



Brooklyn Public Library Presents

'Til Victory is Won: 400 Years of Making Revolution and Inventing Utopia

Teach-In to Observe the 400th Anniversary of the First Slave Ship's Arrival in North America, With Free Lectures and Performances by Activists, Historians, and Artists including

**New York City Public Advocate Jumaane Williams
and**

Nikole Hannah-Jones, project lead of *The New York Times'* 1619 Project

***Curator Brian Tate to Deliver the 'Til Victory Manifesto
A People's Pledge to Honor History and Invent The Future***

Saturday October 26 from 7 p.m. to Midnight

Brooklyn, NY – October 8, 2019 – The Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) today announced the full schedule of programs and performances for ***'Til Victory is Won: 400 Years of Making Revolution and Inventing Utopia***, BPL's observation of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of enslaved Africans to the shores of North America at present-day Jamestown, Virginia, taking place on **Saturday, October 26 from 7 p.m. to midnight**. Invited guest lecturers and panelists, including **Nikole Hannah-Jones, Susan Burton, Greg Tate, Liza Jessie Peterson, and Robyn C. Spencer**, will examine freedom movements and liberation strategies from the Middle Passage to Black Lives Matter and beyond. The evening will include a manifesto, written and delivered by Brian Tate specifically for the *'Til Victory* event and its participants.

The event will also feature simultaneous musical performances and readings of historic works by television and film star **Aisha Hinds** and **New York City Advocate Jumaane Williams**. **Alicia Hall Moran, DJ Reborn, Marika Hughes, The Dream Unfinished: An Activist Orchestra, Sherman Fleming, and Storyboard P** will perform and **Patrick Dougher, Jake-Ann Jones, tai'freedom ford, and LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs** will read historical texts. Author **Bridgett M. Davis** and artist and activist **Ola Ronke Akinmowo**, founder of the Free Black Women's Library, will participate in a **continuous reading of Toni Morrison's** 1987 novel ***Beloved***. The evening will include a live recording of ACLU's At Liberty podcast about the landmark ACLU case *Loving v. Virginia* in 1967.

In the weeks before and after *'Til Victory is Won*, BPL branches across the borough will hold special programs in association with the Library's observation of the anniversary, including performances of songs from the African diaspora, African mask and jewelry-making, as well as spoken word and creative writing workshops.

Taking its name from a key phrase in "Lift Every Voice and Sing," James Weldon Johnson's Negro National Anthem, BPL's *'Til Victory is Won* explores how Americans can work together to create a more radical, inclusive, and racially just future for the United States and beyond. The program furthers the Library's

mission to present socially engaged cultural programming and provide opportunities for civic engagement and exploration.

“It is vital that public institutions like Brooklyn Public Library offer thought-provoking and civically engaging programs such as *‘Til Victory is Won,*” said **Linda E. Johnson, President and CEO of Brooklyn Public Library.** “Our Library is a space to explore ideas and challenging issues, and at the same time strengthen the fabric of the communities we serve. We look forward to welcoming all to this important observation as we continue to grapple with our nation’s difficult history.”

‘Til Victory is Won is an urgent call to learn more about the African American revolutionaries, radical thinkers, and cultural icons who helped forge the country. The five-hour teach in will welcome participants on every floor of Brooklyn’s Central Library at Grand Army Plaza, aiming to fill in gaps that characterize much of the country’s education on slavery and its legacy. Over the course of the evening, participants can delve into periods of American and trans-Atlantic history from 1619 to the present and take part in interactive lectures, conversations, and historical readings that focus on important junctions of our shared history.

“The Library is taking an uncompromising look at where we’ve been and how far we have come and the distance left to travel 400 years after the first slave ships arrived on American shores,” said **László Jakab Orsós, Vice President of Arts and Culture, Brooklyn Public Library.** “The evening will offer an array of activists, writers, and artists speaking on some of the most important matters in both our country’s history and in today’s world, providing the community the chance to engage with one another, which is precisely what the Library aims to do.”

Because a single evening is not sufficient to cover the complex history of the African diaspora from enslavement to freedom to the urgency of the movement for Black lives today, the program is designed to promote dialogue and inspire further learning. The evening will end with a reading of a manifesto co-developed by participating artists and read by Brian Tate, co-curator for the evening and president of The Tate Group. To encourage further reflection on the events, the manifesto will be posted on BPL’s website and the Brooklyn community will be invited to contribute to the living document for one month.

