



#DouglassWeek 2024 | Belfast, Northern Ireland & online

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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BELFAST ANNOUNCED AS #DOUGLASSWEEK 2024 HOST CITY

Organisers confirm plans for next year following a successful 2023 event series

Washington, DC - Organisers are thrilled to announce Belfast as the host city for the #DouglassWeek 2024 event series, which celebrates and commemorates the life of anti-slavery campaigner Frederick Douglass and other changemakers. The series, which will take place in spring of next year, will feature events staged both in person and online in Belfast and other sites in Northern Ireland, around the Republic of Ireland and in the USA. The announcement comes as a new Frederick Douglass statue, the first of Douglass in Europe, is unveiled today on Rosemary Street in Belfast city centre, near a site where Douglass spoke during his visits to the city.

Rochester, New York, was host of #DouglassWeek 2023 and its in-person events. Rochester is home to a statue of Douglass dedicated in 1899, the first statue of an African American erected in the United States. The #DouglassWeek 2023 schedule included additional in-person events in Cork and Kildare as well as online programming from participants in Washington, DC, Wexford, Belfast, and other sites in the UK and the US. The programme of over 40 events encompassed walks, talks, tours, workshops, a star-studded performance evening and a remembrance at the Douglass family gravesite in Rochester. Organisers were delighted with the support received from contributors and attendees from around the world and are looking

forward to further collaboration and co-creation in 2024. Confirmed 2024 partners include Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives, Anti-Slavery Tours Belfast and the John & Pat Hume Foundation, with more to be announced soon.

#DouglassWeek is developed and directed by the US non-profit organisation The Globe Lane Initiative, in partnership with a wide network of Douglass scholars along with artists, musicians, poets, community groups and activists. Each year, participants respond to the story of Douglass and other changemakers through historical, creative, academic, cultural and other lenses to relate the influence of history on contemporary topics and conversations.

Dr. Caroline Dunham-Schroeter and Kristin M. Leary are co-founders of #DouglassWeek/The Globe Lane Initiative. Dr. Dunham-Schroeter said, *“2023 was the third year of #DouglassWeek, which started in Cork in 2021 and was hosted by Washington, DC in 2022, and the festival is growing year-on-year. We had a lively and engaging schedule this year with lots of new and fascinating people who joined us to help organise and host in-person and online events around Ireland and in the US.”*

Leary continued, *“We were delighted with the response to #DouglassWeek in Rochester and online, especially the growing participation from younger people who are inspired by the remarkable lives of Frederick Douglass, the Douglass family and others. We are looking forward to working with many old and new partners to bring the week-long series of events to Belfast next year.”*

Kenneth B. Morris, Jr., great-great-great grandson of Frederick Douglass, Globe Lane Initiative board member and Co-Founder & President of Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives said, *“I am so excited to be in Belfast for #DouglassWeek next year, a place where my great ancestor found such friendship and support. My family is inspired by the rich history of Northern Ireland, too, and I can’t wait to be back in the city and learn more about the people and places that buoyed Frederick Douglass during his visit.”*

Frederick Douglass journeyed to Ireland in 1845-46 as part of a two-year speaking tour, giving powerful speeches denouncing slavery and raising funds for the abolitionist cause in the United States. He found a warm welcome as he traveled throughout the island, delivering lectures to enthusiastic crowds in Dublin, Cork, Wexford, Waterford, Youghal, Limerick and Belfast. Invited by the Belfast Anti-Slavery Society, Douglass gave 11 lectures in Belfast and returned to the city several times. In a letter to fellow abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison sent on

1st January 1846 from the Victoria Hotel (now the site of the Ulster University campus) in Belfast, Douglass wrote, *"I can truly say, I have spent some of the happiest moments of my life since landing in this country. I seem to have undergone a transformation. I live a new life."*

Douglass was just 27 years old when he travelled abroad, and had escaped enslavement in Maryland only seven years earlier. He described his time in Ireland as key to the development of his political thinking. Douglass returned home to America in 1847 and settled in Rochester, where he published his famous *The North Star* newspaper, raised his children and conducted a stop on the Underground Railroad with his wife Anna Murray Douglass, and continued an extraordinary career as a writer, orator, suffragist, diplomat and advisor to at least three US Presidents, including President Abraham Lincoln. Douglass is considered one of the founders of the civil rights movement in America and has inspired such prominent figures as Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., US Congressman John Lewis, US Secretary of State and Queen's University Chancellor Hillary Clinton and US Presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden.

More information on #DouglassWeek 2024 will be announced on www.douglasweek.org and on Twitter at @DouglassWeek24, @DouglassWeek on Instagram and Facebook. All #DouglassWeek events from the past three years are available free of charge at the #DouglassWeek YouTube channel, youtube.com/@douglasweek.

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Image attached: Receipt of a Proclamation from Mayor Malik Evans declaring #DouglassWeek in the City of Rochester, 10-16 July 2023. Left to right: Dr. Caroline Dunham-Schroeter, Co-Founder, #DouglassWeek/The Globe Lane Initiative; Kenneth B. Morris, Jr., Douglass descendant, The Globe Lane Initiative board member and Co-Founder & President, Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives; Dr. Shirley Green, Commissioner, Rochester, New York Department of Recreation and Human Services; Kristin M. Leary, Co-Founder, #DouglassWeek/The Globe Lane Initiative

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