to secure equality for all Americans, and realize how far America has come and has yet to go.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & MESSAGING CONTINUED

310 Word Full Description

Filmed by storytellers from Frederick Douglass's birthplace, Bear Me Into Freedom: The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass, invites audiences to share the world of one of America's most powerful voices for freedom and justice using a cinematic triptych format.

Born into enslavement in the Chesapeake region, Douglass grew up amid the fields, waterways and communities of Maryland's Eastern Shore. He shook off his bondage, claimed his freedom, and emerged as a commanding writer, orator and advocate for abolition, emancipation and equality. Through the power of his advocacy, Douglass forced Americans to confront the contradiction between the nation's founding promise that all men are created equal and a society that enslaved millions of human beings. Later in his life after playing a pivotal role emancipating those who had been held in bondage, he returned to the place of his birth as a celebrated national figure.

Bear Me Into Freedom brings that odyssey vividly to life by pairing Douglass's eloquent words with evocative imagery—ten years in the making—of the Chesapeake landscape that surrounded him along with a soundscape drawn from its birds, insects, winds and waters. Presented in a panoramic format, the film echoes both the broad horizons of the Eastern Shore and the rhythm and complexity of Douglass's rhetoric. Images reinforce, contrast, and converse with one another as his words lead the way along the path to freedom.

The result is less an account of Frederick Douglass than an opportunity to accompany him on his epic journey. Experience the world that shaped him, the freedom he pursued, and the America he challenged to become more faithful to its own ideals. The questions he raised are still being discussed: what freedom means, to whom it belongs, and how much farther we have to go.

Walk where he walked. Hear what he heard. Dream what he dreamed.

Come join the journey.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & MESSAGING CONTINUED

Comprehensive Project Overview

Bear Me Into Freedom: The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass

Walk Where He Walked. Hear What He Heard. Dream What He Dreamed.

Bear Me Into Freedom is a cinematic triptych that brings audiences deep into the life, landscape and philosophy of Frederick Douglass, told in his own words and created by storytellers from the Maryland community where his remarkable odyssey began.

Born into enslavement as Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey in Talbot County on Maryland's Eastern Shore, Douglass spent much of his youth in bondage in an isolated Chesapeake landscape of fields, forests, rivers, creeks, and immense skies. When 20, he self-liberated and emerged as one of the nineteenth century's most powerful writers, orators, and advocates for abolition, emancipation, and equal justice. Late in life, he returned to the place of his birth as a celebrated national figure, demonstrating how far both he and the nation had come.

It was Douglass’s enslaved experience in Talbot County that became the foundation of his narrative, the most consequential slave narrative in American literature. His experiences there became the wellspring of his autobiographies and helped shape the ideas he would carry into the national debate over enslavement, liberty, freedom, and equality. Bear Me Into Freedom is rooted in this place. Its filmmakers and all those involved in the production live in Talbot County, bringing an intimacy with its waterways, weather, natural beauty, and complicated history to the telling of Douglass's story.

At the heart of the project is a simple principle: Douglass speaks for himself. Rather than relying on historians and talking heads to explain what he experienced, thought, or believed, Bear Me Into Freedom draws its script primarily from Douglass's autobiographies and speeches. His words are paired with evocative photography of the landscapes he knew and a rich soundscape of birds, insects, winds, and waters he would have heard. Audiences experience his world through powerful imagery, language, sound, and place.

The cinematic triptych is integral to that experience. Created in an expansive 6:1 panoramic format, its three adjoining visual fields echo both the broad horizons of the Chesapeake and the rhythms of Douglass's prose and oratory. He used language in sets of three. The images reinforce, contrast, and converse with one another, revealing different dimensions of the same moment. The unconventional format is not simply how the film is displayed; it is part of how the story is told. Douglass's words establish the rhythm. The triptych illustrates them.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & MESSAGING CONTINUED

Comprehensive Project Overview Continued

The result is not simply an account of an epic American life, but an invitation to accompany Douglass on an odyssey—from enslavement toward freedom, from Frederick Bailey to Frederick Douglass, from the Chesapeake to the national stage, and ultimately a return to the place from whence his life's work evolved. Audiences are invited to walk beside him, experience the world he knew while encountering the ideas that made him a transformative force in American life.

Douglass understood that gaining his own freedom was not enough. Throughout his life, he challenged America to confront the contradiction between its founding declaration that all men are created equal and the denial of equality to millions. His words stirred a national reckoning with enslavement, forcing a debate over emancipation, citizenship, and equal justice.

That reckoning did not end with Frederick Douglass. His questions remain our questions: What does freedom mean? To whom does it belong? How does a nation make its highest ideals real for everyone?

We have come a long way, but we have farther to go.

Bear Me Into Freedom invites a new generation to encounter Frederick Douglass—not from a distance, but by walking alongside him.

Come join the journey.

