



# 20TH OF MAY

## EMANCIPATION IN FLORIDA

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**HISTORICAL PROCESS • RELEVANCE • REVERENCE**

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CONFERENCE SCHEDULE | MAY 18-20, 2023  
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA





**JOHN G. RILEY**  
CENTER & MUSEUM



**FAAHPN**  
Florida African American Heritage  
Preservation Network

## MISSION

To define the Emancipation Proclamation as the official document that led to the freeing of the enslaved in “Confederate States” in the United States, and explore the historical events tracing the African-American journey from the Civil War to Emancipation.

To present methods, tools and strategies that enhance museum collection and program accessibility.

## PURPOSE

To increase awareness and significance of the Proclamation signing, enforcement reading as a war document and traditional commemorations in Florida, and to share other current statewide initiatives that impact the preservation and conservation of historical events and information of global relevance.

### GET SOCIAL

One of the best ways to engage with fellow enthusiasts after Journey to Emancipation is through social media.

#RileyTLH

#JourneytoEmancipation



Facebook: @JohnRileyCenter



Instagram: @JohnRileyCenter



Twitter: @johnrileycenter



YouTube: johnrileymuseum

### PLEASE TAKE THE SURVEY

Help us improve conferences in the future by completing a survey for each session.

A Maryland slaveholder said that “news of Mr. Lincoln’s proclamation struck the nation like a thunderbolt from a cloudless sky;” an elderly preacher sang “sound the loud trumpets over Egypt’s Red Sea, Jehovah has triumphed, His people are free;” another person warned “may God forget my people - if they forget this day.”

# WELCOME

May 9, 2023

This month, we honor those intrinsic values related to natural rights and freedom as we proudly salute one of the most significant dates in the annals of Florida's history: May 20, 1865. This year, we are honoring "Spirit of Emancipation Culture Keepers" whose leadership and advocacy sparked the discovery, recovery, documentation, preservation, and validation of Florida's emancipation history and culture in this area, including a first Florida Emancipation Conference that was held on December 6, 2021. This date was chosen for its importance as the date on which the 13th Amendment that freed all enslaved persons in the United States was signed. It is our hope that the conference workshops and honoring of the Cultural Keepers will inspire and engender history as the root of intelligence, and the freeing of enslaved men, women and children as a significant part of history and a monumental act of order, civility and humanity.

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing enslaved people in the rebelling Southern states. More than two years later, on May 10, 1865, Union General Edward McCook arrived in Tallahassee to take possession of the city from Southern forces. General McCook established his headquarters at the Hagner House, now known as the Knott House. On May 20, 1865, he raised the United States flag over the Florida Capitol and declared the Emancipation Proclamation in effect. Afterward, a celebration and picnic took place at Bull Pond, today's Lake Ella. Annually, since 1865, Blacks in communities in Tallahassee have celebrated May 20th as Emancipation Day. Today, activities are still held throughout the city and in various other parts of the state of Florida. All Emancipation Day activities listed below are free unless a charge is noted.



Althemese Barnes,  
Founding and Executive Director Emeritus of the  
John G. Riley Center and Museum

# WELCOME LETTER



## Leon County

### Board of County Commissioners

301 South Monroe Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32301  
(850) 606-5300 [www.leoncountyfl.gov](http://www.leoncountyfl.gov)

#### Commissioners

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At-Large  
Chairman

CAROLYN D. CUMMINGS  
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Vice Chairman

BILL PROCTOR  
District 1

CHRISTIAN CABAN  
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BRIAN WELCH  
District 4

DAVID T. O'KEEFE  
District 5

VINCENT S. LONG  
County Administrator

CHASTITY H. O'STEEN  
County Attorney

#### Greetings,

Thank you to everyone for joining us in celebrating one of the most important days in Florida History – Emancipation Day. On May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1865, General Edward M. McCook read the Emancipation Proclamation on the steps of the Knott House, an act that effectively ended slavery in Florida. One hundred and fifty-five years later, in 2020, Leon County became the first county in Florida to recognize Florida's Emancipation Day as a County holiday through a unanimous vote of the Leon County Board of County Commissioners.

