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## **CBMM to host “Bear Me Into Freedom” film screenings April 24-26**

**ST. MICHAELS, Md., April 14, 2026** – A years-long labor of love for a dedicated group of Talbot County residents will reach a major milestone later this month with the local premiere of “Bear Me Into Freedom: Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for America’s Promise.”

The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum will share the immersive film installation in a series of public screenings on the weekend of April 24-26 in the Van Lennep Auditorium. The cost is \$15 per participant, with a 20% discount for CBMM members. Learn more and buy tickets at [cbmm.org/BearMeIntoFreedomFilm](http://cbmm.org/BearMeIntoFreedomFilm).

Presented on an expansive 22-foot screen, the “Bear Me Into Freedom” film is an extension of local historian and photographer Jeff McGuiness’ photo book “Bear Me Into Freedom: The Talbot County of Frederick Douglass” and a companion to the special exhibition of the same name on view now at CBMM. It was developed over the past five years by McGuiness and partners across the community, collectively known as the Bear Me Into Freedom Collaborative.

The one-hour feature traces Frederick Douglass’ journey from enslavement on Maryland’s Eastern Shore to global prominence as an abolitionist, writer, and statesman who challenged the nation to live up to its founding ideals.

Structured around Douglass’ early years in bondage, his fiery oratory and advocacy, and his late-life reflections, the film invites audiences to confront the gulf between the Declaration of Independence and the lived reality of enslaved people and how Douglass’ words continue to echo today amid America’s 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration.

“This video installation is by, about, and featuring Talbot County, and we’re excited to finally share it here,” McGuiness said. “We wanted to let Frederick Douglass tell his story in his own words, while also taking people to the very places he described that are still part of our community today. We hope you’ll join us for this one-of-a-kind, immersive experience.”

McGuiness has spent the past decade invested in the “Bear Me Into Freedom” project. Early on while researching his book, he connected with Frederick Douglass Honor Society cofounder Harriette Lowery.

This history is personal for Lowery, a Talbot County native whose ancestors were enslaved here.

Together, McGuinness and Lowery continued to bring in more local voices to shape the project that evolved into the film installation.

The film's credits listing dozens of local collaborators and supporters are a testament to the community spirit that fueled the project.

"The collaboration and care that went into developing every aspect of this film is so important," said Lowery, who is among the featured voices in the film installation. "I think everybody everywhere should see this, but for Talbot County, it's a special gift. I'm grateful to be a part of it."

Indeed, every detail has been thoughtfully crafted to amplify the impact of the Douglass story.

McGuinness said the presentation at 48:9 scale, three times wider than a standard TV, is meant to evoke the Eastern Shore's flat terrain, and even the nature sounds featured were recorded in Talbot County.

Easton's Lance Morris had the honor and challenge of giving voice to Douglass' powerful words.

When Morris offered his first public reading of a Douglass speech as part of Frederick Douglass Day festivities in 2022, he figured it was a one-time performance. Instead, it's led to an important role within the Bear Me Into Freedom Collaborative.

Morris is proud to be part of the team and of the resulting film they workshopped together.

"The point of this project was really to be a love letter to Talbot County through this historic prism," Morris said. "Beyond the affecting imagery and quotes, what makes it even more powerful is the actual voices that you hear are local people who are invested in sharing this story. You can feel the personality of this special place shining through."

With its just-opened Douglass exhibition right upstairs, CBMM's Van Lennep Auditorium is a natural home for the film installation's local debut.

CBMM's Curatorial Team consulted with McGuinness, members of the Bear Me Into Freedom Collaborative and Frederick Douglass Honor Society, and Douglass' descendants during the design and installation of the *Bear Me Into Freedom* special exhibition.

Before or after their screening, guests are invited to explore the exhibition, which details Douglass' Talbot County experiences through his own quotes and McGuinness' mural-style photographs.

There are hands-on elements, such as a netmaking activity tied to his early childhood on Tuckahoe Creek, to reinforce the stories and a Douglass AI interactive that allows guests to ask questions and receive a curated response in an authentic voice based on primary sources.

The film represents another outlet for CBMM to share this important local history with its guests.

“It’s been a joy to collaborate with Jeff and his collaborators to bring our exhibition to life, and the work that they have done with this film is truly outstanding,” CBMM’s Director of Curatorial Affairs & Exhibitions Jen Dolde said. “By pairing the film with the exhibition, we’re able to offer guests a more complete picture of Douglass’ life and legacy while highlighting the community that continues to carry his story forward.”

To learn more about CBMM and plan your next visit, head to [cbmm.org](http://cbmm.org). To learn more about McGuiness book, visit [bearmeintofreedom.com](http://bearmeintofreedom.com).

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## **PHOTOS:**

*“CBMM\_BearMeIntoFreedomFilm.jpg”*

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*“CBMM\_BearMeIntoFreedomFilm2.jpg”*

Lance Morris, Harriette Lowery, and Jeff McGuiness (from left) helped craft the film installation “Bear Me Into Freedom: Frederick Douglass and the Struggle for America’s Promise” as part of the Bear Me Into Freedom Collaborative.