

Revelations

Using African-American spirituals, song-sermons, gospel songs and holy¹ blues, Alvin Ailey's *Revelations* fervently explores the places of deepest grief² and holiest joy in the soul.

More than just a popular dance work, it has become a cultural treasure, beloved by generations of fans.

1. sacred **2.** pain, sadness

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A timeline of the history of slavery in the USA

Early 1600s: First records of slaves

Around 1780: The Underground Railroad

Slaves from southern states fled to states where slavery was not allowed, mainly to the northern "free states" or to Canada.

1793: Fugitive Slave Act: White people had to help slave owners get their fugitive slaves back.

1808: Importing slaves becomes legal.

1863: President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation that freed four million slaves.

1861-1865: Civil War

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Solomon Northup

I am Solomon Northup. I am a free man; a resident of Saratoga, New York. The residence also of my wife and children who are equally free. I have papers. You have no right whatsoever to detain me...

**File 19 p. 190 • A tribute to Women’s History Month: Harriet Tubman
Underground Railroad State Park opens**

Hardy visitors who braved the cold to attend the grand opening weekend of the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad State Park and Visitor Center got a taste of the bleak¹ winds and open country² that Tubman maneuvered when she led family and friends from slavery to freedom more than 150 years ago.

The atmosphere inside was anything but bleak. The state park that will now anchor³ Tubman’s contribution to American history was alive and brimming⁴ with energy, curiosity and reverence for the abolitionist, Union Army spy, and women’s rights advocate who continues to inspire people around the world, almost 200 years after her birth in Dorchester County.

Marvin Winans, keynote speaker at a breakfast in honor of Tubman said, “We cannot hide ourselves in our own comfort and not recognize and tell the stories of how we got here.”

“What I noticed about Harriet Tubman is that once she was free, she could have kicked back and said, ‘I made it’,” Winans said, recalling Tubman’s repeated trips back into the South to rescue more than 70 persons and give instructions to more than 100 others.

“How free do you think you are when someone who looks like you is not free?” Winans asked the audience.

Deborah Bailey, *The Baltimore Times*, 2017

1. cold **2.** *paysage dégagé* **3.** *ancrer* **4.** *débordant*

File 19 p. 191 • The Underground Railroad

Introduction: The scene takes place in Georgia. Cora and Caesar are two slaves who have decided to run away from their plantation to go north on the Underground Railroad. They are soon joined by an unexpected traveler.

They had made it only a small ways when they heard the voice and stopped. Cora looked at Caesar for a cue¹. He held his hands out and listened. It was not an angry voice. Or a man's voice.

Caesar shook his head when he realized the identity of the culprit. "Lovey – shush!" Lovey had enough sense to be quiet once she saw them. "I knew you were up to something²," she whispered when she caught up. [...]

"You get on back before you ruin us," Caesar said.

"I'm going where you going," Lovey said.

Cora frowned. If they sent Lovey back, the girl might be caught sneaking³ into her cabin. Lovey was not one to keep her tongue still. She didn't want to be responsible for the girl.

"He's not going to take the three of us," Caesar said.

"He knows I'm coming?" Cora asked.

He shook his head.

"Then two surprises as good as one," she said. She lifted her sack.

"We got enough food, anyway."

He had all night to get used to the idea. It would be a long time before they slept. Eventually, Lovey stopped crying out at every sudden noise from the night creatures, or when she stepped too deep in the water, but she did not recognize the other side of her friend, whatever had overtaken the girl and made her run. But every slave thinks about it. In the morning and in the afternoon and in the night. Dreaming of it. Every dream a dream of escape even when it didn't look like it. When it was a dream of new shoes. The opportunity stepped up and Lovey availed herself, heedless of the whip⁴.

The three of them wended⁵ west, tromping through the black water. Cora couldn't have led them. She didn't know how Caesar did it. But he was ever surprising her. Of course he had a map in his head and could read stars as well as letters.

Colson Whitehead, *The Underground Railroad*, 2016

1. *signal*
2. *quelque chose se tramait*
3. *se faufiler*
4. *sans de soucier du fouet*
5. *se diriger vers*

File 19 p. 192 • Black celebrities share the importance of Juneteenth

By Christina Santi – On June 19, 2018

Juneteenth is a holiday celebrated by Black Americans on June 19, commemorating the abolition of slavery in the United States.

Many African-Americans view the day as their rightful Independence Day over the national holiday on July 4, throwing parades and events. Many Black politicians and entertainers flocked to their social media platforms to spread awareness of the day and to honor how far we have come since the days of slavery.

www.ebony.com

What do you remember, Phillis? What do you remember?"

They are always asking me that. As if I would tell anyone about my life before. The few good memories I have I cherish and hold fast.

My people believe that if you give away your memories, you give away of your spirit.

It was Nathaniel asking now. We were at breakfast before the rest of the family came down. "If you can remember anything about your life before, you should tell these men today," he said, looking up from the newspaper he was reading. Today I must go to the governor's mansion. To stand before a committee of the most noble men in Boston to prove that the poetry that I have written is mine.

Me, Phillis Wheatley. A nigra slave who was taken into the home of the Wheatleys as a kindness. And who responded to that kindness by doing something few well-born white women would do in this year of 1772.

Put her thoughts to paper. Write down the workings of her mind. Now, because I had made so bold¹ as to do such a thing, I must stand before these shining lights of the colony today and answer their questions.

Had I truly written this poetry? Or stolen it from somewhere? Was I passing myself off² as a lie? The mere³ thought of their questions made my innards⁴ turn over.

"Don't be anxious, Phillis," Nathaniel was saying.

"I'm not anxious."

Ann Rinaldi, *Hang a Thousand Trees with Ribbons: The Story of Phillis*

Wheatley, 2005