

A New Oral History Project Begins.

We Need Your Help!

▶▶ In 2013, the Independence Seaport Museum unveiled a new flagship exhibition, *Tides of Freedom: The African Presence on the Delaware River (Tides of Freedom)*, conceived by a committee of leading African American scholars and curated by Dr. Tukufu Zuberi, the University of Pennsylvania's Lasry Family Professor of Sociology and Africana Studies.

We are now planning to expand this experience by undertaking a new, multi-year oral history project, *Breaking Uncommon Ground on the Delaware River (Breaking Uncommon Ground)*.



Independence
Seaport Museum

Meet Paul D. Best, Director, Oral History Project



Paul's experience in youth work, education, and the visual & folk arts have forged a unique path, allowing him to impact communities worldwide through education, photography, and storytelling.

He has served two terms as president of Keepers of the Culture, Inc., Philadelphia's Afrocentric Storytelling group. He currently serves as a Museum Educator at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology. Through workshops, tours, and community outreach, he engages visitors of all ages to see their own connection to humans of the past and stay curious. These two roles strongly align with his passions, for he believes that the entire world is a museum – a space filled with stories and wonder.

Paul firmly believes that true liberation for all people can only occur when we honor our ancestors and respect and consult our elders.

FAQs



What is *Breaking Uncommon Ground*?

Our current exhibition, *Tides of Freedom*, tells of Black history along the Delaware River from the 1800s-1920s. *Breaking Uncommon Ground* is the project to expand this exhibit to cover the years 1950-2015.

What will the expansion cover?

We are sharing the untold stories of:

1. Black people who worked in labor unions along the Delaware River.
 - A. Examples: Employees of shipyards, boats, dock workers, etc.
2. Black women who did work connected to the Delaware River.
 - A. Examples: Sold food or other items, babysat river workers' children, worked in offices that operated on or were located near the Delaware River.
3. Anyone who lost their home or business when the I-95 highway was built in Philadelphia.
 - A. Example: People who protested demolition; Businesses that were closed or families who were forced to relocate.

I didn't work on the Delaware River or live on the waterfront. I know people from this group, but they have passed away.

Their stories are still out there, and you can help us share them by spreading the word. Here are some places you can bring it up:

- Your place of worship
- Social Clubs or Organizations
- Your family, friends, and neighbors
- Any senior citizens you know

By using word-of-mouth communication, you can help make *Breaking Uncommon Ground* a lasting contribution to Philadelphia's history.



► Depicted above is a clew, also known as a sail corner. This is something that James Forten, a black Philadelphian sailmaker, would have worked with. Forten's story tells us the long history of black presence along the Delaware River.

Contact Paul

If you know anyone or are from one of these groups, you can reach out to Paul here:

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