



## Stories



***The Loss of a Trailblazer, Freida Parker Steele***



***Say Hello to our Newest Board Director, Marcia!***



***Freedom Achievers Program***

## 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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**October 2019**



## Freida Parker Steele



Recently, we shared the sad news that a pillar of the community, Freida Parker Steele, passed away on September 22nd. The Parker family is full of trailblazers and Freida was no exception. While attending Patterson Collegiate, she won awards for scholastics and athletics. She also graduated as class president, which was the first time that someone of African descent claimed that honour.

Her impact on nursing is also significant. Shortly before she graduated from Hotel Dieu of the St. Joseph School of Nursing in Windsor, Black Canadian women were barred from attending nursing school. As a result of this discrimination, the case was taken to the Ontario Human Rights Commission and in 1948 Colleen L. Campbell and Marian V. Overton became the first Black women to graduate from Hotel Dieu. It was not long after, in 1950, that Freida and Cecile Wright would graduate, becoming the third and fourth Black students to accomplish this.

Freida was also involved with several organizations. She was one of the first volunteers for Windsor's Hospice, in addition to being a Board Director for the Museum and on the Board of Maryvale. She was also the secretary-treasurer for the Windsor and District Institute of Human Rights, which was an organization that drew attention to the problems of minority groups. While in this organization, Freida worked alongside executive members, Alex Maxwell and the late Dr. Howard McCurdy.

Freida and her husband, Eugene Steele, who was the first Black firefighter in Windsor, were also part of The Guardian Club which brought attention to discrimination in Windsor and surrounding areas. This organization performed a series of test cases, particularly with discriminatory housing practices. For example, the group would send a Black Canadian couple to view a house or apartment, in addition to another couple, but they would be white. What they found was that the white couple would be offered the rental, while the former couple would be told that the property was no longer available. These test cases drew a lot of attention to discriminatory practices in the area.

We wish comfort to Freida's children Janice, Alan, Dianne, Cherie, Gina and Deborah, along with other family and friends. Recently, Freida's daughter Dianne shared a lesson passed on in the Parker Family: "Give what you can to help those in need. Share what you've got." These are certainly words that Freida lived by.

### 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](mailto:curator@amherstburgfreedom.org)

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## Welcome to the Board of Directors, Marcia!



We are happy to introduce our newest Board Director, Marcia Pivotte. Here is a bit more about her ... in her own words.

I was born on the 5th of May, 1976 in Toronto, Ontario. My father is from Trinidad and Tobago and my mother from Guyana, South America. I am happily married to a very supportive husband and blessed with 3 beautiful children and 4 foster children. I have lived in Amherstburg for almost 17

years, and the serenity gives me the ability to raise and train my children the way I want to, with its diversity allowing them to learn from people of all tribes and color.

I started my social work career course at the University of Windsor in 2002, but had the university transfer all my credits to St. Clair College so that I can get my diploma. I previously owned Creoles Catering restaurant and am presently working as a direct support professional for Christian Horizons and Community living. I also empower individuals working through crisis intervention. My joy and passion are networking and making sure I leave a positive impact in the lives I touch.

I am very resilient and resourceful, and I love to work with children, women, the old and the vulnerable. In the past I have also been involved with running programs to help the improvement of the Black community. I also lend my services to my community helping women in need and children in crisis. I work along with the Homestay Canada Program where I get to accommodate international students, mentoring them while teaching them the English language and the culture in Canada. I also co-run a youth group called Black Kids in Action, with the aim of getting youth off electronics and encouraging them to be creative using arts, dance and drama. I am also a founding member of Women Inspiring Women. I am passionate about youth and women and hope some day I can achieve my goal of running an organization that can be a voice for them.

The Amherstburg Freedom Museum, for me, is an avenue to learn more. I strongly believe with my personal experience, along with my formal education, dedication and commitment, I can be of great value with planning events and making negotiation with other investors.