Across the branches from October 1 through December 31, ***Our Streets, Our Stories 1619: 400 Years Later,*** organized by BPL’s ongoing oral history project, will record stories from Brooklyn residents. Expanding on BPL’s ongoing *Our Streets, Our Stories* project, oral historians are engaging with Brooklyn residents to hear their thoughts on what they know or were taught about the history of slavery in the United States, what African Diaspora means to them in Brooklyn, and what justice looks like for descendants of enslaved people.

For more information about *‘Til Victory is Won,* as well as branch programming throughout the borough, please visit <https://www.bklynlibrary.org/til-victory-is-won>

‘Til Victory is Won: 400 Years of Making Revolution and Inventing Utopia

Schedule of Events

Line Up Subject to Change

Slavery is an Act of War

7 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Grand Lobby

'Til Victory is Won opens with live music by The Dream Unfinished: An Activist Orchestra, followed by a monologue with Jumaane Williams as Frederick Douglas, Ian Brennan as John Brown, and Aisha Hinds as Harriet Tubman.

The Romantic Poetry of Abolition

7:45 p.m. – 8:15 p.m. History, Biography, and Religion Section

Matt Sandler will introduce the role of poetry in abolitionist organizing and Black community-building. Contemporary poets LaTasha N. Nevada Diggs and t'ai freedom ford will perform the work of nineteenth-century Black poet-activists like Frances Harper and James Monroe Whitfield, who understood their work as integral to the process of Black liberation and community-building. The poets and the session leader will then discuss the ramifications of the history of slavery and abolition in contemporary art and activist practice.

On the Front Lines of Freedom: From Civil Rights to Black Lives Matter

7:45 p.m. – 8:45 p.m. Dweck Center

Veteran and youth activists discuss freedom movements with Anthonine Pierre, Deputy Director of the Brooklyn Movement Center; Geri M. Augusto, Gerard Visiting Associate Professor of International & Public Affairs and Africana Studies, Brown University; and Phillip Agnew, co-founder of the Dream Defenders. Moderated by asha bandle, co-author of *When They Call You a Terrorist: A Black Lives Matter Memoir*.

Hands on the Freedom Plow: Women Activists in the Civil Rights Movement

7:45 p.m. – 8:45 p.m. Languages and Literature Section

Panelists Robyn C. Spencer, *The Revolution Has Come: Black Power, Gender, and the Black Panther Party in Oakland*; Judy Richardson, Series Associate Producer, *Eyes on the Prize* and Co-Editor, *Hands on the Freedom Plow: Personal Accounts by Women in SNCC*; and Dorothy M. Zellner, former staff member of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee discuss women activists in the Civil Rights movement. Moderated by L. Joy Williams, President of the Brooklyn chapter of the NAACP.

Notes on the Middle Passage

7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Info Commons Lab

Ann Chinn, founder of the *Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers Project* and MacArthur Genius Award winner Saidiya Hartman (author, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*) discuss the history of the Middle Passage, moderated by The New School professor Dr. Mindy Fullilove (*Urban Alchemy: Restoring Joy in America's Sorted-Out Cities*).

Susan Burton Reads from “Becoming Ms. Burton”

7:45 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Social Science and Technology section

Susan Burton is an activist based in the United States who works with formerly incarcerated people and founded the nonprofit organization, A New Way of Life. She reads from her memoir, *Becoming Ms. Burton*.

ACLU AT Liberty at BPL: Loving v. Virginia with Melissa Murray

8:50 p.m. – 9:50 p.m. Dweck Center

The Supreme Court struck down bans on interracial marriage in *Loving v. Virginia*, the landmark ACLU case decided in 1967. But the government's regulation of the family didn't start with anti-miscegenation laws or end with *Loving*. A live recording of the ACLU podcast *At Liberty* will explore how, over the course of American history, state control of marriage and sex has helped maintain white supremacy.

Fashioning the Self in Slavery and Freedom

8:50 p.m. – 9:50 p.m. Info Commons Lab

One rarely associates fashion with slavery and the trans-Atlantic slave trade. In fact, fashion, with all its connotations of autonomy and self-determination, can be seen as the antithesis of slavery, the most extreme form of deprivation of freedom and selfhood. Yet, from 1619 to abolition, enslaved peoples in the U.S. (and across the Americas) used fashion to fight for greater freedom and express their multifarious identities. In a lecture, Dr. Jonathan Square teases out the relationship between the institution of slavery and the fashion system.

