

Commencing the Dream: The Genesis Generation

The UGRR: A Definition

The Underground Railroad (1831-61) was a very public and organized movement by abolitionists. The significance of the underground is not found by searching for cubbyholes, tunnels and passageways, but rather the term is more metaphorical as Black abolitionists used newspapers, letters, and demonstrations (sit-ins and marches) to agitate the South about slave escapes.

SOURCE A: Citation: "TWENTY-SIX SLAVES IN ONE WEEK," (Boston) *The Liberator*, October 14, 1842

"Sam Weller is requested to tell the slaveholders that we passed twenty-six prime slaves to the land of freedom last week, and several more this week thus far. Don't know what the end of the week will foot up. All went by 'the underground railroad.'"

SOURCE B: Citation: "Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass," by Frederick Douglass (1845)

"I have never approved of the very public manner in which some of our western friends have conducted what they call the *underground railroad*, but which I think, by their open declarations, has been made most emphatically the *upperground railroad*..."

SOURCE C: Citation: "Help the Fugitives," (Chatham, CW) *Provincial Freeman*, July 8, 1854

"Fugitives from southern injustice are coming thick and fast. The underground railroad never before did so large a business as it is doing now. The Vigilance Committee have their hands full, and all they want is the pecuniary means to meet the demands made upon them. This is a matter that of course cannot be made the subject of much public remark. A word to the wise is sufficient. The members of the Acting Committee are Wm. Still, 31 N. 5th St; N.W. Depee, 334 South St; Jacob C. White, 100 Old York Road, and Passmore Williamson, S.W. corner of Seventh and Arch streets. Any money placed in the hands of either of these gentlemen, or forwarded to Charles Wise, corner of 5th and Market streets, Treasurer of the Vigilance Committee, will be secure of a faithful and a judicious appropriation."— *Pa Freeman*

SOURCE D: Citation: "Cleveland Vigilance Committee Report" (Rochester) *Frederick Douglass Paper*, 9/8/1854

"The Quarterly Report of the business of the Underground Railroad, from Cleveland, for the past three months, has been such as to increase the confidence of all parties connected therewith. Number of passengers passed over the road, 176; Receipts of the road from all sources, \$309.37; Cash on hand, \$19.30; Monthly subscribers to this Committee since the 9th of May up to the 9th of August. We have paid out fifty-nine dollars and thirty-seven cents, for which we have received the large sum of \$35,000, according to the way the American people buy and sell God's image in the Southern States; and we, therefore, resolve as a Committee of men, never to take down our flag, while the Underground Railroad cars shall move on invisibly, for God is on our side."

Signed in behalf of the

COMMITTEE OF NINE (Wm. Howard Day, Chairman)

SOURCE E: Citation: Joseph Bustill letter to William Still, Harrisburg, PA, March 24, 1856

FRIEND STILL-I suppose ere this you have seen those five large and three small packages I sent by way of Reading, consisting of three men and women and children. They arrived here this morning at 8 1/2 o'clock and left twenty minutes past three. You will please send me any information likely to prove interesting in relation to them.

Lately we have formed a Society here, called the Fugitive Aid Society. This is our first case, and I hope it will prove entirely successful. When you write, please inform me what signs or symbols you make use of in your despatches [*sic*], and any other information in relation to operations of the Underground Rail Road.

Our reason for sending by the Reading Road, was to gain time; it is expected the owners will be in town this afternoon, and by this Road we gained five hours' time, which is a matter of much importance, and we may have occasion to use it sometimes in future. In great haste, Yours with great respect, Jos. C. BUSTILL.

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Lecture Thesis:

With his extensive background, William Howard Day offers us a chance to evaluate the origins of the civil rights struggle. Having lived through three eras, Day made enduring contributions that helped cement America's long-winded civil rights campaign, beginning with the first political movement – the Underground Railroad – and which continued after his death and into the 20th Century. With his passing, the living memory of the first civil rights movement faded into the realm of history, but his torch had been passed on to a new generation of civil rights workers, namely the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.



Wm. Howard Day, age ca. 39



Martin Luther King Jr., age 39

WHD Image Citation: Wheeler, Benjamin F. *The Varick Family* (Mobile, AL: s.n. 1906) 40.

MLK Image Citation: The Nobel Foundation [Internet], Jan. 2012, "Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr." www.nobelprize.org.