

July 20, 2019.

When I began **Solomon Northup Day in 1999**, I was inspired not only by the exhibition at Nott Memorial, Union College, spearheaded by Cliff Brown Ph. D., but also by the 1984 PBS docudrama by **Gordon Parks, starring Avery Brooks**.

Realizing Solomon had history in Saratoga Springs I immediately thought what I can do to bring attention to his story as well as to a community too often ignored and underrepresented in the community.

Solomon's story touches all our lives as Americans not because his the only slave narrative but because we are all represented through his narrative and by his great faith that the God would restore him to his family and children. This faith, though dwindled, is still represented today in the Black community. Samuel Bass represents all those who hear pain and will act on it, even at risk to themselves. Those people exist today called 'activists.'

We are seeing activism through **Black Lives Matter, Southern Poverty Law Center, Bryan Stevenson Equal Justice Initiative, Michelle Alexander** and many others who seek freedom and justice for all.

I wonder what Solomon would say today if he were here amongst us?

With joblessness, lack of housing, food insecurity, an injured Voting Rights Act, gerrymandering, mass incarceration and the murder of young black men and women, we in America, are once again at a crossroads not unlike where we were after the Civil War, through the Black Codes, Jim Crow, and thereafter by the powerful forces of systemic racism, institutional racism which continue today. The fight for freedom and justice remains one in which all of us must invest. This struggle has widened to include not only people of color but everyone among the 99% still struggling for dignity and the **American Dream**.

War against the Poor continues unabated and under the current Administration that war is unlikely to slow with nationalism on the rise worldwide. When world leaders tell black and brown people to return 'home' when in fact, they are home you know we are at a critical juncture. We have much to be concerned about as we attempt to go about our daily lives regardless of race.

The recent debate about Reparations is not a new one. Reparations were Petitioned for by

Mrs. B. D. Hawkes of Bethany, she writes in Frederick Douglass' Paper, April 28, 1854.

Petitions for reparations for Solomon Northup's ordeal of unlawful enslavement reads: *(see below)*

Prayer, like Love, is a strong force. Solomon's voice through his autobiography, that that of today's **Rev. William J. Barber** calls for us as Americans to create a Moral Monday, a time when we take on the arduous task of working toward our own salvation; that of working on justice and freedom for the 'other'

Only half the story of slavery has been told, there is a another story about the enslaved African that too frequently gets omitted – one about their lives when they were alone undoubtedly in the cover of night – their insistence, in spite of everything, to love each other (*something we appear to have misplaced*), give birth, celebrated life through dance, song and worship, care and protected each other flee to freedom and bury their dead with pride when they could. There is much to be celebrated as descendants of slaves; as **Dr. Michael Eric Dyson** said, *"We are children of those who would not die."*

Like my dear friend **Mary Jacobs** says, *"Slavery is not our only history"* but all of us within the sound of my voice benefit today from the labor of Africans on this Continent and throughout the world. If we are to free ourselves we must redeem ourselves by recognizing the debt that is owed the human beings who sacrificed their lives for us.

The African, in particular has done extremely well in short period of time given the circumstances, particularly on this Continent. It is my hope and trust that the African Diaspora will be fully realized with a understanding of the debt they owe each other and act accordingly.

There will be no peace on this Contienet until the African is truly free and our ancestors at rest knowing that their labor has not been in vain.

Ancestral prayer, by **Dr. George Fraser of Denver, Colorado:**

May we always remember those who have gone before us, may we be inspried by their vision and their valor, may their lives continually remind us that service is

more important than success that people are more important than possessions, that principle is more important than power.

May whatever we do be molded and shaped by honesty, excellence and commitment. May our children and their children's children be carried forth with pride and the nobility of the histories that are represented here. To the creator of all of us, by whatever name we call that creator, dedicate our lives to make our world better and more beautiful. Amen.

By Renee Moore, founder, Solomon Northup Day, 7/15/2019.

NORTHRUP PETITION.

Mrs. B. D. Hawkes, of Bethany, writes:—
"I send you a copy of the Petition we are circulating, thinking some friend in Rochester would obtain signatures to accompany ours, thereby increasing its respectability, and gaining attention to the subject. If we can only excite discussion upon the matter, good to the oppressed may accrue."

The following is the petition:

To the Honorable Senators and House of Representatives in Congress assembled:

The undersigned, your petitioners, legal voters of the State of New York, respectfully represent to your Honorable body, that Solomon Northrup, a citizen of this State, and at the time of his seizure a resident of the County of Saratoga, was, in the spring of 1841, kidnapped and carried into slavery, sold in the slave market of Washington, and was for twelve years detained in slavery in different parts of the State of Louisiana.

And we respectfully request some suitable action of your Honorable body to indemnify him by some adequate compensation for the time thus spent in the unrequited service of worse than Egyptian taskmasters.

And your petitioners, as in duty bound, will ever pray.