



Stories



**Club 277 with
Juno Award
Winning Singer
Liberty Silver**



**Freedom
Achiever
Spotlight:
Haileigh Smith**



**Mac Simpson
Award
Applications due
June 11, 2021**

About Us

The Amherstburg Freedom Museum is a curated archive that preserves and shares Amherstburg's stories of the Underground Railroad, and the compassion and solidarity it took to make this network possible.

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April 2021



Club 277 with Liberty Silver

On April 21, 2021 at 7pm, the Amherstburg Freedom Museum will host a night at "Club 277" which will feature a fantastic performance from Juno Award Winning singer, Liberty Silver. Liberty recently spoke with us about her impressive career, which includes being the first Black woman to receive a Juno Award and opening for Bob Marley at Madison Square Garden at the young age of 12. Impressively, Liberty was also on Star Search. At the time, Liberty was with a small record label called BMG Records, but went on Star Search to get an American deal. According to Liberty, there were no Black Canadian radio stations at that point to share her music so it was a challenge to be discovered in the American market. Liberty said "I had to take my career into my own hands." When she appeared on Star Search, Liberty playfully said "BMG told me not to hit those high notes because it would scare people, but I did it anyways."



At the age of roughly 18, Liberty was nominated for four Juno Awards and she added that the night went by very quickly, but slowed down toward the end. That night Liberty won two out of the four awards she was nominated for, including a Reggae Award which she missed receiving because she was late to the ceremony. When she arrived, everyone was congratulating her but she did not realize it was because she had won, but instead thought it was because she was nominated. At the Juno Awards, she also performed her song "Lost Somewhere Inside Your Love" which Liberty says was a song that was popular among local DJs, particularly a certain DJ from CHUM radio "who must have loved it because he kept playing it."

Following the Juno Awards, Liberty spent most of her time playing in bands and has collaborated with artists from several genres of music. Liberty even collaborated with a country artist and won an award for it.

The Talking Drum

The Talking Drum is published monthly by the Amherstburg Freedom Museum. Contributions, story ideas, suggestions and feedback are always welcome. Please contact Mary-Katherine Whelan at curator@amherstburgfreedom.org

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Club 277 with Liberty Silver



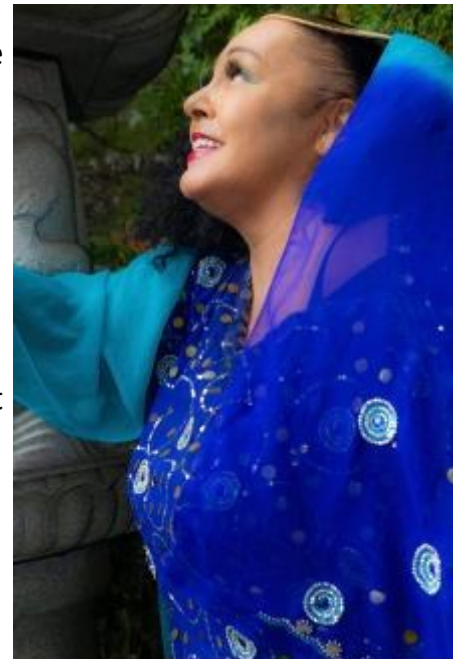
We asked Liberty, of all the awards you've won, which one is the most meaningful to you and your career. She admitted that it was difficult to choose just one award and said that certain awards are meaningful for different reasons. Her Juno Awards, for example, made her a national person and, at that point, she knew that was what she was meant to do, but another important award was the African Achievement Award because she was recognized by her people. Ultimately, she said that "when you connect with people and when they say that my song saved their life or impacted their lives. That's the real reward."

We also asked Liberty if she has a favourite artist that she's performed with or a favourite performance, and she quickly responded that her favourite performance was "Tears Are Not Enough" which was a 1985 charity performance to raise funds for famine relief in Ethiopia. Impressively, the music producer David Foster discovered Liberty at a club while she was singing and asked her to perform, lamenting the fact that there were no other Black performers involved. While singing "Tears Are Not Enough," Liberty performed with an impressive group of artists including Joni Mitchell, Neil Young, and Bryan Adams.

As for Liberty's favourite artist she's performed with, she said Harry Belafonte whom she opened for at Mackenzie Hall. She said that Harry Belafonte was so kind and remembers him fondly. Liberty told us that while she was opening for Belafonte, he asked her how long she was given to perform. Liberty told him 20 minutes and Belafonte said "Take 30."

Liberty prefers to sing in club venues as opposed to stadiums and explained that in smaller club venues there is a different energy and there are more opportunities for people to be part of the performance. She adds that there is "an exchange of energy that you've never felt before and that's what you want to do when you share yourself. You really connect with people."

Liberty is excited to perform at Club 277 and says that our audience should expect a lot of R&B, up-tempo songs with some strong ballads and a few original songs. Liberty added "This is a feel-good event and we'll have fun." Liberty also expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to perform for the ancestors and loves that people from all over, including Toronto, will learn about the Amherstburg Freedom Museum and its history. (See page 6 for Club 277 Poster).