Florida Emancipation Day is now a weeklong celebration filled with African American history, music, speakers, a reading of the Emancipation Proclamation, and more. As you enjoy the conference, don't forget to attend some of the other events happening around town this week. More information can be found on the Leon County and VisitTallahassee websites.

As we reflect on our history, let us solemnly swear to learn from past mistakes so as to improve not only our present but our future as well. Once again, thank you for joining the celebration, and enjoy the conference!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nick Maddox".

Nick Maddox  
Leon County Board of County Commissioners, Chairman

*People Focused. Performance Driven.*

# WELCOME LETTER



JOHN E. DAILEY  
MAYOR

May 5, 2023

As Mayor of Tallahassee, it is my pleasure to welcome the 2023 Journey to Emancipation Statewide History Conference to Florida's capital city.

This conference serves as an opportunity for historians, educators, archivist, and political leaders to come together to listen and learn about the rich history that not only occurred in our state, but historical moments that have occurred right here in the city of Tallahassee. Now more than ever, our city is dedicated to preserving and highlighting our history so that it can be shared for generations to come. This event also keeps its participants informed and engaged by remaining connected.

I am delighted you have chosen Tallahassee, to host your conference this year. While in our city do not hesitate to let us know if there is anything we can do to make your stay more pleasurable. As the Capital City of Florida, we are the epicenter of the state government. In addition, the business community is a major part of our great city. Tallahassee is also home to three institutions of higher learning: Florida A & M University, Florida State University and Tallahassee Community College.

Tallahassee is a diverse, exciting, and vibrant city with a variety of things to do for enjoyment. Experience our lively art scene, beautiful canopy roads, and award-winning culinary scene. Some of my favorite places around town are the State Capitol, Adderley Amphitheater in Cascades Park, Bradley's Country Store, Tallahassee Museum and Alfred B. Maclay Gardens State Park to name a few.

I hope you all enjoy your time together in Tallahassee and make plans to visit again.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John E. Dailey".

John E. Dailey  
Mayor

# THURSDAY

## WORKSHOPS

May 18, 2023, 8:30 am – 10:30 pm

### SESSION 1

#### **Collections Digitization Project 201 Preserving History - “The Root of Intelligence”**

**Location: Parkview at Cascades Ballroom**

The John Gilmore Riley Center/ Museum (JGRCM) and Foundation will present an update of an IMLS funded collections digitization project. A grant from the Institute of Museums and Library Services is enabling the organization to provide worldwide access to its collection by sharing digitized materials through the Digital Public Library of America utilizing the Sunshine State Digital Network (SSDN – Florida’s DPLA Hub). Students from Florida State University, the partnership institution, is assisting professionals to accomplish the project. Students from universities and school districts regularly use the collection, as does the public, for research and as a repository. A consortium of 30 museums, organized out of the JGRCM in 1997 as the Florida African American Heritage Preservation Network (FAAHPN), hold these same kinds of collections— however very few are digitized.

This workshop will be an update to the first workshop that was held in December 2021 with a goal to further inspire other museums to digitize. The digitization project, including transcribed oral histories, will take the JGRCM archive to the next level of having its materials in digital format for long-term storage, preservation and virtual access.

**Presenters:** Dr. Katie McCormick, Florida State University Associate Dean of Libraries Special Collections and Kiah Asabea, owner, Sirius Web Solutions, Miami, Florida. A public event.

**Moderator:** Dr. Katie McCormick



# THURSDAY

## WORKSHOPS

May 18, 2023, 10:45 am – 12:45 pm

### SESSION 2

**The History and Heritage of Emancipation-Preservation in Florida, Florida Humanities Council funded project. Project Director: Dr. Tameka Hobbs**

**Location: Parkview at Cascades Ballroom**

Florida has its own unique emancipation history. A Florida Humanities Council grant to the South Florida People of Color enabled the organization to codify May 20, 1865, as Florida's Emancipation Day, the intent being to ensure that this sacred story of freedom in Florida is accurately documented, acknowledged, and preserved. Conducted in 2023, the project created an authoritative and easily accessible platform to promote the 20th of May in Florida for a worldwide audience. A web portal, rich with historical documentation and narrative interpretation of Florida's emancipation holiday, was the final product and will be shared in this workshop.