BEAR ME INTO FREEDOM

The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass | A CINEMATIC TRIPTYCH

DOWNLOAD FACT SHEET

Title:	Bear Me Into Freedom: The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass
Runtime:	1:00.14
Year:	2026
Country:	USA
Genre:	Historical Documentary, Biography, American History, African American History
Director/Producer:	Jeffrey McGuiness
Principal Participants:	Lance Morris, Harriette Bailey, Vickie Wilson, Rev. Elmer Davis, Marshall Bailey IV, Jimmy Maguire and Dana Bowser
Production Company:	Bay Photographic Works
Website:	https://www.bearmeintofreedom.com/
Contact:	marie@bearmeintofreedom.com
Completion Date:	September 18, 2026
Shooting/Finishing Format:	Digital / DCP
Aspect Ratio:	6:1 (approximately)
Exhibition Format:	DCP available with stereo and 5.1 surround sound. Presented in an ultra-wide 6:1 aspect ratio. A minimum image width of 24 feet is recommended for the intended immersive presentation.
On-Screen Text:	All spoken words, including Frederick Douglass's narration and supporting voiceovers, appear as integrated on-screen text. The text is an integral visual and narrative element of the film rather than conventional closed captioning.
Trailer:	YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EOmNzry5D6s Vimeo: https://vimeo.com/1227115467

FACT SHEET CONTINUED

Screenings:

Hoff Theater - Adele H. Stamp Student Union
Presented by Philip Merrill Journalism College, University of Maryland, Baltimore MD
October 6, 2026 screening with panel discussion

Reginald Lewis Museum of African American History and Culture, Baltimore, MD
July 11-20, 2026 | 22 screenings with panel discussions

St. Luke's Methodist Church/Sardis Chapel, St. Michaels, MD
July 1-5, 2026 | 11 screenings
Frederick Douglass attended Sardis Chapel when he was 15.

Asbury United Methodist Church, Easton, MD
Juneteenth, 2026 | 3 screenings
Frederick Douglass dedicated the church in 1878.

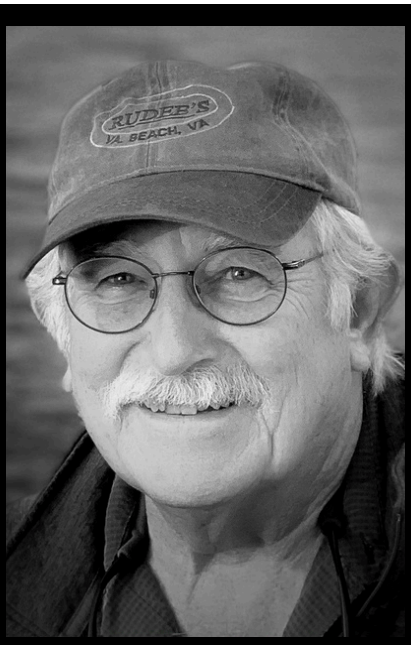
Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, St. Michaels, MD
April 23-26, 2026 | 7 screenings

Historic Lewes, Lewes, DE
February 27-28, 2026 | 7 screenings with panel discussions

BEAR ME INTO FREEDOM

The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass | A CINEMATIC TRIPTYCH

DOWNLOAD DIRECTOR & PRODUCER STATEMENT



JEFF MCGUINESS

Bear Me Into Freedom came into being because I felt something significant was missing in the portrayal of Frederick Douglass. The scholarship surrounding Frederick Douglass is extensive—dozens of extraordinary biographies, scholarly studies, and documentaries about this American icon. But I have long believed that if you don't have a visual sense of where someone is from, you can't fully understand who that person truly is.

I live in Talbot County on Maryland's Eastern Shore, where Frederick Augustus Washington Bailey was born enslaved and spent much of his youth in bondage. The Shore's landscape is unlike any other—rivers, creeks, wetlands and fields beneath immense skies, with water and land continually trading places. Its beauty exists alongside a dark and complicated history—tremendous wealth created by 200 years of enslavement followed by another century of Jim Crow. This was the world that formed Douglass, the wellspring of his narrative, and the landscape he carried in memory long after he shook off Talbot's bondage.

The Bear Me Into Freedom Project began with a photographic study of Douglass's years in the county. As that work began, we asked: If we walk the same paths, travel the same waters, and witness the same landscapes, can we come closer to his experience? Can we, even for a moment, feel the world that surrounded the enslaved child who would become one of America's greatest voices for freedom? Could we even feel his presence? The answer to all three questions was yes.

Once the photobook Bear Me Into Freedom: The Talbot County of Frederick Douglass was published, it was followed by two years of presentations with my colleague Lance Morris, the voice of Frederick Douglass. For more than two years, he and I engaged with hundreds of people sharing his words, displaying the imagery, walking audiences through Douglass's narrative. From that we learned what moves people about his narrative, what inspires them, and the questions for which they have been searching for answers.

That led to a decision to create an immersive experience, a visual panorama that would wrap audiences with the words of Frederick Douglass and the Talbot world in which he lived, one that could be shared with millions.

DIRECTOR & PRODUCER STATEMENT CONTINUED

From the beginning, we wanted authenticity to be at the heart of the film. Rather than assemble historians to tell audiences what Frederick Douglass did and thought, we decided whenever possible to let Douglass tell us himself. His autobiographies and speeches became our primary script. The five years' worth of imagery developed for the book was supplemented by another five year's worth as we divined the precise intent of his language. The soundscape came from the birds, insects, winds and waters he would have heard as he traveled these roads, worked these fields, stood beside these creeks and dreamed of freedom.

The people who made the film are people of this place. Virtually everyone involved in the production lives and works in Talbot County. We know its waterways, its weather, its haunting beauty, and the difficult history embedded in its landscape. This intimacy with place became a core element of Bear Me Into Freedom. Descendents of Frederick Douglass and those enslaved at the time Douglass lived here as a child appear in the film and are heard in the voiceovers.

Even the film's unusual physical form grew from the world of Frederick Douglass. Bear Me Into Freedom was created in an expansive 6:1 panoramic format—far wider than a conventional cinema image. We call it a cinematic triptych. Its dimensions echo the broad horizons of the Chesapeake, where immense skies stretch above a landscape in which water and land continually trade places. We wanted audiences to feel the breadth of the world that surrounded Douglass, allowing the landscape not merely to illustrate his words, but to overwhelm the viewer.

