



***Hamilton* actor Paul Oakley Stovall to recite Frederick Douglass’s now-famous Emancipation Day speech in its original location—Poughkeepsie’s College Hill Park—on August 1, 2021**

Poughkeepsie, NY—July 9 2021—After portraying George Washington in the first national tour of *Hamilton: An American Musical* by Lin Manuel-Miranda, performer Paul Oakley Stovall developed an avid interest in the internationally recognized abolitionist leader Frederick Douglass. Stovall’s subsequent studies of Douglass have led him around the country and as far abroad as Ireland.

On August 1, 2021, Celebrating the African Spirit will present the actor as he recites the Emancipation Day speech Douglass delivered to an audience of several thousand at Poughkeepsie’s College Hill Park in August of 1858. Stovall will return to that original site to perform the address at the pavilion atop the park.

Enslaved from birth, Frederick Douglass managed to educate himself and escape north to freedom. His speech recognized the date Great Britain abolished slavery—August 1, 1834, celebrated as Emancipation Day. Slavery was abolished in New York State in 1827, but the last of four million enslaved people in the south were not free until June 19, 1865 (Juneteenth), when Federal Troops ordered the enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation. It was during this tense and dangerous period, just prior to the Civil War, that Douglass spoke in Poughkeepsie, putting his life at risk to weigh in on U.S. national politics.

The event will open with a rousing procession by Souls United of Hudson Valley, an interfaith gospel choir, and the Center for Creative Education’s Percussion Orchestra of Kingston, a multicultural youth ensemble.

1:00 p.m.: Assembly begins at College Hill Park, located at 149 N Clinton St., Poughkeepsie, NY 12601. Guests are invited to bring a picnic lunch.

2:00 p.m.: Procession led by the Center for Creative Education’s Percussion Orchestra of Kingston and Souls United of the Hudson Valley around the College Hill Park Pavilion.

2:15 p.m.: Paul Oakley Stovall performs “The Poughkeepsie Words of Frederick Douglass.”

The event is sponsored by the City of Poughkeepsie (Yvonne Flowers 5th Ward Councilwoman) and the Helen Forster Novy 1928 Fund at Vassar College. Stovall’s performance is supported by New York Stage and Film (NYSF) as part of its summer partnership with Marist and Vassar colleges.

## About the Artist:

Paul Oakley Stovall is a multi-hyphenate artist and activist based in Chicago. He portrayed George Washington in the first national tour of *Hamilton*. Other national tours have included *Rent* and *Once on This Island*. He has also appeared in numerous Off-Broadway productions.

Stovall is currently at work on an eight-episode limited series about Frederick Douglass and the time he spent in Ireland in 1845, as well as a Sarah Vaughn biopic. He was a staff writer for Season 4 of the STARZ hit comedy *Survivor's Remorse*. Television acting credits include *Empire*, *Chicago Fire*, *Shameless*, and *The Chi*. His film credits include Robert Altman's *The Company*, John Cameron and Mitchell's *Shortbus*.

As a playwright, Stovall is a Steinberg, Jeff, and GLAAD award nominee for his play *Immediate Family*, directed by Phylicia Rashad at the Goodman Theatre and Mark Taper Forum. His musical *Clear* was chosen for the Eugene O'Neill National Playwrights/Music Theatre Conference and his play *The Hunted* (co-written with Evan Linder) was a 2017 Finalist.

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***Celebrating the African Spirit (CAS)*** honors the legacy of enslaved Africans and their descendants in Poughkeepsie, NY. CAS is a 501(c)3 non-profit community-based organization engaged in social action projects to address the consequences of institutionalized racism that Black and Brown people live with today. Learn more at [www.celebratingtheafricanspirit.org](http://www.celebratingtheafricanspirit.org).

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