



FLATCOATFILMS AND LEGION GROUP ARTS
PRESENTS

HOPE OF ESCAPE





FILM INFORMATION

2024, USA, 92 min, Not Rated, [TRAILER](#)

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[HOPE OF ESCAPE FILM STILLS](#)

"THAT GLIMMER OF OPTIMISM GIVES 'HOPE OF ESCAPE' A DIFFERENT TAKE ON THE BRUTAL SLAVE NARRATIVES" - NANTUCKET TODAY

HOPE OF ESCAPE



MIZAN KIRBY

KENDRA CHIDEYA

MARLEY GREGORY

FLATCOAT FILMS PRESENTS AN AMY GERBER FILM SOUND DESIGNER & ASSOCIATE PRODUCER HEIDI GERBER MUSIC BY TREY TOY DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ASHTON RAE CO-PRODUCER APRIL MARCELL PRODUCERS SUZANNE STROH AND AMY GERBER WRITTEN & DIRECTED BY AMY GERBER

HOPEOFESCAPEMOVIE.COM

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LOGLINE & SYNOPSIS

LOGLINE: Hope of Escape is a historical drama based on a true story that follows the incredible journey of an enslaved mother (Diana) and daughter (Cornelia) who must escape before they are sold and separated forever. Their only hope is to connect with their free relatives in the North and convince the most powerful abolitionists of their time to help them.

SYNOPSIS (100 WORDS): The patriarch of a rice plantation in Charleston, South Carolina abruptly dies, and his next of kin feud over the assets. A house servant all her life, Diana and her daughter are at the mercy of their new master who is conflicted about following his dead father's wishes – that Diana should be free. A star-studded “cast” of historic characters include abolitionist Julia Williams; famous orator Henry Highland Garnet, and renowned abolitionists William Lloyd Garrison and Lewis Tappan. Now a rescue effort, that involves hundreds of people, offers a ray of hope as the countdown begins for Diana and Cornelia's escape.

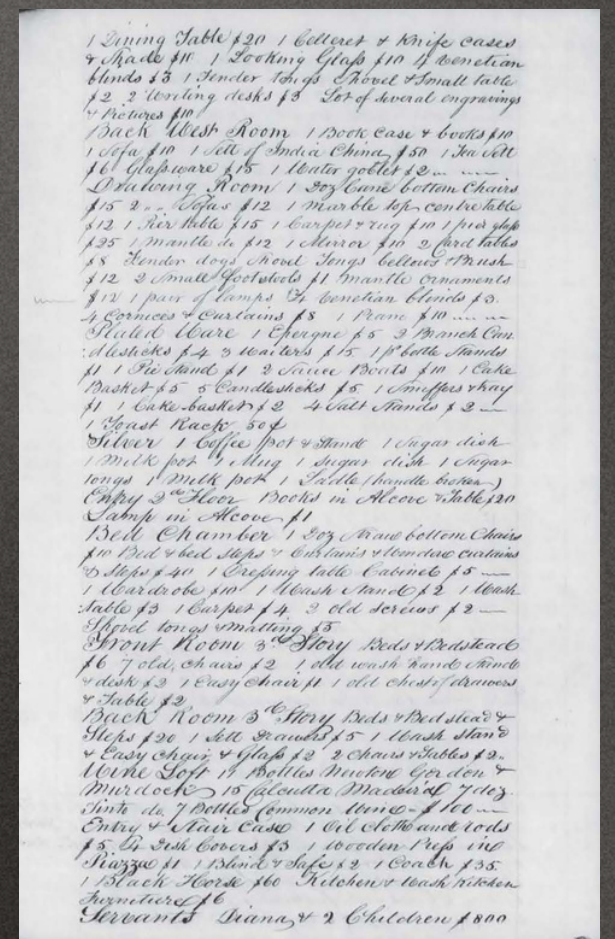
LONG DESCRIPTION

(135 WORDS)

Hope of Escape offers an alternative to the conventional Hollywood portrayal of slavery, diverging from the prevailing Hollywood trope of excessive violence and victimization. Instead, it delves into the lesser-known facet of slavery, the "above-ground Underground Railroad," a clandestine movement where enslaved individuals were liberated through ransom payments to their masters (by their families, mostly in the North), akin to Frederick Douglass's path to freedom.

