

# What Was The Underground Railroad

## Underground Railroad

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The Underground Railroad was an organized network of secret routes and safe houses used by freedom seekers to escape to the abolitionist Northern United States and Eastern Canada. Slaves and African Americans escaped from slavery as early as the 16th century; many of their escapes were unaided. However, a network of safe houses generally known as the Underground Railroad began to organize in the 1780s among Abolitionist Societies in the North. It ran north and grew steadily until President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863. The escapees sought primarily to escape into free states, and potentially from there to Canada.

The Underground Railroad started at the place of enslavement. The routes followed natural and man-made modes of transportation: rivers, canals, bays, the Atlantic Coast, ferries and river crossings, roads and trails. Locations close to ports, free territories and international boundaries prompted many escapes.

The network, primarily the work of free and enslaved African Americans, was assisted by abolitionists and others sympathetic to the cause of the escapees. The slaves who risked capture and those who aided them were collectively referred to as the passengers and conductors of the Railroad, respectively. Various other routes led to Mexico, where slavery had been abolished, and to islands in the Caribbean that were not part of the slave trade. An earlier escape route running south toward Florida, then a Spanish possession (except 1763–1783), existed from the late 17th century until approximately 1790. During the American Civil War, freedom seekers escaped to Union lines in the South to obtain their freedom. One estimate suggests that by 1850, approximately 100,000 slaves had escaped to freedom via the network. According to former professor of Pan-African studies J. Blaine Hudson, who was dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of Louisville, by the end of the Civil War, 500,000 or more African Americans had self-emancipated from slavery on the Underground Railroad.

## The Underground Railroad (novel)

*The Underground Railroad is a historical fiction novel by American author Colson Whitehead, published by Doubleday in 2016. The alternate history novel*

The Underground Railroad is a historical fiction novel by American author Colson Whitehead, published by Doubleday in 2016. The alternate history novel tells the story of Cora, a slave in the Antebellum South during the 19th century, who makes a bid for freedom from her Georgia plantation by following the Underground Railroad, which the novel depicts as an actual rail transport system with safe houses and secret routes. The book was a critical and commercial success, hitting the bestseller lists and winning several literary awards, including the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, the National Book Award for Fiction, the Arthur C. Clarke Award, and the 2017 Andrew Carnegie Medal for Excellence. A TV miniseries adaptation, written and directed by Barry Jenkins, was released in May 2021.

## Underground (TV series)

*Underground is an American period drama television series created by Misha Green and Joe Pokaski about the Underground Railroad in Antebellum Georgia*

Underground is an American period drama television series created by Misha Green and Joe Pokaski about the Underground Railroad in Antebellum Georgia. The show debuted March 9, 2016, on WGN America. On April 25, 2016, WGN renewed the show for a 10-episode second season, that premiered on March 8, 2017. On May 30, 2017, it was announced that WGN had cancelled

the show after two seasons. The cancellation came after the network's parent company Tribune Media was attempting to be purchased by conservative corporation Sinclair Broadcasting Group, which led to speculation that the latter did not approve of the subject matter of the show.

The Oprah Winfrey Network acquired rebroadcast rights for Underground in 2020.

Joseph Cassey Bustill

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Joseph Cassey Bustill (September 29, 1822–August 19, 1895) was an African American conductor in the Underground Railroad, operating primarily in Philadelphia to aid refugee slaves.

Songs of the Underground Railroad

*Songs of the Underground Railroad were spiritual and work songs used during the early-to-mid 19th century in the United States to encourage and convey*

Songs of the Underground Railroad were spiritual and work songs used during the early-to-mid 19th century in the United States to encourage and convey coded information to escaping slaves as they moved along the various Underground Railroad routes. As it was illegal in most slave states to teach slaves to read or write, songs were used to communicate messages and directions about when, where, and how to escape, and warned of dangers and obstacles along the route.

Aaron Pierre (actor)

*series Krypton (2018–2019). He starred in the period drama miniseries The Underground Railroad (2021), and the thriller films Old (2021) and Rebel Ridge*

Aaron Stone Pierre (born 7 June 1994) is an English actor. After training at the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art, Pierre gained recognition for his role as Dev-Em in the science fiction series Krypton (2018–2019). He starred in the period drama miniseries The Underground Railroad (2021), and the thriller films Old (2021) and Rebel Ridge (2024). He also portrayed Malcolm X in the miniseries Genius and voiced Mufasa in Mufasa: The Lion King.