The triptych also reflects something fundamental in Douglass's use of language. His prose and oratory repeatedly build through rhythm, repetition, and powerful groupings of ideas, often moving through sets of three that give his words a poetic force. We chose to echo that rhetorical structure visually. Images move across three adjoining fields—sometimes reinforcing one another, sometimes contrasting, sometimes revealing different dimensions of the same moment. The unconventional format is not simply how the film is displayed; it is part of how the story is told. Douglass's words establish the rhythm. The images illustrate them across the triptych.

And it is an extraordinary experience.

The film follows an American odyssey: from Frederick Bailey, born into enslavement beside the Chesapeake, through his pursuit of freedom and emergence as Frederick Douglass, one of the nation's leading advocates of abolition, emancipation and equal justice, and ultimately returning to the place where his journey began, now one of the most celebrated figures in America's history. The nation had been transformed by his work and so had he.

DIRECTOR & PRODUCER STATEMENT CONTINUED

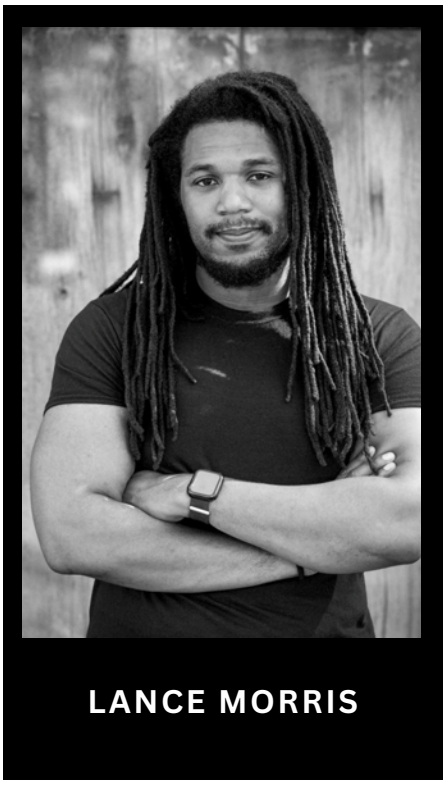
Douglass did more than win his own freedom. Through the extraordinary power of his words, he forced Americans to confront the contradiction between a nation founded on the proposition that all men are created equal and a society that denied equality to millions. He challenged America to examine what freedom and equality meant, who possessed it, who had been denied it, and what responsibilities came with it.

Those questions did not end with the passing of Frederick Douglass. The tides still move through the creeks Douglass knew. Seasons pass over these fields. The same broad skies stretch across the Chesapeake. Much has changed, but the landscape and the tragic lives buried in it remain—and so do many of the questions Douglass carried from Talbot County to the nation as he overcame its bondage. Yes, we have come far, but there is farther to go.

Bear Me Into Freedom: The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass is our invitation to enter that landscape and accompany him on his journey: to walk where he walked, hear what he heard, and dream what he dreamed.

We invite you to come join the journey.

DOWNLOAD CO-WRITER'S STATEMENT
VOICE OF FREDERICK DOUGLASS



LANCE MORRIS

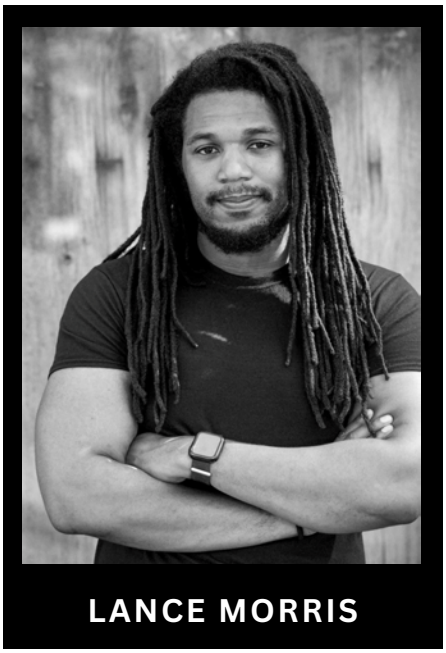
Even now, I consider myself to be the exact opposite of Frederick Douglass. When you read about him or listen to the countless scholars committed to analyzing his work and life talk about him, he is always associated with words like 'bold', 'powerful', and 'uncompromising'. He could walk into any room with a confidence and control that immediately captivated people. And when he finally spoke about his life or the sickness of slavery and sanctioned inequality, he tore into the hearts and minds of anyone who was listening.

When Jeff approached me with this project, I did not think it was something I could do. I detest a spotlight, I cannot summon confidence on a whim, and I've never loved hearing myself talk about much of anything. But I've always loved to read. I love getting lost in the words and stories of people, and when I first read Douglass' What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July speech in front of a crowd of people, none of my hang-ups or personal flaws mattered. The words were heavy with feeling and righteous anger, and reading them was an exercise of great care; I still feel that way now after reading them time and time again during my time with the Bear Me Into Freedom project.

Jeff and I have remained adamant that the best way to experience the life of Douglass is to let him speak for himself. The words he left behind contain depths of emotion and hard truths about what it means to live in a country that claims to be for the people and by the people while only giving a select few access to grace, dignity, and comfort, while others toil and suffer for their benefit, and maybe, if more people heard and felt them, that could change.