Freedom Achiever Spotlight: Haileigh Smith

Name: Haileigh Sophia Smith

Age: 15 years

School and Class: Huntington High School, Grade 10

Hometown: Huntington, NY

Parents: Byron Smith (formerly of Windsor, ON) and Katherine (Barnett) Smith

Question: What do you want to do when you grow up?

Answer: I want to go into the medical field, either a surgeon or dermatologist.

Question: What extra-curricular activities do you participate in?

Answer: I volunteer with Habitat for Humanity and Key Club at school. I am also a member of the National Honor Society for English. I play on the school softball, varsity volleyball, and fencing teams. Volleyball is my favorite sport overall but when accounting for team dynamics, fencing is my favorite. Sometimes when playing a team sport there is competition within the team members. When you're on the (fencing) strip it's individual. You're on your own against the opponent, but your wins and losses contribute to the team, so everyone is cheering you on to win. I also like fencing because it's an aggressive and calculating sport, so you must be quick and strategic.



Haileigh, right, on the fencing strip gets a touch on her opponent.

The Talking Drum wanted to speak to Haileigh about winning first place honors in the 2020 Huntington High School National History Day contest. Haileigh created a website about Wendell Smith, originally from Detroit, Michigan, who broke the colour barrier in sports journalism and is a member of the writer's wing in the National Baseball Hall of Fame.

Question: What was your inspiration or why did you choose the topic "Wendell Smith: The Fight for Racial Equality On And Off The Field" for your webpage?

Answer: When the theme of "Breaking Barriers in History" was first released, I immediately knew I wanted to explore the over-coming of a racial barrier. I had figured that the issue of race and inequality has been prominent throughout the globe for centuries,

but it's still one that continues to change and develop alongside civilization. I can remember sitting at my computer the week before I had to submit my topic, and I had just settled on the *Loving v. Virginia* case, which led to the legalization of mixed-race marriages. For whatever reason, I was accepting of the topic itself and recognized that the academic portion was there, but I wasn't passionate about it, and I think I realized that when I kept going back and researching other topics to see where the *Loving vs. Virginia* case stood. It wasn't until my mom mentioned Wendell Smith, did it finally click. Suddenly, I had a topic that clearly matched the theme, had plenty of information and achievements, and had that personal connection that allowed me to run with the idea.

Question: You and Wendell have the same last name. Is that a coincidence?

Answer: No. My great grandfather is Wendell's first cousin.

Question: If you could have a conversation with one historical Black figure, who would it be and what would you want to talk about?



Freedom Achiever Spotlight: Haileigh Smith

Answer: It seems rather biased but I would probably choose Wendell. I'd want to know how a man, whose life and career was altered by racism at the very beginning, found a way to integrate himself so closely into the baseball community. Research can help you understand the major events in a person's life, but it can't explain to you the strength of the emotional and professional connections they formed. That sort of information has to come from the individual themselves.

Question: What do you want people to take away after reading Wendell's story on your webpage?

Answer: What I tried to represent through Wendell and through his story is that, you don't always have to be the face of a movement to be successful, or to achieve the goals you aspire to reach. Yes, the part Jackie Robinson played made him a legend, but it was Wendell who gave his all to make sure he got there, and his work to break the color barrier in sports journalism was notable even before he found Robinson. My project is intended to acknowledge the contributions of the Wendell Smiths in the world; the people working to build something behind the scenes, and who are equally if not more important than the contributors in the spotlight.

Visit <https://site.nhd.org/15180034/home> to view Haileigh's webpage and learn more about Wendell Smith.

Anti-Black Racism Student Leadership Experience Grant

The University of Windsor is offering an **Anti-Black Racism Student Leadership Experience Grant**. There will be five (5) **\$10,000** awards distributed. The application deadline is **April 15, 2021**. To learn more, <https://www.uwindsor.ca/dailynews/2021-03-23/grants-foster-student-leadership-against-racism>





A Night at Club 277



AMHERSTBURG
FREEDOM MUSEUM

A NIGHT AT CLUB 277

KING STREET

FEATURING JUNO AWARD
WINNING SINGER

Liberty Silver



- WITH A DANCE PERFORMANCE FROM JOLIE AND COMPANY
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Mac Simpson Award Applications due June 11, 2021