## Freedom Achievers Program Welcomes Dwane Casey!

THE AMHERSTBURG FREEDOM MUSEUM IN PARTNERSHIP  
WITH THE AMHERSTBURG COMMUNITY FOUNDATION PRESENTS

# FREEDOM ACHIEVERS

Where Dwane Casey, Head Coach of the Detroit Pistons,  
will launch our Speaker Series by discussing  
Freedom in the 21st Century

**OCTOBER 12, 2019  
11AM - 1:30PM**

**LIBRO CREDIT UNION CENTRE  
COMMUNITY ROOM  
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[www.freedom-achievers-kickoff.eventbrite.ca](http://www.freedom-achievers-kickoff.eventbrite.ca)

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## Freedom Achievers Program

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On October 12th, at the Libro Centre, the Amherstburg Freedom Museum will launch its Freedom Achievers Program, which developed out of our 2017 Amherstburg Freedom Summit. The Summit welcomed young persons of colour and asked them to discuss the challenges they face, but also solutions to create positive change. We are implementing their suggestions through our Freedom Achievers Program which consists of two parts: a mentorship program that connects mentees with successful mentors, with professional experience, who will provide valuable advice and guidance as the mentees transition from university/college to their chosen career, and a high-profile speaker series. Our first speaker is Dwane Casey, Coach of the Detroit Pistons, who will share career advice, but also how he overcame obstacles in order to achieve success.

**Seating is Limited. Tickets for the general public are \$10 for adults and \$5 for students. Tickets can be purchased on [Eventbrite.ca](https://www.eventbrite.ca) or by calling 519-736-5433.** Free admission for registered Mentors and Mentees. If interested in registering as a mentee or mentor, please call 519-736-5433.

## Happy Birthday to Us!

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**A big thank you to everyone who visited the museum on our 44th birthday, include Amherstburg Coucillor, Don McArthur. You all made our special day even better!**





## Freedom Achievers Program—Donate Today!

### *BLACK HISTORY, UNIVERSAL INSPIRATION*

#### Dear Freedom Achievers Supporter,



The town of Amherstburg has one of Southern Ontario's richest histories, especially when discussing its significance on the Underground Railroad. The Amherstburg Freedom Museum's Nazrey A.M.E. Church was a haven for countless African Americans fleeing enslavement and offered these newcomers the assistance they needed to start their new life in freedom. This Church remains a tribute to the bravery and perseverance of Black settlers.

It was Mac and Betty Simpson's dream to build a museum that preserved our heritage and shared Black history with the world. They believed that social, economic and educational problems could be addressed more effectively by people with a greater self-awareness and pride in their own history. Our goal is to share this impactful history with people of all ages, which is why we hosted The Amherstburg Freedom Summit that welcomed young persons of colour and asked them to discuss the challenges they face, but also solutions to create positive change.

A prevailing suggestion was a mentorship program and speaker series, which is why we have created the Freedom Achievers Program. Our initiative includes a mentoring program that will recruit successful achievers as mentors in professional fields such as First Responders, S.T.E.M., Arts & Entertainment, Education, Legal, Medical, Business & Finance. The mentoring sessions will provide insight into career options and actively engage with mentees. We will also host a High-Profile Speakers Series called "Achieving Freedom in the 21st Century" that welcomes at least four diverse high-profile community builders to discuss the challenges they faced and how they challenged issues such as racism, gender inequality and homophobia to create positive change.

We are partnering with the Amherstburg Community Foundation on this event and we are thrilled that Dwane Casey, Head Coach of the Detroit Pistons, will kick off our High-Profile Speakers Series, but we need your help to make this happen. Even the smallest donation can help us achieve our goal of \$39,000. To donate, go to [amherstburgfreedom.org](http://amherstburgfreedom.org) or call the Museum, 519-736-5433. Let's work together to create a path to success for the youth of Essex County.

Sincerely,

*Monty Logan*

President, Amherstburg Freedom Museum  
[monty.logan@amherstburgfreedom.org](mailto:monty.logan@amherstburgfreedom.org)



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*Please note that as of January 2014, we cannot provide a tax receipt for subscription dues. Should you prefer a tax receipt, please indicate that you wish to make a donation instead. Subscription privileges will not apply.*



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