I have been very fortunate to add my voice to the many voices that believe in this film. I am proud to be a part of something that was made in the same place Frederick Douglass walked. And I ultimately want others to feel the same way I did when I started really reading his words: You are not alone in how you feel, it doesn't matter what you or others think about how you are lacking, and change is always possible if we have the will to speak out against cruelty and oppression in all its forms. Voices carry weight, and I'm happy I can use mine.

PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES



LANCE MORRIS

Lance Morris is a communications professional and performer based in Easton, Maryland, who gives voice to Frederick Douglass in *Bear Me Into Freedom*. His association with Douglass began with a public reading during Easton's Frederick Douglass Day in 2022 and developed into an intensive, multiyear collaboration with the project, interpreting Douglass's autobiographies, speeches, and other writings for the film. As the voice of Douglass, Morris brings the abolitionist's words to life with a distinctive resonance, cadence, and emotional depth that have become central to the immersive experience. Morris is Communications Coordinator for the Easton Economic Development Corporation, where his work focuses on promoting Easton and communicating the history, culture, and character of the community.



HARRIETTE LOWERY

Harriette Lowery is a Talbot County historian, educator, community leader, and longtime advocate for preserving the African American history of Maryland's Eastern Shore. A descendant of two of the 18 African American veterans of the United States Colored Troops who returned after the Civil War to establish the historic community of Unionville, Lowery has devoted decades to preserving and sharing the history of Unionville and its families. She and her late husband, Eric Lowery, were founding members of the Frederick Douglass Honor Society and played leading roles in the years-long effort to erect a statue honoring Talbot County native Frederick Douglass on the grounds of the Talbot County Courthouse in Easton, where it was unveiled in 2011.

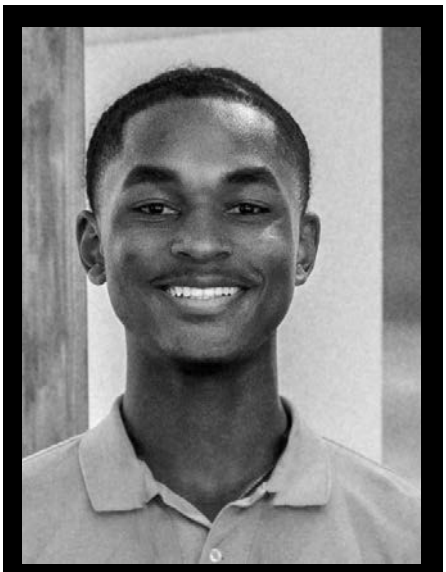
Lowery has remained a leading voice in the Honor Society's educational and commemorative work and has served on the advisory committee for Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe. Her work across the Eastern Shore reflects a longstanding commitment to recovering, preserving, and sharing the histories and contributions of African Americans in the region.

PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED



VICKIE WILSON

Vickie J. Wilson is a retired educator and longtime community leader in Talbot County. During her 37-year career with Talbot County Public Schools, she served as a science teacher, school counselor, and Pupil Services Worker at schools in Easton. A graduate of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, she holds a master's degree in education from Salisbury University. Wilson has remained deeply engaged in the community through the Frederick Douglass Honor Society, Talbot Branch NAACP, Cambridge Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Talbot Interfaith Shelter, Mid-Shore Early Learning Center, and Chesapeake College Multicultural Advisory Committee. She is also an active member of St. Matthew United Methodist Church and has devoted decades to education, service, and community life on Maryland's Eastern Shore.



MARSHALL BAILEY IV

Marshall "LB" Bailey IV is a sixth-generation descendant of Frederick Douglass who portrays Douglass as a young man in Bear Me Into Freedom. Born and raised in Easton, Maryland, Bailey brings a unique personal connection to the role, portraying his ancestor on the same Eastern Shore landscapes where Douglass spent his formative years. A senior at Westtown School in West Chester, Pennsylvania, Bailey is also an accomplished student-athlete and standout guard on the school's varsity basketball team, where he has surpassed 1,500 career points, earned First Team All-Friends Schools League honors, and set the school record for three-pointers in a single game. In 2026,

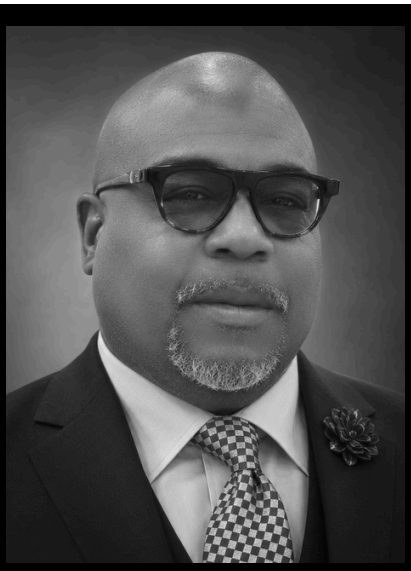
Bailey was selected as Grand Marshal of Easton's Frederick Douglass Day parade, recognizing both his family connection to Douglass and his place in a new generation carrying that legacy forward.

PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED



DANA BOWSER

Dana Bowser is a vocalist, educator, and community leader on Maryland's Eastern Shore who serves as the principal vocal artist and music coordinator for Bear Me Into Freedom. Known for her powerful a cappella voice, Bowser performs both as a soloist and with the vocal group Friends in Faith, bringing to the project a musical tradition deeply rooted in faith, community, and the African American experience. She has had a long career at Chesapeake College, where she has held leadership positions in student success, retention, multicultural affairs, and first-year programs, and she is actively involved in numerous community organizations. As music coordinator for Bear Me Into Freedom, Bowser has helped shape the project's musical voice while her own performances provide some of its most stirring and memorable moments.



