



For Immediate Release

The 2021 Underground Railroad Free Press Prize for Leadership has been awarded to Historic Sotterley of Hollywood, Maryland, for its exemplary Common Ground Initiative and Descendants Project that has brought together Black and White descendants of people who lived at Sotterley Plantation in the era of slavery. Says *Free Press* publisher Peter H. Michael, "With this initiative, Historic Sotterley has become an American trailblazer in racial healing and understanding."

To date more than 200 Sotterley descendants of both races living in thirty states and four countries have self-identified. Several, both Black and White, hold leadership positions on Historic Sotterley's governing board of trustees. A full calendar of public events closely involves the descendants.

In April of 2017, Sotterley launched its Descendants Project when it dedicated its 1830s slave cabin exhibit to the memory of Agnes Kane Callum, a Sotterley descendant and board member emerita who descended from an enslaved person at Sotterley.

Dating from 1699, Historic Sotterley has been designated as a National Historic Landmark, a Middle Passage Port Markers Site, a UNESCO Site of Memory for the Slave Route Project, and has been honored with numerous awards such as a Maryland Sustainable Growth Award and two Maryland Preservation Awards.

Historic Sotterley has come far since its designation 25 years ago as one of the 11 Most Endangered Historic Places in America by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. At the time, a dedicated board of trustees helped to save Sotterley from being lost. Notable were two special members: John Hanson Briscoe, former Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates who was descended from the last owner of enslaved persons at Sotterley, and Agnes Kane Callum, respected genealogist and historian, whose descendants were enslaved by the Briscoes. These remarkable individuals, who were not only board colleagues but friends, set the stage for the Descendant's Project which would be formalized two decades later. Their children, Jan Briscoe and Martin Callum, serve on the board today along with three other Sotterley descendants. In a variety of capacities, descendants are helping to shape Sotterley's future, and they are modeling to our nation how it is possible to come together for understanding, dialogue, and healing. For more on Historic Sotterley and its work, visit <https://www.sotterley.org>.

Published bimonthly since 2006, *Underground Railroad Free Press* brings together organizations and people interested in the historical and contemporary Underground Railroad. Since 2008, *Free Press* has awarded the annual Free Press Prizes for Leadership, Preservation and Advancement of Knowledge, regarded as the top honors in the contemporary international Underground Railroad community. *Free Press* is the home of Lynx, the central registry of contemporary underground railroad organizations, and Datebook, the community's event calendar. Visit <http://urfreepress.com> for more.