It "took a village" to fundraise and emancipate an enslaved person. Hope of Escape vividly illustrates how Diana and Cornelia depended on a complex network of abolitionists, both within and beyond the United States.

Hope of Escape highlights the resilience of both free and enslaved families who, despite being separated by time and thousands of miles, managed to keep their connections, holding on to the hope of a brighter future.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Films about Black history are more crucial than ever, especially in light of the recent attacks on teaching Black history in schools and the pulling of books in libraries. I feel *Hope of Escape* is an important chapter in Black history and I hope its story will inspire others to continue to research, tell stories, and teach about the historic lives of Black people in America.

The urgency to tell more stories about women of color in history is clear. They are unsung heroes. There has been a positive increase of African American women protagonists in historical dramas over the years, such as *Hidden Figures* (2016), *Harriet* (2019), and *Passing* (2021). These films are few and far between and the need for more independent voices is paramount to level the playing field. I feel I am also making a statement to support other filmmakers: Should only studios with really big budgets have the right to tell these important stories in history? I think not. Luckily for me, all I have to do is look back into my own family history to find stories about courageous black women. I strive to combat the worn out and monolithic stereotypes of enslaved people being complete victims without agency. *Hope of Escape* reveals the complex lives of black women from a variety of experiences and perspectives that played out in antebellum south and in the abolitionist hubs of the north.

This film underscores the undeniable importance of historical narratives that focus on Black lives. It champions the heroism of enslaved Americans and courageous abolitionist allies who, in the tumultuous decades leading up to the Civil War, risked everything to combat the scourge of slavery. The story is made intensely personal by its connection to my own ancestry, with Cornelia and William as my great, great grandparents, and Diana as my great, great, great grandmother.



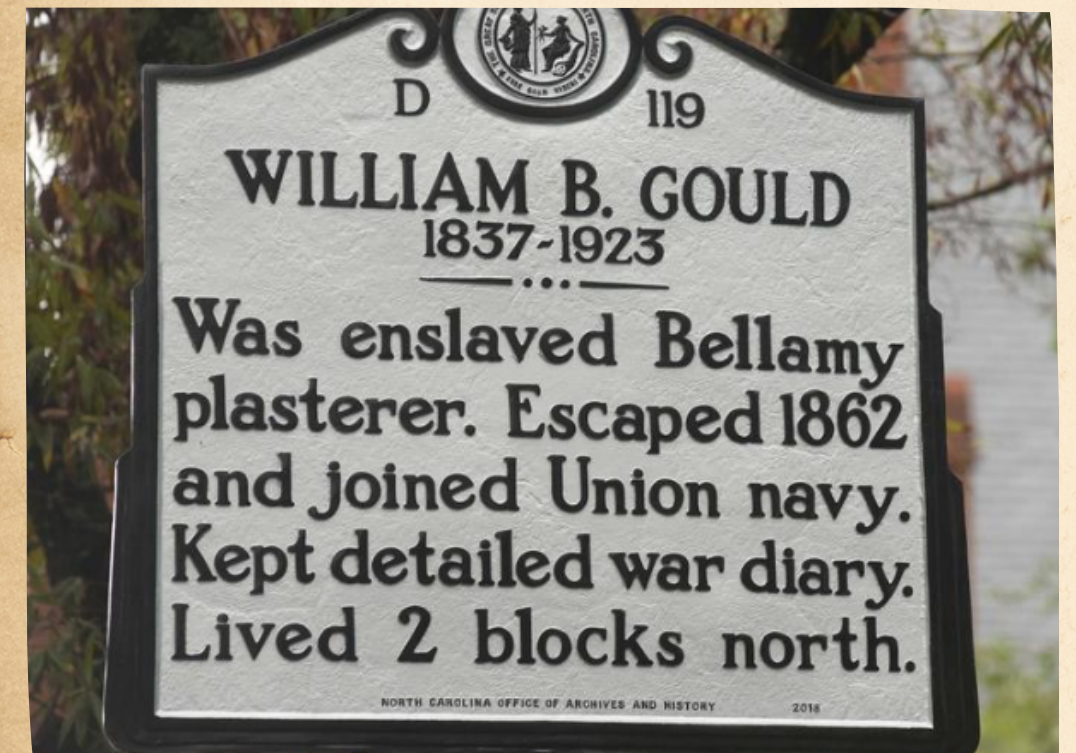
DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT CONTINUED