REV. ELMER DAVIS

The Rev. Elmer Neal Davis Jr. is pastor of St. Luke's United Methodist Church in St. Michaels, Maryland, and Superintendent of the Upper Shore District of the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church. St. Luke's is the successor congregation to Sardis Chapel, which Frederick Douglass attended while an enslaved teenager living in St. Michaels, and Davis is the first African American pastor to lead the historic congregation. Before entering the ministry, Davis served for 22 years in law enforcement, rising to the rank of lieutenant with the Salisbury Police Department.

He earned a Master of Divinity from Howard University School of Divinity and was ordained an Elder in the United Methodist Church in 2011. His ministry at St. Luke's brings a powerful contemporary dimension to a congregation whose history is deeply intertwined with Douglass's formative years on Maryland's Eastern Shore.

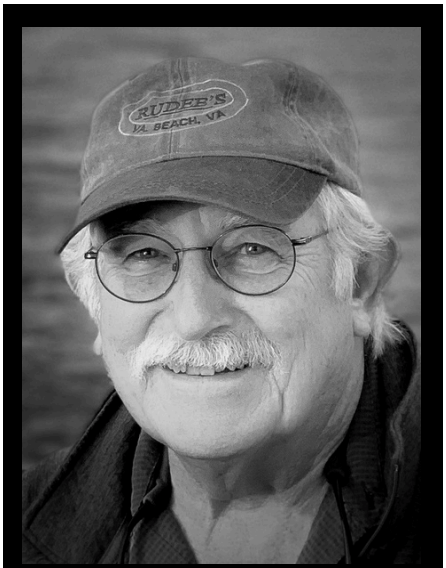
PRINCIPAL PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES CONTINUED



JIMMY MAGUIRE

Jimmy Maguire is a filmmaker, editor, and videographer based in Easton, Maryland, and the editor of Bear Me Into Freedom: The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass. Working through TwentyThirdFrame, Maguire has produced and edited video projects for a range of organizations and institutions on Maryland's Eastern Shore. His collaboration on Bear Me Into Freedom has encompassed the extensive process of shaping the project's filmed performances, historical imagery, landscapes, sound, and music into its final cinematic form. As editor, he has played a central creative role in establishing the film's visual rhythm, narrative flow, and emotional character.

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER BIOGRAPHY LONG VERSION



JEFF MCGUINESS

Some go through life in a logical progression; others follow their muse. Art, boating, history, politics, and photography have been lifelong fascinations for **Jeff McGuiness**—a mix not as disjointed as it may seem.

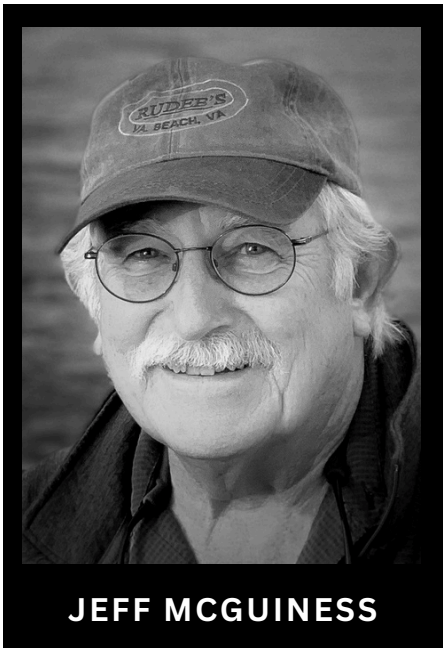
McGuiness was born in California and grew up in suburban Washington, D.C. After graduating with a degree in fine arts in 1969, he served in the U.S. Air Force as a photographer during the Vietnam conflict. He then worked as a commercial photographer in St. Louis before deciding, in the midst of Watergate, that it might be fascinating to pursue a career in law. He practiced for more than four decades in his own boutique firm in Washington, D.C., concentrating on public policy and the management of nonprofit organizations.

An avid boater, McGuiness explored his beloved Chesapeake with a camera and a small library. Along the way, he discovered that the place he now calls home on Maryland's Eastern Shore was the place in which Frederick Douglass spent much of his early life in enslavement. Douglass transformed his experiences there into one of the most powerful narratives of enslavement in American literature. Inspired by that connection, McGuiness authored the acclaimed photobook Bear Me Into Freedom: The Talbot County of Frederick Douglass, pairing Douglass's words with images of the precise places where he was held in bondage.

Following its publication, Douglass scholars and prominent artists urged McGuiness to turn the photobook into an immersive experience. The resulting film, Bear Me Into Freedom: The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass, places viewers alongside Douglass on his journey toward freedom. It also explores how the experiences of his Chesapeake years shaped an extraordinary lifetime of advocacy—one that challenged the nation to reconcile the ideals of its founding documents with the reality of the American experience.

McGuiness is the managing member of Bay Photographic Works and chairman of the Chesapeake Heritage and Freedom Center in St. Michaels, MD.

DIRECTOR/PRODUCER BIOGRAPHY SHORT VERSION



JEFF MCGUINESS

Jeff McGuiness has followed a lifelong fascination with art, photography, history, politics, and boating from California to Washington, D.C., and ultimately Maryland's Eastern Shore. A former Air Force and commercial photographer who spent four decades practicing law, he rediscovered photography while exploring the Chesapeake. That led to his acclaimed photobook on Frederick Douglass and, ultimately, Bear Me Into Freedom: The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass, an immersive film rooted in the landscapes that shaped Douglass's life.

