



## NEWS RELEASE

For immediate release

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### **“What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?”**

*Second Annual Reading from Frederick Douglass’ 1852 Speech*

**Trenton, NJ** (For immediate release)— The Trent House Association will hold a free program of reading and song on Saturday, July 5, 2025, at 4 pm. Selections from Frederick Douglass’ 1852 speech “What to the Slave Is the Fourth of July?” will be introduced and read by James Peebles. Audience members can join Laranah Phipps in singing “Battle Hymn of the Republic,” a Union Army marching song during the Civil War, and “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” written during the post-Reconstruction period after the war. The program will be held in the William Trent House Museum Visitor Center at 15 Market Street in Trenton, across from the Hughes Justic Complex. Free parking and the museum entrance are at the rear of the property off William Trent Place.

After escaping from enslavement in Maryland, Frederick Douglass became a leading abolitionist renowned for his eloquent oratory and anti-slavery writings. He gave this speech on July 5, 1852, in Rochester, New York. In his speech, Douglass referred to the Declaration of Independence as establishing a nation committed to providing opportunity for “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” to all its citizens. In less than a decade, that nation was embroiled in a civil war about the legitimacy of the enslavement of people of African descent.

The words to the *Battle Hymn of the Republic* were written by Julia Ward Howe, an active White abolitionist, in 1861, which was sung as a marching song by Union troops. In 1900 Black civil rights activist and NAACP leader James Weldon Johnson and his brother John Rosamond Johnson wrote *Lift Every Voice and Sing*. This was in a period when Jim Crow laws in the southern states enforced racial segregation and de facto segregation and discrimination was practiced in the north. The lyrics subtly protest racism and recount both the struggles and triumphs of African Americans.

James Peebles is a trustee of the Trent House Association and an active member of Trenton’s arts and culture community. Laranah Phipps is a singer, songwriter, Influencer, and producer, performing in multiple genres including jazz, funk, and Afrofuturism.

The William Trent House Museum is a National Historic Landmark in the Crossroads of the American Revolution National Heritage Area and on the Washington-Rochambeau Revolutionary Route National Historic Trail and on the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail. The Museum is dedicated to sharing the authentic history of the house, property, and people with our communities, connecting the past with today and tomorrow. Owned by the City of Trenton, it is operated by the Trent House Association, which is supported by the generosity of its donors; by grants from the New Jersey Council for the Humanities, the New Jersey Cultural Trust, the New Jersey Historic Trust, the Mercer County Cultural and Heritage Commission with funding from the New Jersey Historical Commission, and the Bunbury Fund and the New Jersey Arts & Culture Renewal Fund of the Princeton Area Community Foundation; and by contributions from NJM Insurance Group and Orion General Contractors. For more information, visit [www.williamtrenthouse.org](http://www.williamtrenthouse.org).