



# ULSTER COUNTY NEWS

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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“Somebody’s Calling My Name - Free And Half Free”

Exhibit Explores African American Life In The Mid-Hudson Valley

TRANSART and Cultural Services announces the installation of an exhibition chronicling the history, of African Americans in the Mid-Hudson Valley from the 1600’s to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Entitled “Somebody’s Calling My Name - Free and Half Free” the exhibit will be on view in the Ulster County Office Building, 244 Fair Street, Kingston, New York, in the Tourism Information Room, and on view from February 5 through February 28. The Exhibit can be seen Monday through Friday from 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM.

In 1626, eleven men from Africa and from Europe became the Mid-Hudson Valley’s first African ancestry residents. A few years later, the first African women arrived. They could own property, marry in a Dutch church, and the men could serve in the militia and could testify against whites in a court of law. In 1644, the men petitioned for their freedom and won. No longer slaves, they remained “half free”. Each had to labor on Dutch West India Company public work projects whenever required and each had to pay the Company 22 bushels of grain and “one fat hog” every

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year for as long as he lived. They never became the equal of the Dutch freeman or of freed indentured servants and those who remained enslaved could hope for “half free” status. Their “half free” lives are symbolic of the history of African Americans in the Mid Hudson Valley who for the next 300 years would not achieve full equality with the White majority.

“Somebody’s Calling My Name-Free and Half Free” was part of a four part exhibition on view during the tri-centennial celebration of the first capital of New York State, Kingston. Greer Smith, President of TRANSART says, “Free and Half Free” has been designed to travel to schools, libraries or wherever this information is of interest. The exhibition is a chronology and can be used as a tool for further study and dialogue around important periods in American history and Hudson Valley history.

“It is also important to showcase this activity in the County Office Building,” states Rick Remsnyder, Director of Tourism. “We encourage people to stop in while transacting other business and then come back with their families.”

This exhibit is free and open to the public.