BEAR ME INTO FREEDOM

The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass | A CINEMATIC TRIPTYCH

INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

TALBOT HISTORICAL Society

NATIONAL MUSEUM of AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY & CULTURE

REGINALD F. LEWIS MUSEUM OF MARYLAND AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY & CULTURE

Sultana EDUCATION FOUNDATION

FREDERICK DOUGLASS DAY EASTON, MARYLAND

BAAM Building African American Minds

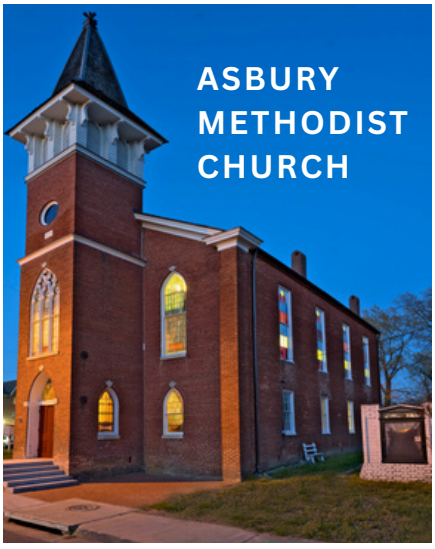
CHESAPEAKE BAY MARITIME MUSEUM

TALBOT COUNTY FREE LIBRARY

NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM

ST. MICHAELS MUSEUM AT ST. MARY'S SQUARE

EASTON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION



DOWNLOAD HISTORICAL CONSULTANTS

Prof. Celeste-Marie Bernier

Celeste-Marie Bernier is an internationally recognized scholar of Frederick Douglass and the Douglass family and Professor of United States and Atlantic Studies at the University of Edinburgh. Her many works on Douglass include *If I Survive: Frederick Douglass and Family* in the Walter O. Evans Collection, *Picturing Frederick Douglass*, and scholarly editions of Douglass's autobiographies. Bernier is also the leading scholar of Anna Murray Douglass: her *Anna Murray Douglass: A Revolutionary Family Biography and Life in Documents*, published by Edinburgh University Press in 2026, is the first volume in her landmark Douglass Family Lives series, while her forthcoming *Anna Murray Douglass: Biography of a Revolutionary,* to be published by Duke University Press, is the first standalone biography of Anna Murray Douglass and draws on three decades of archival research. A senior advisor to Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives and an Honorary Member of the Frederick Douglass Honor Society, Bernier has devoted decades to recovering and documenting the lives, writings, activism, and legacies of Frederick Douglass, Anna Murray Douglass, and their family.

Neil King, Jr.

Neil King Jr. (1959–2024) was an acclaimed journalist and author whose career at *The Wall Street Journal* spanned more than two decades and took him across the United States and around the world. At the *Journal*, he served as chief diplomatic correspondent, national political reporter, and global economics editor, and contributed to the newspaper's Pulitzer Prize-winning coverage of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. His first book, *American Ramble: A Walk of Memory and Renewal* (2023), grew out of a 330-mile journey on foot from Washington, D.C., to New York City, weaving together American history, encounters with people and places along the route, and reflections on the nation and his own life. A graduate of Columbia University and Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, King also wrote for *The New York Times, The Atlantic*, and other publications.

Priscilla Morris

Priscilla Morris is a Talbot County historian and researcher whose decades of work have contributed significantly to the understanding of Frederick Douglass's life and experiences on Maryland's Eastern Shore. Drawing on extensive research in local land records, historic properties, and the geography of Talbot County, she has developed particular expertise in identifying and interpreting the places associated with Douglass's formative years, including the Bayside farms where he lived and worked from 1833 to 1836. Morris has served on the board of Historic Easton and on the Frederick Douglass Park on the Tuckahoe Advisory Committee and has contributed to numerous historical research and preservation initiatives in Talbot County, including the effort to document Easton's historic Hill community. A longtime Talbot County resident with family roots in the county extending to the seventeenth century, she has devoted much of her historical work to deepening the understanding of Douglass's relationship to the people, places, and landscape of the region.

