

## **PIONEERS IN PRESERVATION PARTNERS TO HOST 'RUNAWAY SLAVE' AUTHOR REGINA MASON – NOV. 4 & 6**

**SAVANNAH, GA – October 23, 2019** – Pioneers in Preservation partners Davenport House Museum, Andrew Low House, and Ships of the Sea Maritime Museum, are slated to present two events, which are free and open to the public, featuring Regina Mason, author, playwright and editor of “Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave.”

Enslaved in Savannah in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, William Grimes wrote the first published runaway slave narrative in American history entirely by his own hand. Mason, who is the great-great-great granddaughter of William Grimes, will give a lecture at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Nov. 4 at Second African Baptist Church, 123 Houston Street, with a reception to follow. Later that week at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 6, Savannah State University’s (SSU) Africana Studies Program will host the Savannah premiere of the film “Gina’s Journey: The Search for William Grimes,” at the Mary C. Torian Auditorium in SSU’s Howard Jordan Building. Mason will introduce the film and answer questions at its conclusion.

“Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave” is the first fugitive slave narrative in American history. Because Grimes wrote and published his narrative on his own, without deference to white editors, publishers, or sponsors, his story has an immediacy, candor, and no-holds-barred realism unparalleled in the famous antebellum slave narratives of the period. This edition of Grimes’s autobiography represents a historic partnership between a noted scholar of the African American slave narrative, William L. Andrews, and Regina Mason, Grimes’s great-great-great-granddaughter. Their extensive historical and genealogical research has produced an authoritative, copiously annotated text that features pages from an original Grimes family Bible, transcriptions of the 1824 correspondence that set the terms for the author’s self-purchase in Connecticut (nine years after his escape from Savannah, Georgia), and many other striking images that invoke the life and times of William Grimes.

“What makes this authentic to us here in Savannah, is that twelve pages of Grimes’s story are about his time in Savannah in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. He may have resided at one time on

Columbia Square and he knew the people the Davenports knew and walked the streets the Davenports traversed,” said Davenport House Museum Director Jamie Credle. “We and our partners believe that we need to make Grimes’s name and story familiar to the wider community.”

Regina Mason is an international speaker, author, executive producer, and storyteller who spend 15 years researching the life and times of her great-great-great grandfather, pioneering fugitive slave autobiographer William Grimes. Mason, along with literary critic and expert William L. Andrews, is co-editor.” In addition to being an in-demand speaker and co-editor of the authoritative 2008 Oxford University Press edition of “Life of William Grimes, the Runaway Slave,” she performs “The Raw Truth,” a celebrated one-woman show, and is Executive Producer of the award-winning feature documentary “Gina’s Journey: The Search for William Grimes.” A native of California, Mason is a retiree from the University of California, Berkley, and currently resides in Oakland with her family. She is the recipient of the prestigious AMISTAD “Freedom” award, presented by the state of Connecticut’s Amistad Committee, Inc. In 2018, she served as the Featured Speaker at RootsTech, the largest family history conference in the world. Mason helped organize the 2015 University at Buffalo workshop when descendants of 19<sup>th</sup> century anti-slavery activists gathered to reflect, promote, and make relevant their ancestor’s voices.

The Savannah State University Africana studies program, hosts of the Nov. 6 screening, provides students with the opportunity to study and research the history and culture of Africans and African Americans. Africana Studies majors are employed in schools, museums, libraries, archives and agencies committed to preserving African and African American culture.

Although it is not required, those interested in attending the lecture and/or film premiere are encouraged to RSVP by calling 912-236-8097 or emailing [info@DavenportHouseMuseum.org](mailto:info@DavenportHouseMuseum.org). For more information about these events, please visit [www.DavenportHouseMuseum.org/programs/](http://www.DavenportHouseMuseum.org/programs/).

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