



Chester County

Juneteenth Festival

Journeying Towards Freedom

Chester County, Pennsylvania, plans a county-wide commemoration of Juneteenth, the oldest-known celebration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Four partners ---the Chester County Historic Preservation Society, Voices Underground, the Chester County History Center, and the Chester County Planning Commission -- are working together to present an array of programs and public events that honor the courage and commitment of residents, past and present, in support of freedom and equality for all.

Juneteenth 2021 will highlight the history of Chester County's role in the Underground Railroad and the Anti-Slavery movement. In the mid-19th century, Chester County became a hotbed for the Underground Railroad, with free Blacks, escaping slaves, and White abolitionists working together to aid runaways on their perilous journey to freedom. This commitment to social justice has continued through the County's history, seen in decades of brave efforts to secure equal rights and social justice that continue to echo in today's campaigns.

The Festival will kick off on June 12 with a United Faith Community Celebration, led by area clergy. The Festival 's keynote events will take place in and around Kennett Square the weekend of June 18, featuring nationally-known speakers, performances, gatherings, and tours.

The annual Town Tours and Village Walks, all dedicated to the Festival's theme, will begin on June 17. Local programs and celebrations will be held in communities across the County from June 12 through July 3 and will include an array of visits to historic sites, walking tours, speakers, and family programs. A full schedule of events will be available in late spring.

For more information about the Juneteenth Festival visit our website.



Learn more at www.vuproject.org/juneteenth

Dr. Joshua Bennett



Joshua Bennett is the Mellon Assistant Professor of English and Creative Writing at Dartmouth College. He is the author of three books of poetry and literary criticism: *The Sobbing School* (Penguin, 2016)—which was a National Poetry Series selection and a finalist for an NAACP Image Award—*Being Property Once Myself* (Harvard University Press, 2020) and *Owed* (Penguin, 2020). Bennett holds a Ph.D. in English from Princeton University, and an M.A. in Theatre and Performance Studies from the University of Warwick, where he was a Marshall Scholar.

Bennett has recited his original works at venues such as the Sundance Film Festival, the NAACP Image Awards, and President Obama's Evening of Poetry and Music at the White House. He has also performed and taught creative writing workshops at hundreds of middle schools, high schools, colleges, and universities across the United States, as well as in the U.K. and South Africa. Currently, he is the 2020-2021 Visiting Scholar at Friends Seminary in New York City.

Bennett's writing has been published in *The Best American Poetry*, *The New York Times*, *The Paris Review* and elsewhere. He has received fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, the Ford Foundation, MIT, and the Society of Fellows at Harvard University. His first work of narrative nonfiction, *Spoken Word: A Cultural History*, is forthcoming from Knopf.



Caroline Randall Williams



Williams, a native of Nashville, Tennessee, graduated from St. Paul's School (New Hampshire), Class of 2006, and later graduated from Harvard University, class of 2010. After graduation, she spent two years as an instructor in the Teach for America program. She received an MFA in creative writing from the University of Mississippi in 2015. She is the daughter of Alice Randall and Avon Williams III.

One of her great-great-grandfathers is Edmund Pettus, US senator of Alabama, senior officer of the Confederate States Army and grand dragon of the Ku Klux Klan; he fathered her great-grandfather Will. She has stated, "The black people I come from were owned and raped by the white people I come from."

She is the great granddaughter of Arna Bontemps, the African-American poet, novelist and noted member of the Harlem Renaissance, and the granddaughter of Avon Williams, the Nashville lawyer and key leader of the city's civil rights movement.

In January 2015, she was named by Southern Living magazine as one of the "50 People Changing the South in 2015." In 2015, she joined the faculty of West Virginia University as an assistant professor. In 2016 she was appointed Writer-In-Residence at Fisk University. In the Fall of 2019, she joined the faculty of Vanderbilt University as the Writer-In-Residence of Medicine, Health, and Society.