Guided by humanities scholars and experts from five (5) regions of the state—Northwest Florida, North

Central Florida, East Florida, Central Florida, and South Florida--this digital archive and portal, includes news clippings, photographs, archival documents, and oral histories documenting both the history of emancipation in Florida and the cultural heritage of May celebrations in the state since 1865. A sample of other marketing/preservation tools will also be presented.

**Presenters:** Dr. Natalie King-Pedroso, Associate Professor at Florida A&M University and owner of Cotton Boll Collective; Leon Stubbs, author, historian, and associate with Texas African American Heritage Tourism Initiatives in Schertz, Texas and Denise Powell, writer, videographer and owner/CEO of DP Global Media in Atlanta, Georgia. A public event.

**Moderator:** Pasha Baker

## LUNCH BREAK

12:45 - 2:15 pm

Several eateries including El Jalisco, Chili's and Q&Q Caribbean are located east of AC Marriott and through the tunnel on Lafayette Street. Lighter lunches are in the AC Marriott café.

# THURSDAY

## WORKSHOPS

May 18, 2023, 2:30 pm – 5:30 pm

Location: Parkview at Cascades Ballroom

## SESSION 3

Watching for Freedom 2023

Honorees: Spirit of Emancipation Culture Keepers

“Traditions, Customs, and Reflections”

Stories, Drumming, Music, Foodways,  
and Other Cultural Traditions

Invitational: Culture Keepers and their guests, friends and families and FAAHPN and “Connecting the Dots’ Members/ Associates

Sponsors: City of Tallahassee; Riley Center/Museum of African American History and Culture; Florida Department of State; Division of Cultural Affairs; Florida African American Heritage Preservation Network (FAAHPN); and Cotton Boll Collective, the Home of Rootedness

# **PROGRAM**

## **Watching for Freedom 2023 Spirit of Emancipation Culture Keepers 2023**

### **Host:**

Ola Sylvia Lamar-Sheffield, PhD  
Jefferson County

### **Invocation:**

Lorenzo Myrick  
Leon County

### **Processional:**

Spirit of Emancipation Honorees

### **Welcome**

### **Occasion:**

Natalie King-Pedroso, PhD  
Director: 20th of May Group and  
Cotton Boll Collective, the Home of Rootedness

### **Documentary:**

"May 20th Drumbeat-Preserving the Legacy"

Brian Forbing, Michael Johnson, and Melody Hadley  
"What May 20, 1865 Means to Me and  
Should Mean to my Generation"

# INSTALLATION

## Spirit of Emancipation Culture Keepers 2023

Danny Sylvester  
Jackson County  
(Althemese Barnes)

Charles Parrish  
Jefferson County  
(Essie Norton)

John Nelson  
Jefferson County  
(Mary Brooks)

Rebecca Sloan Dickey  
Leon County  
(Erianna Quallo)

Nora James  
Gadsden County  
(Gabriel Showers)

Gloria Jefferson-Anderson  
Leon County  
(Tatiana Daguillard)

Sarah Hall  
Taylor County  
(Voilandra Smith)

James Family Drummers  
(Wilson James, Johnny James, Tony James, and Willis James)  
Leon County  
(Rosa James Jefferson)

Ray Mobley, PhD  
Madison County  
(Rev. Albert Barfield)

Freddie Franklin  
Wakulla County  
(Herb Donaldson)

Songs of Freedom  
Marcia Porter  
Tallahassee Symphony  
Tallahassee, Florida

### **Special Presentation**

#### **Acknowledgments:**

Althemese Barnes and Natalie King-Pedroso, PhD

#### **Benediction:**

Rev. Albert Barfield (Madison County)