From my early years, I have known a great deal about my African American forebears, particularly the captivating life of William Benjamin Gould, affectionately known as "Wilby" in the film, my great, great grandfather. I happen to have access to a diary that Gould kept during his escape and continued to write as a sailor for the Union during the Civil War. I do feel, though, that the stories of William Gould and other male relatives have often dominated my family narrative and obscured stories about the amazing women in my family who were just as significant and brave. My film strives to highlight their experiences and to espouse their achievements.

Moreover, this film serves as an opportunity to shed light on the significant roles Black women played in the anti-slavery and abolitionist movements of the 19th century, roles that have long been obscured by their husbands' legacies. Julia Williams, my great, great aunt, a formidable anti-slavery advocate in her own right, remains overshadowed by her husband Henry Highland Garnet, despite her invaluable contributions in crafting his speeches and leading Black communities alongside him.

Although my film is a very personal exploration, I wish to add another perspective to our collective historical memory as a U.S. citizen and a descendant of slaves. Along this line, my film specifically explores the experiences of mixed-race slaves, sired by their white masters, with all of the advantages and disadvantages. The film also shows how it sometimes "took a village" to emancipate a slave, and how much my own family depended on a complex network of activists, both inside and outside the country. We see how, even though separated for many years and by thousands of miles, families (both free and enslaved) managed to keep connections with each other, holding onto hope that their circumstances would change for the better.

I believe that the women in my family, like countless others, carried a fierce hope within them during slavery, enduring so that their descendants, including myself, can continue the fight & aspire to escape the nightmare of institutional slavery. In a small way, Hope of Escape is part of that fight.



PROTAGONISTS



MIZAN KIRBY (DIANA)

Kirby is a New York based actress with decades of experience on the stage and screen. She has played a range of roles, such as Bessie Coleman in *Only the Sky is Free* (dir. Duane Jones), Valaida in *Hot Snow* (dir. Imani Douglas of DramaLeague), and Amanda in *Sherlock Holmes and the Hands of Othello*. Kirby also has extensive training in improvisation. A tribute to Kirby's work is highlighted in the book, *The History of African American Theatre*, by Errol G. Hill.



KENDRA CHIDEYA (CORNELIA)

Chideya is an Elon University grad with a degree in BFA Acting. She has performed in & directed several film & theater productions, including *School for Wives* (Enrique), *Dog Sees God* (Van's Sister U/S), and *Twelfth Night* (Attendant). She debuted virtually in theatrical production, "Pheromone: An Awkward Olfactory Inquiry," by Rachel Graf Evans & directed by Kevin Hoffmann. She wrapped on a film, set to premiere 2023, & landed the lead role in a mini-series now in production.



MARLEY GREGORY (WILBY)

Gregory is a theatrically trained actor with nearly a decade of experience. He has performed across the U.S. and twice in London, England at the International Youth Arts Festival (IYAF) during the summers of 2014 and 2015 at the Rose Theatre. His recent lead performance in *Garden of the Gods* garnered him a nomination for "Best Actor" at the Georgia Shorts Film Festival, where the film won "Best Horror". Disney has hired him to perform in shows at Disney World in Florida.