William Still

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William Still (October 7, 1819 – July 14, 1902) was an African-American abolitionist based in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. He was a conductor of the Underground Railroad and was responsible for aiding and assisting at least 649 slaves to freedom. Still was also a businessman, writer, historian and civil rights activist. Before the American Civil War, Still was chairman of the Vigilance Committee of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, named the Vigilant Association of Philadelphia. He directly aided fugitive slaves and also kept records of the people served in order to help families reunite.

After the war, Still continued as a prominent businessman, a coal merchant, and philanthropist. He used his meticulous records to write an account of the underground system and the experiences of many escaped slaves, entitled *The Underground Railroad Records* (1872).

## Underground culture

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Underground culture, or simply underground, is a term to describe various alternative cultures which either consider themselves different from the mainstream of society and culture, or are considered so by others. The word "underground" is used because there is a history of resistance movements under harsh regimes where the term underground was employed to refer to the necessary secrecy of the resisters.

For example, the Underground Railroad was a network of clandestine routes by which African slaves in the 19th-century United States attempted to escape to freedom. The phrase "underground railroad" was resurrected and applied in the 1960s to the extensive network of draft counseling groups and houses used to help Vietnam War-era draft dodgers escape to Canada, and was also applied in the 1970s to the clandestine movement of people and goods by the American Indian Movement in and out of occupied Native American reservation lands. (See also: Wounded Knee Occupation).

The filmmaker Rosa von Praunheim documented the legendary New York underground scene in the 1970s around Andy Warhol in some of his films, for example in *Underground and Emigrants* (1976) and *Tally Brown, New York* (1979). Since then, the term has come to designate various subcultures such as mod culture, hippie culture, punk culture, techno music/rave culture, underground hip hop and also neo-nazi.

## Kidnapping into slavery in the United States

*and written about, the Reverse Underground Railroad was just as active as its counterpart. Historian Richard Bell writes that the "professional kidnappers*

The pre-American Civil War practice of kidnapping into slavery in the United States occurred in both free and slave states, and both fugitive slaves and free negroes were transported to slave markets and sold, often multiple times. There were lucrative rewards given for the return of fugitives. Three types of kidnapping methods were employed: physical abduction, inveiglement (kidnapping through trickery) of free blacks, and apprehension of fugitives. The enslavement, or re-enslavement, of free blacks occurred for 85 years, from 1780 to 1865. Kidnapping of black children for resale was a consistent issue throughout the slavery period.

The term Reverse Underground Railroad has been retroactively applied to the clandestine network of slave traffickers who abducted free blacks for reward amounts ranging from \$400 to \$700 (estimated to be \$9,000 to \$15,000 by 2019 standards). Although the Underground Railroad—the network of abolitionists and their sympathizers who helped smuggle escaped slaves to freedom, generally to Canada but also to Mexico—is far more celebrated and written about, the Reverse Underground Railroad was just as active as its counterpart. Historian Richard Bell writes that the "professional kidnappers left their mark everywhere and spirited into slavery roughly as many African Americans as Tubman and her comrades and collaborators ever assisted in escaping from it."

## Thuso Mbedu

*the 2018 Forbes Africa 30 under 30 list. In 2021, she starred in the Amazon Video limited series The Underground Railroad as Cora, which made her the*

Thuso Nokwanda Mbedu (born 8 July 1991) is a South African actress. She rose to prominence for her performance in the South African teen drama series *IsThunzi* for which she was nominated consecutively for

an International Emmy in 2017 and 2018. Mbedu later appeared on the 2018 Forbes Africa 30 under 30 list.

In 2021, she starred in the Amazon Video limited series *The Underground Railroad* as Cora, which made her the first South African actress to lead an American television series, and earned her the Independent Spirit Award for Best Female Performance in a New Scripted Series. She then made her feature film debut in the American historical epic *The Woman King* (2022) in the role of Nawi.

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