### **"A Taste of Freedom"**

#### **Documentary 2:**

The Beat of Freedom,  
A Tallahassee and Leon County COCA funded project

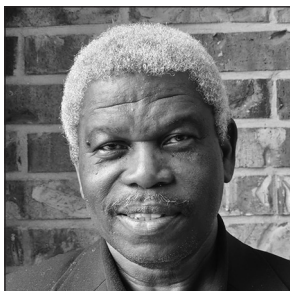
Targeted to Florida African American Heritage Preservation Network (FAAHPN) members, other historical and cultural non-profit museums leaders and staff, historic preservationists, curators, collections care and management specialists, historical societies, student and scholarly researchers, "history buffs" and the public in general.

## MEET THE PRESENTERS



**NATALIE KING-  
PEDROSO, PHD**

Associate Professor of  
English and Modern  
Languages at Florida  
A&M University



**LEON STUBBS**

Author, Historian and  
Associate with Texas  
African American Heritage  
Tourism Initiative  
Schertz, TX



**KIA ASABEA**

Owner,  
Sirius Web Solutions  
Miami, FL



**TOMEKA HOBBS**

Professor of Economics  
& Director of the African  
American  
Florida State University



**KATIE McCORMICK**

FSU Associate Dean  
of Libraries Special  
Collections and John Riley  
Museum Board Chair



**DENISE POWELL**

Writer, videographer and  
owner/CEO of  
DP Global Media

A blue-tinted photograph of cotton bolls, with the text 'COTTON BOLL COLLECTIVE' overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

# COTTON BOLL COLLECTIVE

COTTON BOLL COLLECTIVE GREW OUT OF AN INTERGENERATIONAL DESIRE TO COMMEMORATE THE HERITAGE, CULTURE, RITUALS, TRADITIONS, AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF AFRICAN DESCENT COMMUNITIES WITH DEEP ROOTS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH. OUR DIASPORA IS WIDE. OUR DAUGHTERS AND SONS HAVE TRAVELED THE WORLD, YET THEY HAVE LOOKED HOMEWARD TO THESE ANCESTRAL SPACES AS THEIR WELLSPRING OF INSPIRATION AND STRENGTH. WHETHER YOU ARE IN CAIRO, EGYPT, OR CAIRO, GEORGIA, OUR AIM IS TO HONOR THE CULTURE AND GIFTS OF COMMUNITIES INSPIRED BY THOSE AFRICANS WHO WERE BROUGHT TO THE AMERICAN SOUTH (AND NORTH) VIA THE MIDDLE PASSAGE, AS WELL AS THEIR DESCENDANTS.

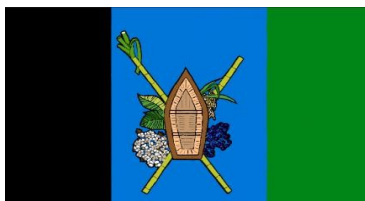
OUR ROOTEDNESS LINE IS A MEDITATION ON OUR PAST AS WE LOOK TOWARD THE FUTURE, HONORING A PROUD PEOPLE. IT IS OUR BELIEF THAT EVERYONE ON THE PLANET IS THE PRODUCT OF AN AMAZING COMMUNITY. HERE, WE CELEBRATE OURS.

**“COTTON BOLL COLLECTIVE: PRIDE OF THE AFRO-SOUTH”**

[WWW.COTTONBOLLCOLLECTIVE.COM](http://WWW.COTTONBOLLCOLLECTIVE.COM)

INSTAGRAM: COTTONBOLLCOLLECTIVE

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**“ROOTEDNESS: WITH DIGNITY, WITHOUT SHAME”**

The January 1 Proclamation did not free all slaves but it unlocked slavery's door, tilting the moral arc toward Emancipation. Over the next two and one half years, wherever Union troops were present to provide protection, as many as 3 ½ million of 4 million slaves walked out into freedom and nearly 200,000 eagerly joined the Union Army and Navy.