FILMMAKING TEAM



Amy Gerber - Writer, Director, Producer

Amy has produced and directed independent films for over 25 years. Her films have won honors at numerous national and international film festivals. She also has directed art films for the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Amy's films primarily explore the intersections of memory, culture, and history. In addition to her directing work, she served as a casting associate on 12 major motion pictures in the 90s, including titles like *Angels In The Outfield*, *Tank Girl*, *Goldeneye*, and *The Mask of Zorro*. She has worked for all the major studios in Hollywood including Disney, Warner Bros., and Columbia Pictures. Amy holds an M.F.A. in Film/Video from the California Institute of the Arts and currently chairs the film department at Hollins University in Roanoke, Virginia, where she teaches production, animation, and film studies.



Suzanne Stroh, Producer

Suzanne has significant film experience as a writer and producer. She was the first screenwriter on the BBC's four hour miniseries *Portrait of a Marriage* (1990). With filmmaker Lavinia Currier, Suzanne co-wrote the screenplay for *Oka!* (2011: Dada Films). It premiered at Telluride and opened its theatrical run at Angelika Film Center. Suzanne's historical drama *Scotch Verdict* has won awards at film festivals in the US, Germany, France, Spain, and Mexico, and Great Britain. The Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts adapted and staged a production of the script in 2015 and made it part of their curriculum. Suzanne has produced two projects for FlatCoatFilms: *My Grandfather was a Nazi Scientist* (2012) and *Public Memory* (2004: Cinema Guild).

April Marcel, Co-Producer

April Marcel is the CEO of Gibson & White Pictures, and has studied at Hollins University, and received her B.A. in theater and film May 2011. April has had several plays produced; one includes her musical, God's Eye, which was produced at the Downing-Gross Cultural Arts Center and at New Millennium Studios. Her film, No Weapon Shall Prosper, was picked up by Maverick Entertainment Group and is distributed worldwide. Her comedic short play, Out Of Gas was also produced at Mill Mountain Theater in Roanoke, Virginia. April was Theatre Director at Booker T. Washington High School and enjoys being a part of helping students reach for their dreams. She was also an Editor at News Channel 3 in Norfolk, Virginia for five years.

Ashton Rae Witt, Cinematographer

Ashton Rae Witt is a USC graduate of the Cinematography MFA program. Based out of Los Angeles, Witt's body of work consists of a diverse portfolio of scripted narrative content that has won honors at festivals, including the Pan African Film Festival and the Chattanooga Film Festival. Witt's professional experience also includes work in the commercial industry for numerous brands including Marriott, Google, Nars, and L'Agence.





Trey Toy, Composer

Trey Toy is a Los Angeles-based composer, producer, guitarist and electronic musician. He is known primarily for his work in film, television and video games and has contributed music to a wide range of projects, from Emmy Award-winning shows such as *Ozark* (Netflix) and *Vikings* (History Channel) to Blizzard Entertainment's hit game, *Diablo IV*.



Heidi Gerber-Salins, Sound Designer

Heidi has worked as a professional studio audio engineer and producer since 1990 and founded her audio production company, All Access Audio, in 2001. She has worked extensively with music, spoken word, and sound design for radio, film, video and television, and her projects have garnered multiple Grammy and Washington Area Music Association Award nominations, as well as New York Radio Festival awards. She also served on the Board of Governors for the Washington D.C. Chapter of the Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. Gerber-Salins is Assistant Professor in the Department of Media, Journalism and Film at Howard University.

PRODUCTION COMPANIES

FATCOAT
FILMS

FLATCOAT FILMS

FlatCoatFilms, LLC is an independent production company that makes documentary, narrative, and art films. Founded by Amy Gerber in the year 2000, FlatCoatFilms, LLC has produced award-winning and critically acclaimed independent films for well over two decades.

