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The Underground Railroad Committee of the Niagara Frontier

MISSION STATEMENT:

The Underground Railroad Committee of the Niagara Frontier (URCNF) is a not-for-profit organization. Its primary purpose is to promote better understanding and goodwill among all people. The organization will develop and implement programs and events designed to increase an awareness of and appreciation for cultural and ethnic diversity.

The URCNF will, through the exploration of historical research, state-of-the-art documentation, and current events, work to forward the notion that all people are truly created equal, and that people maintain an equal sense of purpose and humanity under natural law - there is a connection. In essence, our goal is to spotlight the many positive effects our diversity has had on the sustainment of freedom, courage and hope in this great nation.

HISTORY OF ORGANIZATION

The URCNF was established by a group of civic minded individuals who are widely recognized for leadership and public service throughout the Western New York and Niagara Frontier communities. Many have received awards for their accomplishments from the highest authorities. The organization has also established support mechanisms with individuals and organizations outside of the Western New York area with pledges of support from all over the United States and Canada, including the Maritime Province of Nova Scotia.

AS EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST TEACHER

"TREK A MILE IN MY SHOES"

"Trek a mile in my shoes" is an old (para)phrase, but is still fresh.

It says that experience is the best teacher; that knowing someone promotes understanding and understanding promotes better relationships.

This is a time for bettering relationships and what better way to do that than through an historical event that highlights the love of freedom and courage of our ancestors.

When we talk about the Underground Railroad, that secretive passage way north to freedom for enslaved Africans, it means talking about the courage of the Africans who staked their lives for their freedom and that of their descendants; it means talking about those peoples, African Americans, European Americans, and Native Americans who also risked their lives, homes and reputation to provide shelter, rest and sometimes food for the weary and frightened, but determined freedom seekers.

It means bringing out the good in all of us. What better way to understand what our ancestors went through, to understand what it took for them all to participate, than by re-tracing their efforts.

As experience is the best teacher, it ultimately means looking at things and people in a different light. One can't help but stop and think when remembering your own experience of huddling in the night air of a strange place; anticipating the arrival of weary and secretive visitors - longing to help, anxious for their safe departure.

These experiences will be more than history lessons, they are life lessons. They are tools for better understanding and promoting good will. They are opportunities for us to make a better country.

"Trek a Mile in My Shoes with the URCNF" is your opportunity to show you care about your country, its people and its ideals.

PROJECT NARRATIVE

The URCNF is proposing a trek, beginning in the "Capital of the South," Atlanta, GA, and working its way north. The trek is scheduled to begin on July 4, 1993. This is the day the United States celebrates freedom and the date in 1852, that Frederick Douglass delivered his historic speech "What Does July Fourth Mean to the Slave?" The route was chosen with the assistance of noted historian and author Charles L. Blockson, Curator of the Blockson Afro-American Collection at Temple University.

The trekkers path will consist of 13 site-stops along the way, relative to the history of the Underground Railroad, to pay homage to those heroes and heroines who walked and those who aided in the struggle to reach freedom. The trek is scheduled to take approximately 14 days.

The three primary functions of the URCNF is to **1) solicit funds, 2) locate organizations that wish to sponsor trekkers, and 3) to organize the trek.**

Each group, club, or college who sponsors a trekker is responsible for getting their trekkers to the starting point of Atlanta as did the first passengers on the Underground Railroad, trekkers will depend on the kindness of others for food and stop-overs. In anticipation of unforeseen circumstances we estimate sponsored trekkers will require a maximum of \$ 500, the bulk of which intended for transportation to Atlanta, and from our final destination (see route itinerary). For the duration of the trek they will be under the auspices of the URCNF who will coordinate first aid, security and local lodging. The 1,000 mile journey will culminate in celebration at Niagara-On-The-Lake Ontario.

Such an ambitious project will involve not only financial support money, but in-kind services to bring this project to fruition.

In these troubled times, the search for positive multi-cultural relations is a challenging one. The URCNF believes, however, that our national history and cultural tradition established the existence of these positive connections and that our national future depends on them. We are asking for your support and the support of similarly driven individuals and institutions to help make our goal a reality.



Underground Railroad Committee
of the Niagara Frontier
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The Route Itinerary for Trek

1. Atlanta, GA - Home of Martin Luther King, "Capital of the South"
2. New Garden, NC - Home of Levi Coffin
3. Washington, DC - 30th anniversary of Kings march '63 march
4. Bucktown, MD - Dorchester county, birth place of Harriet Tubman
5. Wilmington, DE - Rev. Peter Spencer documented site for URR, also the Thomas Garret house
6. Kennett, PA - Long Wood Garden URR Museum & Cemetery, URR agents buried here
7. Oxford, PA - Lincoln University and site of Hosanna AME Church
8. Philadelphia, PA - Mother Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, oldest AME Church in America
9. New York, NY - Harlem/Manhattan, Mother Zion Church funeral procession to the recently unearthed Black Cemetery
10. Auburn/Rochester, NY - Home of Harriet Tubman and Fredrick Douglass
11. Buffalo, NY - URR site, Michigan Ave.
12. Niagara Falls/Lewiston, NY - Castellani Art Museum & First Presbyterian Church
13. Niagara-on-the-Lake, Canada - Freedom Celebration