# FRIDAY

## TOUR

Friday, May 19, 2023

### TALLAHASSEE HERITAGE TOUR

**8:45 am**

Board buses AC Marriott, Depart at 9 am

Customized Freedom Tour of the City  
Guides: Beth LaCivita and Volunteers

Lunch - Historic Old Raney School

**12:30 p.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

1:45 p.m. Reboard for Return to Hotel

Registered Participants:

Florida African American Heritage Preservation Network  
(FAAHPN) "Connecting the Dots" Art and History Tour -  
Banners, Markers and Trails

Members & Associates

## EMANCIPATION CONCERT

**7:00 pm**

Adderley Brothers Amphitheater in Cascades Park  
East of AC Marriott (walkable)  
"Watching for Freedom Concert"  
a Public Event Presented by  
The Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra

# SATURDAY

**May 20, 2023**

Tallahassee Emancipation Day Events and Locations

**9:00 a.m.** - Freedom Church Bells Ring

**10:00 a.m.** - Old City Cemetery - "Grave Decorating Ceremony in Tribute to the Fallen Soldiers on Behalf of Freedom": John Gilmore Riley Museum and United States Colored Troops Reenactment Unit. Special Music by Marcia Porter - Professor of Voice, FSU; Tallahassee Symphony; Litany: Florida Representative Allison Tant and Hope Evans. Invocation: Leon County Commissioner and Pastor, New Salem AME Church William "Bill" Proctor; Occasion: City Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox; Grave Decorators: Kingdom Life Ministries and Academy and other attendees. USCT 21 Gun Salute. Public Event.

**11:30 a.m.** - Knott House Museum, 301 East Park Avenue – Official Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation & Picnic in the Park featuring: Keynote Speaker: John Anderson, Abolitionist Frederick Douglas Re-enactor; Invocation: Father Hugh Chapman, St. Michael All Angels Episcopal Church; Negro National Anthem - Tallahassee Symphony Quartet; Freedom Bake Bazaar: Elizabeth Popular Spring Primitive Baptist Church, Zeta Phi Beta Sorority Inc., Sigma Gamma Rho Sorority Inc. and Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority Delta Kappa Omega Chapter and Tau Theta Omega Chapter serve up traditional May 20th dessert cakes, pies and teacakes. Special Drumming: Hunter Hill, Johnny, Tony, Wilson and Willis James. Public Event

**2:00–4:00 p.m.** - Tallahassee Museums: Open to visitors with Free Admission: Goodwood, Tallahassee Museum, and John G. Riley House Museum.

**7:00 pm – 11:00 p.m.** - 2nd United States Colored Troops Living History Emancipation Abolitionist Ball. A Ticketed event

Freedom Day in Florida sponsored by the Florida Department of State, John Gilmore Riley Center/Museum/Foundation, Florida African American Heritage Preservation Network and Cotton Boll Collective.

**SATURDAY**

**GRAVE DECORATING CEREMONY**

Saturday, May 20, 2023

**8:45 am**

**Board buses for Old City Cemetery Emancipation Service**

**9:00 am – 9:45 am**

**Old City Cemetery**

Presiding: Dr. Aron Myers

Hymn: Dr. Marcia Porter

Occasion: Tallahassee City Commissioner Dianne Williams-Coxs

Prayer: Leon County Commissioner and Chairman of the Board,  
Rev. Bill Proctor, and Pastor - Salem AME Church

Litany: Leon County Representative Allison Tant

Message of Reverence/Dedication:  
Sergeant Major Retired Jarvis Rosier, Coordinator,  
USCT Living History Association

Decorating of Graves, Military Salute and Departure

**10:00 am**

**Board buses 1 and 2**

Buses depart for Knott House Events  
(10:15 am - 2:00 pm)

**USCT ABOLITIONIST BALL**

[PAID EVENT]

**7:00 pm - 10:00 pm**

National Guard Armory

“There stretched away behind us an awful chasm of darkness and despair - of more than two centuries; the American slave, bound in chains, tossed his fettered arms on high - and groaned for freedom’s gift - in vain; the colored people of the United States lived in the shadow of death... and had no visible future; it was doubtful whether liberty and union would triumph, or slavery and barbarism; victory had largely followed the arms of the Confederate army; the mighty conflict between the North and the South appeared to the eye of the civilized world - as destitute of qualities and that the day ‘should be remembered as if it was a thousand years.’”

