

PROGRESS

94TH

THE OLDEST INTERNATIONAL COLOURED PUBLICATION
IN THE WORLD — EMANCIPATION — WINDSOR, ONT., 1957

ANNIVERSARY

25
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AUGUST 1, 2026



EMANCIPATION CELEBRATION MONUMENT

On August 1, 2026 - Emancipation Day - the City of Windsor unveiled a new **Emancipation Celebration Monument** at Jackson Park.

The monument and gathering space includes:

- A large decorative archway reflecting the shape and style of the proscenium of the original Jackson Park bandstand, which burned down in 1957, featuring the words "The Greatest Freedom Show On Earth";
- Three murals by local artist Dennis K. Smith, cofounder and president of The Artists of Colour, depicting the history of Emancipation celebrations in Windsor through large-scale framed paintings;
- Interpretive panels sharing stories and images connected to the local history of Emancipation Day and local Black history curated by Irene Moore Davis, local historian, educator, author, and assistant curator of the Amherstburg Freedom Museum; and
- Decorative benches, landscaping, lighting, and a shade structure.

The space also includes room for a future life-sized bronze sculpture of Walter Perry, to be created by sculptor Mark Williams; as well as commemorative bricks with donor names placed around the site.

The project was supported by an investment of over \$400,000 by Mayor Drew Dilkens and Windsor City Council.

"The Emancipation Celebration Monument is truly special to behold. We have created a fitting and inspiring tribute to a shared history that shaped our city, province, and country. I thank Council for approving funding to make this happen, Joi Hurst, Gale Carter, all members of the Committee, along with the designers, artists, and community members who worked in lockstep with the City to bring this beautiful vision to life in Jackson Park."

-Windsor Mayor Drew Dilkens

"Serving as the Emancipation Monument Committee Chairperson has been an immense honour. This experience has offered invaluable lessons and profound satisfaction. I understand the significance this monument holds for many. It serves as a powerful reminder of a pivotal moment in history. The monument represents hard-won freedoms and enduring resilience. Its presence encourages reflection on the struggles and triumphs of those who came before us. I believe it is crucial to preserve and honour this important symbol. The dedication to its upkeep will reflect our commitment to remembering our past. This monument stands as a testament to progress and a beacon of hope. The collective effort has made this an unforgettable chapter. It is a vital part of our shared heritage."

-Joi Elaine Hurst, Committee Chair

"Emancipation was eating ribs with sticky fingers, while dressed in our Sunday best. It was more than a parade; it was a pageantry of progress. I'm honoured to be part of this project and to have the opportunity to tell these stories through my art."

-Dennis K. Smith, Murals Artist



SATURDAY, AUGUST 1, 2026 - EMANCIPATION DAY CELEBRATION

Hosted by the Emancipation Celebration Monument Ambassadors

ARIANA HUDSON, MAKAI MURTTY & MARIUM TOLSON-MURTTY

And Special Guests

MAYOR DREW DILKENS, JOI ELAINE HURST, GALE CARTER, JIM CRICHTON & MORE

With the Official Unveiling of the Emancipation Murals by Artist

DENNIS K. SMITH

Along with the Unveiling of Accompanying Interpretive Panels Developed with

IRENE MOORE DAVIS

Featuring

TRADING PLACES BAND, KINGSVILLE ESSEX ASSOCIATION BAND

INDIGENOUS ELDER THERESA SIMS, NADINE MANROE-WAKERELL, SARAH OLAWORE,

RODNEY JONES & THE COALITION FOR JUSTICE UNITY EQUITY YOUTH,

MOTHER SHARON WILSON, MISS WINDSOR SHAKIRA IBRAHIM, PHILIP CROSBY,

MARK CROSBY, BLACK KIDS IN ACTION

Emancipation Celebration Monument Committee

MAYOR DREW DILKENS, COUNCILLOR RENALDO AGOSTINO,

JOI ELAINE HURST, GALE CARTER, LAURA WILLIAMS, DENNIS K. SMITH, MARK WILLIAMS,

RYAN FALLOON, JAMES CHACKO, CHRISTOPHER MENARD, WADAH AL-YASSIRI,

LAURA ASH, DARRON AHLSTEDT, HODA KAMELI, PAM MADY, MICHAEL OKANLAWON

REFLECTIONS ON FREEDOM

“I’ll use my freedom well.” – **Josiah Henson**

“The Freedom Gates are half-ajar. We must pry them fully open.” - **Mary McLeod Bethune**

“For to be free is not merely to cast off one’s chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.” – **Nelson Mandela**

“God’s time is always near. He set the North Star in the heavens; He gave me the strength in my limbs; He meant I should be free.” – **Harriet Tubman**

“I prayed for freedom for twenty years, but received no answer until I prayed with my legs.” – **Frederick Douglass**

“Life is a hard battle anyway. If we laugh and sing a little as we fight the good fight of freedom, it makes it all go easier.” – **Sojourner Truth**

“Freedom is never voluntarily given by the oppressor; it must be demanded by the oppressed.” – **Martin Luther King, Jr.**

“Find your voice. Raise your voice.
Let yours be a voice for freedom.” – **Ellen Johnson Sirleaf**

“Freedom is not something that one people can bestow on another as a gift. They claim it as their own and none can keep it from them.” – **Kwame Nkrumah**

“We have to talk about liberating minds as well as liberating society.” – **Angela Davis**

“We are going to emancipate ourselves from mental slavery, for though others may free the body, none but ourselves can free the mind.” – **Marcus Garvey**

“You can’t separate peace from freedom because no one can be at peace unless he has his freedom.” – **Malcolm X**

“I would like to be known as a person who is concerned about freedom and equality and justice and prosperity for all people.” – **Rosa Parks**

“Consistent action is the key to emancipation.” – **Henry Bibb**

“There is in this world no such force as the force of a person determined to rise. The human soul cannot be permanently chained.” – **W.E.B. Du Bois**

“Never be limited by other people’s limited imaginations.” – **Mae Jemison**

“Exclusion is never the way forward on our shared paths to freedom and justice.” – **Desmond Tutu**

“Bringing the gifts that my ancestors gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the slave.” – **Maya Angelou**

Learn more about the imagery in the Murals, the Artist inspiration, future plans for the Walter Perry life-size bronze sculpture, and Emancipation Day Celebrations in Windsor online:

