

For Immediate Release

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Southwest DC Residents to Hold Event Commemorating Historic Escape of Enslaved People to Freedom from SW Waterfront in 1848

Washington, DC – On Thursday, April 15th, at 7:00 p.m. EST, The Pearl Group will present “Remember the Pearl,” an online event that will be broadcast from Westminster Presbyterian Church, located at 4th and I Streets, Southwest, TinyURL.com/PearlSW. A commemoration program will follow at 8:00 p.m., at the Southwest Duck Pond, located at 6th and I Streets, Southwest.

The online event will feature DC historian C.R. Gibbs and Dawne Young, descendant of an enslaved passenger on the Pearl. The program at the Southwest Duck Pond will begin with a processional led by a soloist and two period re-enactors. There will be a reading of the names of the Pearl passengers, lighting of memorial luminarias, the presentation of flowers, and comments by Dr. Sheila S. Walker, cultural anthropologist, among others. The public will be encouraged to visit the temporary memorial at the Southwest Duck Pond between Friday, April 15th (DC Emancipation Day) and Sunday, April 18th.

Reverend Ruth Hamilton, convener of The Pearl Group along with Southwest resident Vyllorya Evans, said, “So few people know about this important part of DC’s history. Members of The Pearl Group hope this commemoration will renew interest in the story of the Pearl and that it will be the first of yearly remembrances. We also honor the long-standing work of The Pearl Coalition founded by the late Lloyd D. Smith, and carried on by his grandson, David Smith.”

The Pearl was the schooner that carried 77 enslaved people from Washington DC, on a failed bid for freedom. The incident and its aftermath contributed to the abolition of slavery in Washington DC. See brochure for the event: <https://westminsterdc.org/remember-the-pearl>

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