HISTORICAL CONSULTANTS CONTINUED

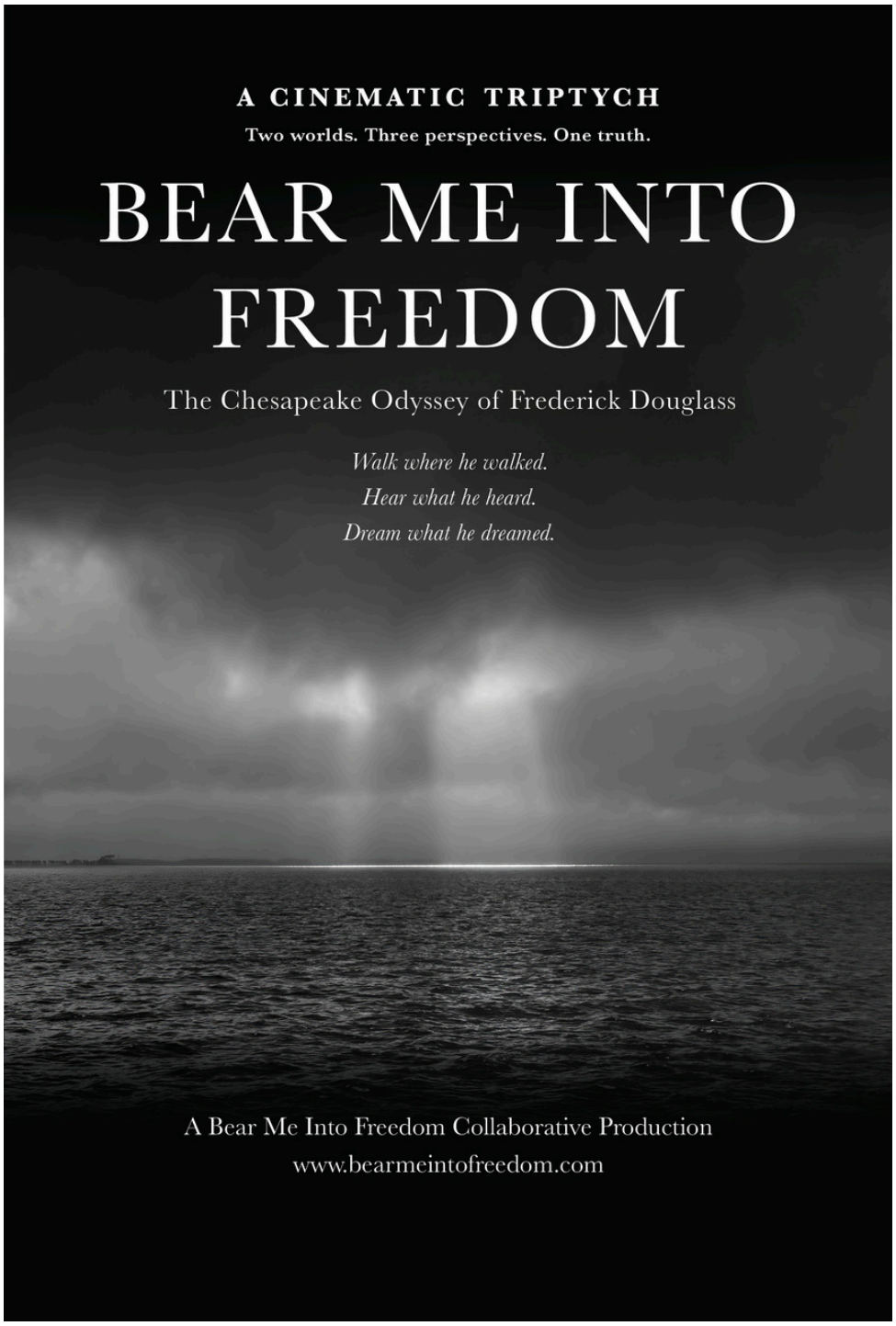
Richard Tilghman

Richard C. Tilghman Jr. is the owner and steward of Wye House, the historic Talbot County estate where Frederick Douglass spent formative years of his childhood while enslaved by the Lloyd family. A direct descendant of Edward Lloyd I, Tilghman represents more than twelve generations of family connection to Wye House and its complex history. A retired Baltimore attorney, he has supported archaeological and historical research at the property and welcomed scholars, students, and historians seeking to deepen understanding of the lives of the people who lived and labored there. Tilghman has been an important contributor to Bear Me Into Freedom, generously providing access to Wye House and its grounds and sharing his extensive knowledge of the property, its history, and its connections to Douglass.

Charlie Yonkers

Charles E. “Charlie” Yonkers is an attorney, educator, and former Peace Corps executive whose career has spanned international service, law, and American history. A graduate of Yale College and Harvard Law School, he served for four years as Peace Corps Country Director in Benin before returning to Washington, D.C., where he became managing partner of an international law firm that grew from 14 attorneys to more than 400 during his career. After retiring from legal practice, Yonkers earned a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies from Georgetown University and joined the faculty of Georgetown’s Graduate Liberal Studies Program, where he taught for more than a decade, offering courses on the American Founding, The Federalist Papers, and the relationship between place, values, and identity. He has continued to teach and lead public discussions on American history, constitutional government, and national identity.