In the Interest of Justice: A Moral Response to Mass Incarceration

8:50 p.m. – 9:50 p.m. Languages and Literature

Human rights activist Susan Burton (Founder, *A New Way of Life*, and co-author, *Becoming Ms. Burton: From Prison to Recovery to Leading the Fight for Incarcerated Women*) and playwright/actor Liza Jessie Peterson (creator, *The Peculiar Patriot*, and author, *All Day: A Year of Love and Survival Teaching Incarcerated Kids at Rikers Island*) discuss mass incarceration, moderated by award-winning investigative journalist Sylvia A. Harvey.

Greg Tate Reads from *Flyboy 2*

8:30 p.m. – 9 p.m. History Biography and Religion section

Tate will read an essay of cultural criticism from *Flyboy 2: The Greg Tate Reader*.

Visual Narratives of Liberation

10 p.m. – 10:50 p.m. Info Commons Lab

This artist spotlight discussion during *'Til Victory is Won* features New York City-based photographers Barron Claiborne, Delphine Diallo, Russell Frederick, and Jamel Shabazz as they explore what it means to reimagine utopia and celebrate Blackness and Black culture through their work. What opportunities does the realism of lens-based art hold for a recognition of culture that is richly present—and for a cultural imaginary that is yet to be? Moderated by Cora Fisher, Curator of Visual Art Programming at the Brooklyn Public Library.

Lay Down Your Sword and Shield

8:30 p.m. – 9:15 p.m. Dweck Center

The phrase, drawn from Toni Morrison's *Beloved*, refers to the need for warriors to heal from endless battles against oppression. For activists today, how do you maintain your capacity for vulnerability and invention while combatting systemic injustice? Panelists include Sasha Alexander, founder of Black Trans

Media; Noel G Altaba, founder Indigenous Womxn Collective; and Mildred Beltrè, co-founder Brooklyn HiArt! Machine. Moderated by dancer, choreographer, and filmmaker Gabri Christa.

Envisioning Victory: What Will It Take To Win?

10 p.m. – 10:50 p.m. Dweck Center

Nikole Hannah-Jones, project lead of *The New York Times*' [1619 Project](#); Demita Frazier, founding member of the Combahee River Collective; Shawnda Chapman Brown, board chair, Black Women's Blueprint and director of the *Beyond the Bars* Fellowship at Columbia University; and Kimberly Peeler-Allen, co-founder of Higher Heights, a national organization building the political power and leadership of Black women. Moderated by journalist/cultural critic Greg Tate (*Flyboy 2: A Greg Tate Reader*; *Everything But the Burden: What White People Are Taking from Black Culture*).

The full list of events may be found at: <https://www.bklynlibrary.org/til-victory-is-won>. Throughout the evening patrons can add their thoughts to the manifesto and share their own oral histories and stories.

'Till Victory Is Won is co-curated by Brian Tate with cultural advisors from Weeksville Heritage Center, the Center for Black Literature at Medgar Evers College; Kimberly Peeler-Allen, Co-founder of Higher Heights, a national organization building the political power and leadership of Black women; Columbia University; Harvard University; and the 400 Years of Inequality Committee.

About Brooklyn Public Library (BPL)

Brooklyn Public Library (BPL) is an independent library system for the 2.5 million residents of Brooklyn. It is the fifth largest library system in the United States with 60 neighborhood libraries located throughout the borough. BPL offers free programs and services for all ages and stages of life, including a large selection of books in more than 30 languages, author talks, literacy programs and public computers. BPL's eResources, such as eBooks and eVideos, catalog information and free homework help, are available to customers of all ages 24 hours a day at our website: www.bklynlibrary.org.

About Curator Brian Tate

Brian Tate is a culture curator who develops major public programs that examine the issues of our time. He has built forward-looking projects at the nexus of arts and ideas for more than 20 years, and he is expert at centering creative thinkers in matters of human justice. He is founder of The Tate Group, a New York City-based consulting firm that specializes in cultural initiatives, marketing strategy, community engagement, and partnership development. Economic growth and narrative change around issues of equality are at the core of its practice. www.TateStrategy.com

###

Media Contacts

Brooklyn Public Library

Fritzi Bodenheimer

fbodenheimer@bklynlibrary.org

718-230-2402

Katrina Reynolds

Resnicow and Associates

kreynolds@resnicow.com
212-671-5184

Julie Danni
Resnicow and Associates
jdanni@resnicow.com
212-671-5173