LEGION
GROUP | ARTS

LEGION GROUP ARTS

Legion Group Arts is an international collective of scholars, storytellers, and business professionals. They tell stories of artistic creators of the past, through literature, theater, & film and enhance inspirational cultural heritage. Their aim is to make art, history, & culture relevant to new generations.



FILM PARTNERS

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CREDITS

PRODUCTION

Producer Amy Gerber-Stroh
Producer Suzanne Gerber-Stroh
Associate Producer Heidi Gerber-Salins
Co-Producer April Marcell
Director Amy Gerber
Writer Amy Gerber
1st AD (Wilmington/Nantucket) Philippa Gerber-Stroh
1st AD (Middleburg) Naomi Rajoo
1st AD (Roanoke) Hannah Chaikin
Production Coordinator Anja Hanington
Assistant to Director (Nantucket) Olivia Landon
Assistant to Producer James Stevens

CAMERA

Director of Photography (DP) Ashton Rae
2nd Unit DP Stewart Maxey
1st AC (Connecticut) Elizabeth Ribeiro
1st AC (Roanoke) Stewart Maxey
1st AC (Wilmington) Jazmine Kettenacker
2nd AC (Wilmington) Mandi Lamb

SOUND

Sound Recordist & Boom Tyler Lyon
Sound Recordist & Boom Anja Hanington Heidi Gerber-Salins
Sound Recordist & Boom Leah Gerber-Salins
Asst. Sound Recordist

ELECTRICAL

Gaffer Ben Paige
Gaffer (Wilmington) Cat Tyler

GRIP

Key Grip (Connecticut) Shakis Moore
Grip (Roanoke) Ben Mullen
Key Grip (Roanoke) Trae Price

ART DEPARTMENT

Set Dresser (Wilmington) Mandi Lamb
Set Dresser (Roanoke) Suzanne Stroh

MAKEUP & HAIR

Key Makeup (Wilmington) April Marcell
Assistant Makeup (Wilmington) Spring Promise
Key Makeup (Roanoke) Suellen DaCosta Coelho
Assistant Makeup (Roanoke) Chin Wai (Rosie) Wong

WARDROBE

Costumer Debra Scheu
Wardrobe Supervisor Stephanie Scheu

TRANSPORTATION

Captain of Skiff, boat maker Bryan Humphries
Pontoon Boats Capt. Jake Scuorzo
Yacht Delivery Captain, Writer Capt. John Wolfe

CATERING

Caterer Cathy Whatley

PRODUCTION ASSISTANTS

Production Assistant (PA) Sinjun Chapman
Production Assistant (PA) Zachary Daniel

Production Assistant (PA)
Production Assistant (PA)
Production Assistant (PA)
Production Assistant (PA)
Office PA
Intern
Intern
Intern
Intern

POST PRODUCTION

Editor
Sound Editor
Sound Mixer
Sound Designer
Audio Sweetener

ADDITIONAL CREW MEMBERS Still

Photographer Archer Mesner-Hogan
Poet Michael Metivere

CONSULTANTS

Independent Historian, Author Bryan Prince
Assistant Prof. of History Dr. Anne Kerth
Asst. Prof. of African American History Dr. Shannon Eaves
Associate Prof. of History Dr. Adam Domby
Author/Historian Edward Ball
Independent Historian Daniel Billin
Prof. of Creative Writing, Author Philip Gerard
Linguist and Historian Frances Karttunen

Harika Ganeshni Bommana
Kari Iverson
Naomi Rajoo
Khiry Savoy
Chambliss Schneider
Julia Morris
James Dawoud
Theodore DeHoff
Catie Hirabayashi
Sean Robertson

Amy Gerber-Stroh
Amy Gerber-Stroh
Heidi Gerber-Salins
Heidi Gerber-Salins
Charlie Pilzer

