

Geographies of Slavery: In My Backyard ***“Harriet Was Here”***

For the past two years, Terry Leonino and Greg Artzner have conducted songwriting residencies with elementary school students in New York and in Maryland focusing on the story of famed abolitionist and Underground Railroad conductor Harriet Tubman. Some of the residencies have taken place at Sandy Spring Friends School in Sandy Spring, Maryland and some have been conducted in Auburn, NY where Harriet lived out her life after the Civil War. Still others have taken place in the Adirondack Mountains of upstate NY, and future residencies are planned for schools in central New York as well as Ontario, Canada and the Eastern Shore of Maryland, where Tubman was born, and from whence she escaped slavery and began her famous career as an Underground Railroad operative.

The songwriting residencies explore not only Tubman’s life as a conductor helping her friends, family and neighbors to find freedom, but also her subsequent exploits, adventures and actions as a spy for the Union army during the Civil War, her work as a nurse, her efforts as a community activist in Auburn, and her dedication to equal rights for women.

For students these programs represent an opportunity to explore, in depth, a nearly one-hundred-year-long period in American History through the experiences of this remarkable individual. They are also a singular opportunity to engage in the art of songwriting, working directly with world-renowned songwriters, which is a multi-level educational experience in itself, involving English language arts, research, and creative and critical thinking, including the creation of musical settings for the lyrics the class writes together.

The programs are administered by the Freedom Education Organization, John Brown Lives! in collaboration with the Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance & Abolition at Yale University, and Dr. Kate Clifford Larsen, the pre-eminent biographer of Harriet Tubman. and are funded in part by a grant from the Sarah Lahr Foundation.



Nanny of the Maroons

The Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, & Abolition
at the Whitney and Betty MacMillan Center
for International and Area Studies at Yale