—Abolitionist Frederick Douglass

## SPECIAL HISTORICAL SHARING

BY WILLIS AND TONY JAMES

# History of 20th of May Drumming

### BRIEF OVERVIEW

Tony and Willis (pictured below) attended the 20th of May Emancipation Celebrations with parents, Johnny James, Sr. and Leatherine Austin James annually in Munree Community, which was near the Testarina Primitive Baptist Church on Miccosukee Road. During these events, the drums were the only form of music.

We watched as our dad, Johnny "Heck" James, Sr. and our uncle, Wilson "Pete" James beat the drums, along with our older brothers, Johnny "Gator" James, Sr. and the late Henry "Smokey" James, Sr. As we

listened and watched we took an interest in, and was very influenced by the sounds of the drums. We developed a desire to learn the art of the beat.

There are other late relatives and friends who have passed away who had excellent skills in beating the drums and helped carry the legacy of Emancipation with the freedom drumming. We will always remember and never forget the many other drummers (too numerous to name), some are still with us and others have passed away, but they also made an impact and influenced us to become drummers.



## ORAL HISTORIES



### **TONY "MAN" JAMES**

My name is Tony "Man" James. I am the son of Johnny James, Sr. and Leatherine Austin. I attended Raney Elementary School, Griffin Middle School, the original Lincoln High School – graduating class of 1964 and Florida A&M University, earning a BA degree in 1975. I had one (1) tour as a U.S. Marine and was employed until retirement as a Senior Officer Specialist, Leon County School bus driver, and currently employed as a Leon County School crossing guard.

I am a deacon at St. Peter Primitive Baptist Church. I am married to

Doris James and father to the late Tony Xenos James, the late Christopher Barron James and one (1) daughter, Adriann James. I have three (3) grandchildren and three (3) great grandchildren.

I am speaking for myself and my younger brother, Willis "Blue" James because we both were teenagers when we took an interest in watching others, such as our dad, Johnny "Heck" James, Sr. beat the drums and occasionally, our Uncle Wilson "Pete" James would beat the drums as well. We enjoyed seeing them beat.

Additionally, our older brothers, Johnny "Gator" James, Jr. and Henry "Smokey" James had an influence on our willingness to learn the art of beating the drums. Last but not least, our great uncle, the late Ned Ardley, revolutionized the art of beating the smaller drum. We cannot forget the Hill brothers, Otis and Hunter, who would beat the drums the longest in terms of time.

We finally got our start when our dad decided to purchase a set of drums for himself. Willis and I took these drums and would beat them, practicing in the back of the room of our home. Everyday we began to beat them for hours on end. We would take a break and then get back to it until we mastered the trade as teenagers in the early 1950s.

## ORAL HISTORIES



### **WILLIS "BLUE" JAMES**

My name is Willis "Blue" James, Sr. I am the son of Johnny James, Sr. and Leatherine Austin James. I attended Raney Elementary School and Griffin Middle School. I was employed in my earlier years by Steward Nursery and later became employed by FSU as a Groundskeeper Supervisor. I am a widower to the late Hilda Isom James and the father of two (2) sons, Algernon and Willis James, Jr. and one (1) daughter, Rosa James.



(top photo)  
Willis with his drum.  
His uncle, Wilson James, also a drummer and mentor to his nephews, looks on.

(bottom photo)  
Johnny James, Jr.

[www.20thofMay.com](http://www.20thofMay.com)

Thanks to our supporters!



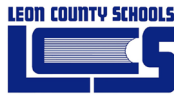
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