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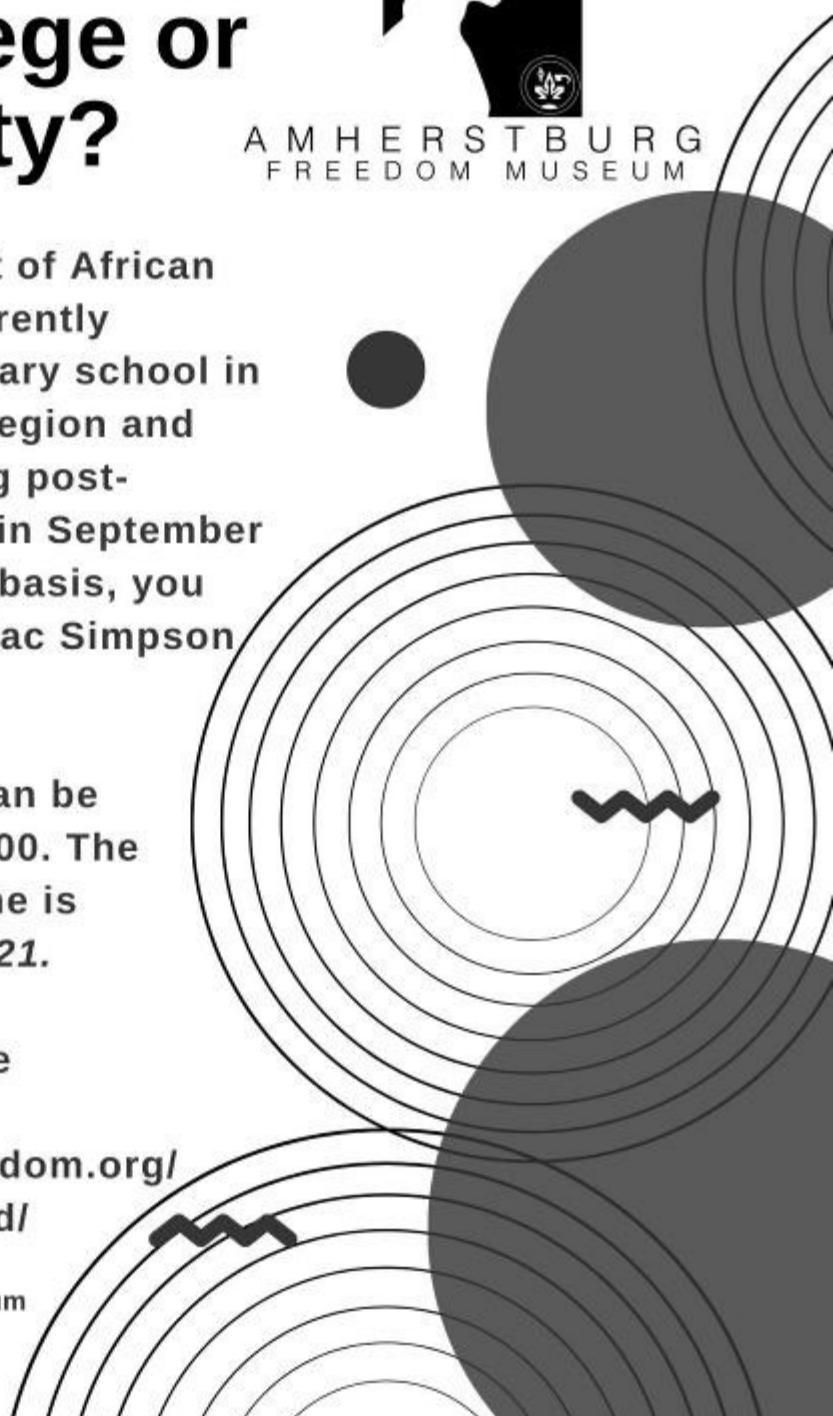
AMHERSTBURG
FREEDOM MUSEUM

If you are a student of African descent who is currently attending a secondary school in the Essex County region and will be commencing post-secondary studies in September 2021 on a full-time basis, you can apply for the Mac Simpson Award!

Eligible students can be awarded up to \$1,500. The submission deadline is *Friday, June 11, 2021.*

Applications can be downloaded at amherstburgfreedom.org/mac-simpson-award/

Amherstburg Freedom Museum
519-736-5433
amherstburgfreedom.org





A Message of Solidarity from AFM Vice President, Barb Porter

Dear Amherstburg Freedom Museum Supporter,

As a Black woman who has experienced discrimination in my life, I am appalled that here we are in 2021, and the degree of racism and intolerance has spread as well as increased in intensity, frequency, and severity. It's beyond words to express how devastating the level of racism has filtered into our school system and in our day to day lives affecting our children's self esteem, sense of security and in some cases, affecting the trajectory of their futures. As an aunt of two Asian Black nephews, I felt the need to express my thoughts with you. Our youth are our future. Please speak out against racism! As MLK says, "Racism is man's gravest threat to man—the maximum of hatred for a minimum of reason."

Sincerely,

Barb Porter

Amherstburg Freedom Museum Vice President and Fundraising Chair

AFM logo Face Masks



We've added our AFM logo face masks to our gift shop! Only \$10! We are also offering a limited time offer!

Purchase any three (3) small AFM Logo items (pen, magnet, face mask) from our giftshop and receive \$5 off your order! Click here to shop on our online store

<https://amherstburg-freedom-museum.myshopify.com/>

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Thank You Charitable Gaming Windsor & Paradise Gaming Centre!

Amherstburg Freedom Museum would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to **Charitable Gaming Windsor** and **Paradise Gaming Centre** for their continued support. Throughout the years, they have helped us keep the Museum open and running, and allowed for us to continue to offer our programming throughout the pandemic. Thank you!

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