

CONFRONTING SLAVERY

VENTURE SMITH TO THE PRESENT

1765-1865-1965-Today

*Beecher House Center for the Study of Equal Rights
Wilberforce Institute for the study of Slavery and Emancipation*



Rescheduled from February due to building closure for State holiday

Thursday, April 7, 2016 - 1:00 - 5:00 pm
Friday, April 8, 2016 - 9:00 - 5:00 pm
Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street Hartford, Connecticut 06106

Keynote Speakers - to be re-confirmed

Rosa L. DeLauro - *United States Congresswoman, CT-3rd*
Dr. K. Opoku-Agyemang, Cape Coast University, Ghana

This international *Event* will look at slavery and its impact at key historical points, with the goal of exploring ways to confront the persistent scourge of human bondage in all its forms.

The life of Venture Smith is a story of perseverance, strength, courage, and integrity against daunting forces. Smith was one of the earliest African slaves taken to what would become the United States to achieve his own freedom, which he purchased from his last owner.

One of the joys of history is to uncover and make accessible compelling stories that inform us about the past and illuminate the important issues of our times. Venture Smith is just such a story – one that we hope will inspire people to see the world around them in new ways – Lonnie G. Bunch, March 2014.

This and other very human stories need to be told to wider audiences in the effort to raise public awareness and organize anti-slavery education around the world.

Since freedom manifests itself in various ways and various formats, we offer more than a conference. The *Event* in February 2016 will draw upon the rich assortment of scholarly research, literature, art, theatre, entertainment, and information technologies to enhance the story-telling process and mobilize the participants into an anti-slavery crusade.

We have just celebrated the 250th anniversary of
Venture Smith's liberation from slavery.

Submission of Proposals:

Event organizers are inviting papers, exhibits, and program proposals to be submitted by scholars, public historians, activists and artists:

The goal is to offer a very broad spectrum of topics and genres, linking past, present, and future when appropriate and involving dialogue between scholars, students, activists, victims, and political leaders. We welcome biographies – historical and economic analyses – cultural presentations involving literary, fine and performing arts – exhibits – screenings – and testimonies from Venture Smith’s descendants and from survivors of modern slavery.

Possible themes and issues to be explored:

- The intellectual roots of eighteenth century anti-slavery thought and action
- Slavery and the construction of race in the Atlantic world
- The role of autobiography, narratives and other literary forms in confronting slavery
- Political mobilization, anti-slavery, and civil rights
- Anti-slavery, freedom, and national identity
- Anti-slavery and the origins of human rights
- Law, resistance and violence in the ending of slavery
- Legacies of slavery and transitions to freedom
- Continuities and changes in patterns of forced labor globally since the mid-18th century
- Measuring slavery in all its forms, past and present
- Contemporary slavery in historical perspective
- Historical memory, commemorations, & representations of slavery in mobilizing anti-slavery action
- Anti-slavery in the age of globalization and mass information technology
- The true statistical picture of slavery’s history in North America
- The exposure of inaccurate stereotypes, such as the notion that the Northern States were free of responsibility in the slave trade
- The impact of African slave culture on America and Europe
- The role and attitudes of America’s founding fathers in supporting and opposing slavery
- The role and complicity of African and Arab commerce in the 17th -18th-century slave trade
- Defining the nature of the “freedom” achieved by Venture Smith in 1765 and the 4 million former slaves in 1865
- Paths to Freedom – Liberty networks Then and Now – comparing the Underground Railroad with modern networks of escape
- Generations: Life after enslavement. Workshop with descendants of Venture Smith, Cuff Condol, the Bemans, and contemporary survivors of enslavement and trafficking
- Re-creation of the abolition debates from the 1830s with a second contemporary version on the issue of ending child/bonded labor
- The scope and causes of modern-day slavery throughout the world
- Who are the primary stakeholders involved?
- Are today’s bonded laborers, sex trade workers, and child soldiers in fact slaves?

The above list is not conclusive; we welcome all kinds of proposals, for papers, panels, exhibitions, witnesses, and live interactive events.

Proposals should be submitted via email to: Beecher House Center – info@VentureSmith.org