CREDITS

CAST

Diana
Cornelia
Wilby
Julia
Rev. Crawford
Henry Garnet
Caroline
Cornelia as Child
Capt. Maffitt
George
Ann Crawford
Andrew
Escaping Contraband
David
Isaac
TC Worth
William Garrison
Julianna
Barber shop customer 1
Chief Steward, funeral attendee
Anna Richardson
Child at play 2
Wilmington townsfolk 2
Enslaved servant, Wilmington townsfolk
Mr. Taylor
Parishioner
Barber shop customer 2
College Student
Farm worker
Steamboat passenger 3
Steamboat Waitress
Schoolgirl

Mizan Kirby
Kendra Chideya
Marley Gregory
Hope Blackstock
Lamont Williams
Jeffery Phillips
Elise Rackemann
London White
Aaron Zapf
Malique Hawkins
April Marcell
Denzel Murph
Artis Hill, Jr.
Malcolm Campbell
Mark Robinson
Ashley Stinnett
Jason Cook
Carys Spencer
T.J. Anderson
Robert (Allen) Baker
Kelly Becker
Violet Berlus
Edith Berry
Deja Braxton
Larry Brooks
Triston Brown
Anthony Buckner
Linda Burkhart
Sinjun Chapman
Cynthia Clancy
Linda Clarkson
Celia Cooley

Ann as child (scene dropped)
Conductor in SC
James Withers Read
Train passenger
Priest
John Harleston
Steamboat passenger 2
John Jr.
LewisTappan
House slave
Julia as child (scene dropped)
Julia as adolescent
Townsperson 4 (Wilmington),
Peanut worker 3, waiting friend 3
Mrs. Pope
Limp arm, Funeral attendee
Carriage driver (Providence)
Angry farmer 3
Child at play 3
Ann as adolescent
Burly Man
Pullman Porter
Townsperson 1 (Wilmington),
Funeral attendee 3
Nancy Williams
Child at play 1
Slave Catcher
Steamboat passenger 1
Jamaican townsfolk
Train official (Wilmington)
Woman Passenger (Roanoke)
Barber shop customer 3
Train passenger (Roanoke) 4

Aaliyah Cotton
Chance Courtney
Zach Daniel

Jimmy Davis
Seth DiMarco
Elaine Dodge
Kaleb Dufrene
Les Epstein
Karen Evans
Bree Fyffe
Jay Gibson
Anita Gurley

Elizabeth Hall
Kyla Hanington
Sue Harmon
Hayden Hundley
River Johnson
Jada Key
Jeffrey Leonard
Chamar Little
Matthias Margraves

Monique Marshall
Jazmyne Marshall
Rogelio Martinez
Bambi Morangio
Effie Mwando
Gary Paige
Samantha Pearl
William Penn
Quinn Pierce

Funeral attendee 4, Train passenger
Elizabeth Moore
Driver (Wilmington)
Anna Richardson (VO)
Angry farmer 1/townsfolk
Townsperson 2 (Wilmington), Peanut
worker 1, waiting friend 1
Townsperson 3 (Wilmington), Peanut
worker 2, waiting friend 2
Carriage drivers
Train passenger (Wilmington), funeral
attendee
Wilmington townsfolk 1
Peanut worker 3, Waiting friend 3
Angry farmer 2
Train passenger (Roanoke) 2
Steamboat passenger 4
White Sailor
Conductor (Roanoke)
New York gentleman, Train passenger
(Roanoke) 4
Mean student, townsfolk
Train passenger (Roanoke) 3
Escaping Contraband

Maddi Plonk
Rebertha Pope-Matthews
John Pucci
Lucy Rayner
Chad Roberts
Jemeka Robertson

Terry Robertson

Dot & Louis Ruqus
Veronica Russell

Mark Russell
Mikkel Saunders
Christian Sierra
Beth Simmons
Marti Smith
James Stevens
Henry Stevens
Robert Sulkin

Audrey Sullivan
Karen Wade
Isaiah Webb

CONTACT

For more information about Hope of Escape,
please visit: hopeofescapemovie.com

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