

# ◆ Frederick Douglass Memorial Cemetery Newsletter ◆

Welcome to the Friends of Frederick Douglass Memorial Cemetery newsletter. This quarterly newsletter will inform all stakeholders, descendants, and the public about the scope of work and ongoing progress at the cemetery.



Courtesy of W.W. Norton & Company

## History

Frederick Douglass Memorial Cemetery located at 1421 Wilkes Street in Alexandria, VA dates back to the early 1800s. Black residents of Alexandria named this burial ground after the great activist Frederick Douglass soon after he died in 1895.

Well over 2000 African Americans are buried here with several hundred born into slavery and then freed. Two hundred are children, some who were stillborn and some who lived very short lives. Records indicate that of 2000 buried here, approximately six to seven hundred headstones are present.



Photo taken by Michael Johnson

## Restoration Updates

Archaeologists from Wetlands Studies and Solutions, Inc. completed the work to document, move, and secure the gravestones this week. The gravestone conservator made a site visit to plan the work to repair gravestones that are found to be cracked or broken before they are replaced at the end of the project. This work will take place on site. The construction crew is currently working within the drainage ditch on the north side of the cemetery to regrade the outfall area and to install stones to armor the north embankment. Looking ahead to the next two weeks, the existing headwall at the end of the drain outlet will be removed. Work will begin at the north end on the installation of the new stormwater pipe. Overall, the project is on track with a couple weeks delay due to inclement weather.



## Additional Photos of Updates

Photos taken by Michael Johnson\*



\*Photo provided by Eleanor Breen



## Spotlight:

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### Char McCargo Bah



Photo provided by Char McCargo Bah

Char McCargo Bah is an investigative genealogist, author, writer and CEO and founder of Finding Things for U, LLC. Char is a native Alexandrian and has been doing genealogical research for African Americans since the 1980s, beginning with that of her own family. Since joining the D.C. Genealogical Society, a sister society of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, at the beginning of her career, Char has served as president and written over 40 articles for the society. Through her LLC, Char does genealogy for African American clients throughout the country and contracts out her services to institutions including the City of Alexandria, Virginia Theological Seminary, and Gunston Hall.

Char is motivated to continue this work by her passion for community and a sense of duty to preserve African American history and tell our stories.

### Introducing the Intern

Originally from South Florida and Jamaica, I have lived in the DMV since 2021, when I enrolled at American University to study Anthropology, Literature, and African American and Diaspora Studies.

My favorite part about being an intern has been doing the research needed to write about those buried at Douglass; it has allowed me to learn about them as individuals and also about the deep history of the Black community in Alexandria.

### E.G. Street (they/them)



Photo provided by EG Street

I am working on my Master's of Arts in Public Anthropology, which I plan to finish at the end of this Spring. For my Master's Thesis, I am working with the Douglass Cemetery restoration project to research how the mistreatment and neglect of Black cemeteries reflects the patterns of systemic racism that impact Black people throughout their lives. I am also focusing on the power of grief to disrupt those patterns, as descendant communities repair the physical sites of cemeteries and restore dignity to the dead and the living.

Reach out to me if you'd like to learn more about my research and/or would like to provide insights, comments, or suggestions on my research topic.

You can email me at [egstreet03@yahoo.com](mailto:egstreet03@yahoo.com)  
or call/text at 786-298-3483

## BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS

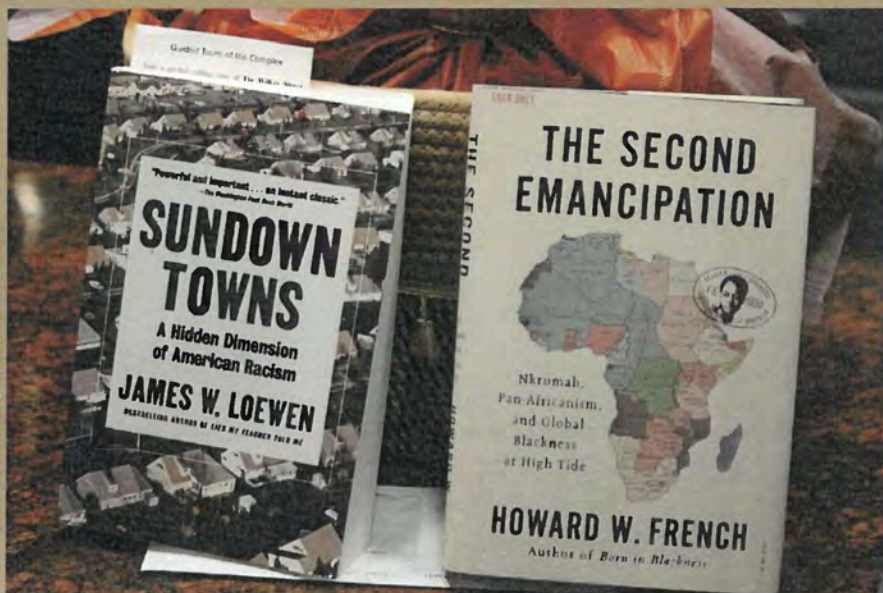


Photo taken by Michael Johnson

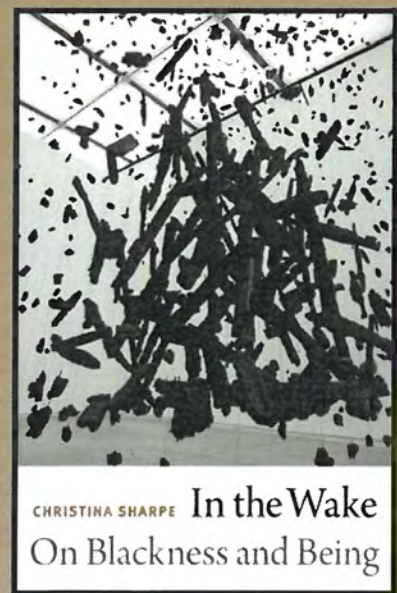


Photo by SZWalker.com

*Sundown Towns:  
A Hidden Dimension of  
American Racism* by  
James W. Loewen

*The Second Emancipation:  
Nkrumah, Pan-Africanism,  
and Global Blackness at High  
Tide* by Howard W. French

*In the Wake:  
On Blackness and  
Being* by Christina  
Sharpe

## Contacts

Photo taken by EG Street



**For more information that your organization might need, please contact:**

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Michael Johnson  
Steve Nelson  
Dr. Darnella Nelson  
Stephanie Johnson  
Bennie Evans  
Verdella Jennings  
Katherine Benjamin

## Special Thanks

To Historic Alexandria Archaeology Museum's Dr. Eleanor Breen and Dr. Ben Skolnik; Michael Johnson, Francesco de Salvatore, Char McCargo Bah, Audrey Davis, David Heiby, Kerry Reed, Dr. Elizabeth Clark-Lewis, and E.G. Street for their contributions



Photo taken by Michael Johnson

## References

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- **Alexandria African American Hall of Fame**  
<https://www.alexandriaafricanamericanhalloffame.org/>
- **Alexandria Virginia Historic Sites**  
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic-sites/douglass-memorial-cemetery>
- **Douglass Memorial Cemetery**  
<https://www.alexandriava.gov/historic-sites/douglass-memorial-cemetery>
- **The Fight to Preserve Douglass Cemetery**  
<https://alextimes.com/2021/11/the-fight-to-preserve-douglass-cemetery/>
- **Social Responsibility Group**  
<https://www.socialresponsibilitygroup.org>
- **The Black Cemetery Network**  
<https://blackcemeterynetwork.org/>  
dave@gravestonestories.com  
(703.869.0872)
- **Concerns Growing Over Flooding at Historically Black Cemetery in Alexandria**  
<https://www.wusa9.com/article/news/local/virginia/flooding-at-historically-black-cemetery-in-old-town-remains-an-ongoing-issue-for-families-and-neighbors/65-02163cf6-5098-4fe4-9b01-f998bf91384b>