

Walking Artist Reaches New York Following the Underground Railroad And the Footsteps of Harriet Tubman

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Tottenville, NY – A Philadelphia man is expected to make the historic crossing of the Arthur Kill River this Saturday as part of his 265-mile walking journey from Maryland to the free state of New York retracing the footsteps of Harriet Tubman and other Freedom Seekers who crossed into the Empire state from Perth Amboy, New Jersey.

Ken Johnston, a Philadelphia-based walking artist, who responds to the call of social change and history by walking to put the Movement back in the Civil Rights Movement, is retracing the footsteps of Harriet Tubman's travel between known Underground Railroad communities from Maryland to Harlem, New York.

After experiencing numerous delays over the past year due to the pandemic, Johnston said he is excited to arrive in Tottenville this Saturday after walking more than 235-miles to reach the historic crossing. Tottenville was a major crossing point from Perth Amboy for Freedom Seekers attempting to reach New York City during the mid-19th century.

Once on Staten Island, Johnston will continue his trek north across the Island visiting points of historic interest for their role in helping fugitive slaves reach New York City before continuing their journey upstate.

New York City Itinerary

Upon reaching the North Shore of Staten Island, I will resume my walk from the Brooklyn Bridge Park on Saturday April 10, journeying to the Weeksville Heritage Center and later back across the Brooklyn Bridge to the African Burial Ground in lower Manhattan. On Sunday April 11, the walk will continue uptown to the former site of Seneca Village in Central Park, before concluding the walk to freedom in Harlem at the Harriet Tubman Memorial on Fredrick Douglas Boulevard.

Walking Background

Not new to long distance walking, in 2018, Johnston successfully completed a 400-mile solo walking journey across the Deep South from Selma, Alabama to Memphis, Tennessee to commemorate MLK 50th visiting the many places Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. either worked, pastored, or led peaceful protests.

Internationally, Johnston has walked across Ireland symbolically linking its short lived Civil Rights movement with the U.S., and across the Island of Puerto Rico on the second anniversary of Hurricane Maria following the trajectory of the storm's devastating path.

Johnston is seeking to share his story about walking the Harriet Tubman Underground Railroad Byway with groups in the New York City area. He expects to finish his walk with stops at the Weeksville Heritage Center, April 10; the African Burial Ground, Seneca Village, and concluding at the Harriett Tubman Memorial on April 11.

For more information or to suggest an idea, contact Ken at kjohnston16@yahoo.com or visit his website at www.ourwalktofreedom.com