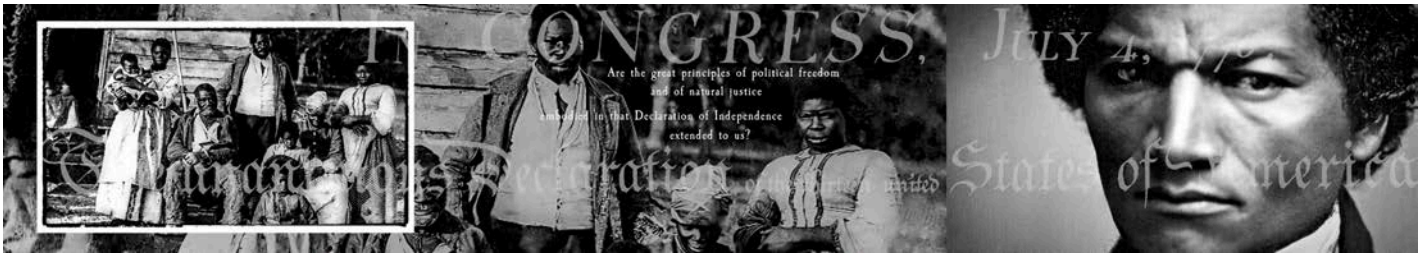
SAMPLE POSTERS & PROMOTIONAL GRAPHICS

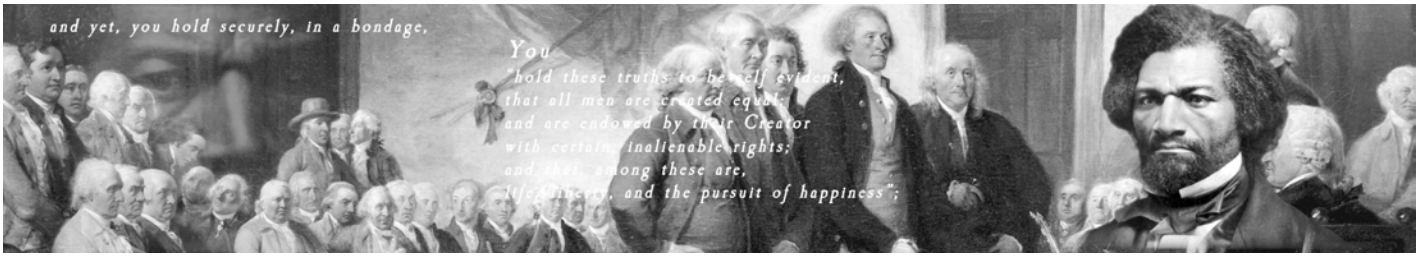


BEAR ME INTO FREEDOM

The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass | A CINEMATIC TRIPTYCH

DOWNLOAD PRODUCTION STILLS









BEAR ME INTO FREEDOM

The Chesapeake Odyssey of Frederick Douglass | A CINEMATIC TRIPTYCH

PRODUCTION STILLS









DOWNLOAD CAST & CREW PHOTOS



05 Lance Morris and Jeff McGuiness
Jeff McGuiness, photographer, director, and producer (left) and Lance Morris (right), the voice of Frederick Douglass. © Jeffrey C. McGuiness



Lance Morris and Jeff McGuiness
Lance Morris (left) and Jeff McGuiness (right).



09 Vickie Wilson
Eastern Shore native Vickie Wilson portrays Betsy Bailey who was Frederick Douglass's beloved grandmother who raised him until age six when he was taken away to live with his enslaver. © Jeffrey C. McGuiness

CAST & CREW PHOTOS CONTINUED



03 Viewing Bear Me Into Freedom
The Bear Me Into Freedom cast party at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in April 2026. Dozens of Talbot County residents generously contributed their talents during the production of the film. © Jeffrey C. McGuiness



06 Marshall Bailey IV
This descendant of Frederick Douglass portrays Douglass as a teenager who endured brutal treatment when he was leased to a farmer who lived along shore of the Chesapeake Bay. © Jeffrey C. McGuiness



01 Bear Me Into Freedom Collaborative
Nine Talbot County residents have devoted the several years to bringing the film into existence. From left to right: Jimmy Maguire, Vickie Wilson, Harriette Lowery, Ben Jensen, Dana Bowser, Lance Morris, Kayla Weber, Dorie McGuiness, Jeff McGuiness. © Jeffrey C. McGuiness

DOWNLOAD FEATURED SHOT LOCATIONS



02 Bear Me Into Freedom signature image
Light shines through the clouds on the Miles River.
© Jeffrey C. McGuiness



14 Wittman Shore
When he was sixteen, Frederick Douglass was leased to Edward Covey, a farmer and a slave breaker.
© Jeffrey C. McGuiness



08 Holme Hill Farm
This wooded area along the banks of Tuckahoe Creek was the birthplace of Frederick Douglass.
© Jeffrey C. McGuiness

FEATURED SHOT LOCATIONS CONTINUED



11 Wye House

When Frederick Douglass was six years old, he was taken to the Lloyd Plantation (now Wye House) where he lived as an enslaved youth for two years. He returned to the plantation at the age of 63 after becoming one of the most consequential figures of the 19th century. © Jeffrey C. McGuiness



12 Tall Ship on Miles River

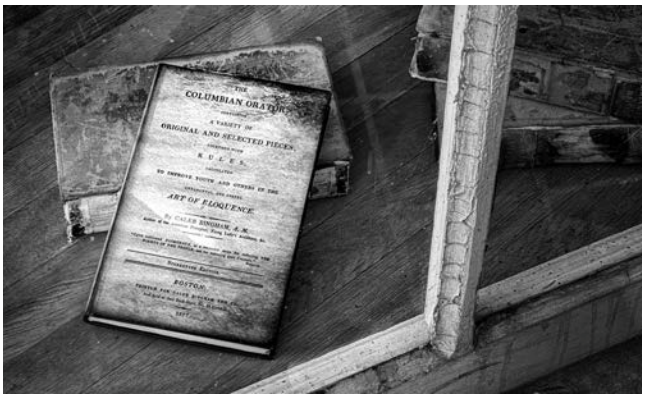
Frederick Douglass left the Eastern Shore to live in Fells Point when he was seven years old.
© Jeffrey C. McGuiness



10 Log Monsters

When he was six, Frederick Douglass was taken on what he found to be a scary 12-mile walk to the home of his enslaver. © Jeffrey C. McGuiness

FEATURED SHOT LOCATIONS CONTINUED



13 Columbian Orator

The Columbian Orator was a grade-school textbook used for teaching rhetoric. Frederick Douglass purchased the book for 50 cents when he was thirteen and kept it with him for years. It was a collection of essays and speeches from leading intellects, from Cato through the enlightenment. He used it to become on the greatest orators and writers of the Nineteenth Century. © Jeffrey C. McGuiness



16 Caulker Tools

When he was eighteen and still enslaved, Frederick Douglass was sent back to Fell's Point.
© Jeffrey C. McGuiness