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DOWNTOWN LIBRARY SHOWCASES COLLECTION OF ITEMS RELATED TO THE HISTORY OF SLAVERY IN AMERICA - NEW EXHIBIT



MEDIA RELEASE

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More information: Joy Testa Cinquino, 716-858-7182, testaj@buffalolib.org

Downtown Library Showcases Collection of Items Related to the History of Slavery in America in New Exhibit

The great American abolitionist, writer and orator Frederick Douglass once said, “Slavery is the great test question of our age and nation.” Now, 400 years after African people were captured, enslaved and first transported to America, the repercussions of enslavement — a systematic and institutionalized practice -- remain with us today.

The Buffalo & Erie County Public Library’s downtown Central Library at 1 Lafayette Square, Buffalo will showcase various items from its History of Slavery collection in a new exhibit entitled *Telling the Story: Enslavement of African People in the United States*. This free exhibit, housed in the Library’s main floor Rare Book Room and Ring of Knowledge, will be on view during all Library operating hours, as of **Saturday, May 4**, for approximately one year.

Included in the exhibit:

- An historical overview of enslavement in the United States from 1619 to Emancipation;
- Original documents including a bill of sale for an enslaved person, auction advertisements, a freed man’s certificate, anti-slavery sermons, debates and court cases;
- First-person narratives by Frederick Douglass, Solomon Northup, Phillis Wheatley, Olaudah Equiano, and William Wells Brown, and
- Creative works on the subject of enslavement including poetry, music and the first edition of Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*.

Additional display material highlighting local stories of individuals and their efforts to assist freedom seekers via the Underground Railroad and seek civil rights for all will be installed in the Library’s main floor Ring of Knowledge programming space near the Rare Book and Grosvenor rooms. Supplemental material regarding these displays and the Library’s collection will also be available through the Library website, www.BuffaloLib.org.

A committee of local historians, educators and community leaders provided the Library constructive input for the creation of this exhibit, identifying additional resources and programming opportunities. A series of programs with related content will take place at the Central Library during the display year.

“This is a very difficult and sensitive topic for most Americans,” noted Library Director Mary Jean Jakubowski. “Our community, and our nation as a whole, continues to grapple with the ramifications to this day of this very dark aspect of American history. Therefore, we felt it was essential that these stories and the items that embody them be brought out to the public. We anticipate this exhibit will encourage understanding and constructive dialogue going forward.”

Telling the Story: *Enslavement of African People in the United States* is made possible by generous support from the Raymond M. Melancon Annuity Fund, the Julian R. & Varue W. Oishei Foundation, Rand Capital Corporation, Mr. Patrick Martin, Esq., The Challenger, Buffalo Criterion, Greyline Outdoor Advertising, WBLK Radio and WUFO Radio.

For more information on this free public exhibit and related programs and tours, visit: <https://www.buffalolib.org/content/now-display/rare-book-room/2019-04> or call 716-858-8900. The Library System website is: www.BuffaloLib.org.

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Buffalo & Erie County Public Library * 1 Lafayette Square * Buffalo, NY 14203 * (716) 858-8900 * Fax: (716) 858-6211

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