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## PHILADELPHIA FREEDOM FESTIVAL SCHOLARLY PANEL TO “LET FREEDOM RING”

### *The Mann’s Philadelphia Freedom Festival to Host Discussion on the Life and Impact of Octavius V. Catto*

**PHILADELPHIA (April 21, 2014)** – On Wednesday, April 30 the Mann’s Philadelphia Freedom Festival presents an engaging scholarly panel, “Let Freedom Ring,” on civil rights from the age of Octavius V. Catto (19<sup>th</sup> century) to today through the voices of representatives from Philadelphia’s academic and activist communities. The event is free and open to the public. Hosted at Temple University’s Mitten Hall from 4-6 p.m., the panel unites a diverse set of perspectives including authors, educators, ministers and local civil rights leaders to discuss the legacy of Catto and his impact on civil rights in this city today.

Moderated by veteran broadcaster Nick Taliaferro of 900 AM-WURD, the scholarly panel will discuss a variety of topics including the present-day significance of Catto, why the study of his life is important and what can be learned from Catto today. Further, in a year that marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the Civil Rights Act, the panel will discuss the ongoing struggle for civil rights locally in Philadelphia and nationally. The program will be broadcast live by 900 AM-WURD.

“The Mann is proud to partner with the Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection and Temple University to join this incredibly thoughtful group of leaders to reflect on the life and legacy of a man who made significant, lasting contributions to this city and this country,” said Catherine M. Cahill, President and CEO of the Mann. “These are important discussions that must continue and the Philadelphia Freedom Festival is pleased to be part of the effort to shed light on the legacy and impact of Octavius Catto.”

The program, part of a six-month festival that features an exhilarating array of original, artistic and educational programming linking the arts with civil rights history, will be hosted by Dr. Diane Turner, curator of the Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection. The Cheyney University Concert Choir, under the direction of Marques Garrett, will open and close the event.

#### **Panelists:**

**Dan Biddle**, Co-Author, *Tasting Freedom*

**Keith Bingham**, Archivist, Cheyney University of Pennsylvania

**Charles L. Blockson**, African American Historian

**Dr. John E. Churchville**, Local Civil Rights Leader

**Mel Dorn**, Local Civil Rights Leader

**Murray Dubin**, Co-Author, *Tasting Freedom*

**Mahlon Duckett**, Negro League Baseball Player

**Karen Jordan**, Local Civil Rights Leader

**Dr. Mark Kelly Tyler**, Senior Pastor, Mother Bethel AME

**Rev. Nolan Williams, Jr.**, Festival Artistic Director, Philadelphia Freedom Festival

This program is free and open to the public. Seating is limited. Register for free tickets at <http://manncenter.org/events/2014-04-30/let-freedom-ring>.

### **About the Mann's Philadelphia Freedom Festival**

From February through July, the Mann is presenting an imaginative series of original, artistic programming linking the arts with civil rights history, commemorating the life and legacy of Octavius V. Catto, a 19th-century Philadelphian and African-American civil rights pioneer. The Philadelphia Freedom Festival is under the direction of Nolan Williams, Jr., one of the country's foremost producers of inspirational arts programming, and Rhoda Blount, Project Director for the Festival and Vice President of Education and Community Outreach for the Mann. Supported by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage and The Presser Foundation, with additional support from The Lomax Family Foundation, the Philadelphia Freedom Festival features collaboration with partners from cultural, educational, and ecumenical institutions to provide programs and activities inspired by the rich diversity of Catto's life. Program partners include The Philadelphia Orchestra, the African American Museum of Philadelphia, Art Sanctuary, the Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection, Curtis Institute of Music, History Making Productions, Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, Temple University, Temple University Press, The Union League of Philadelphia, 900-AM WURD with additional support from the Mayor's Office of Faith Based Initiatives. For information on Philadelphia Freedom Festival events, please visit [www.manncenter.org/philadelphia-freedom-festival](http://www.manncenter.org/philadelphia-freedom-festival).

### **About Octavius V. Catto**

Octavius V. Catto, Philadelphia's 19<sup>th</sup>-century African-American civil rights pioneer, made a lasting impact on civil rights in Philadelphia and the nation. Born in Charleston, SC in 1839, Catto later settled in Philadelphia with his family in 1850. A well-educated man with a dedication to learning, he graduated valedictorian from what is now known as Cheyney University. Catto was insistent on the equality of all men and became a leader of local and national prominence for enfranchisement and civil rights for African Americans. He worked alongside other black leaders, including Frederick Douglas, to fight for equality. On election day, October 10, 1871, Catto was murdered on his doorsteps for his efforts. Catto remains an important figure in early civil rights history for both the region and the nation.

### **About the Mann**

The Mann Center for the Performing Arts' Education & Community Engagement Program is the region's largest free education program, impacting more than 50,000 young people annually and more than 400,000 since 1997. The Mann's Connecting Arts-N-Schools program offers city-wide schools a wide array of multicultural performances in music, theater and dance. This gives thousands of students the opportunity to experience the sights, sounds and rhythms of live performances – often for the very first time.

As one of the most important outdoor music centers in the country, the Mann Center for the Performing Arts presents top artists in a world-class, entertainment destination in association with AEG Live and Princeton Entertainment. Each summer season, renowned symphony orchestras, iconic rock stars and the latest touring artists in indie rock, hip hop, R&B and pop take the stage here, and today's success is a nod to the venue's storied history. The Mann has been the summer home of The Philadelphia Orchestra since the 1930s and presented critically acclaimed performers in every decade since then. Located in the heart of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park, the Mann hosts more than 170,000 visitors annually. Signature concert experiences are surrounded by Philadelphia's stunning nighttime skyline and include seats beneath the Mann's magnificent shed; picnics, blankets and music under the stars on its famous lawn; and dining in Crescendo, the venue's spectacular tented restaurant. For more information, visit [www.manncenter.org](http://www.manncenter.org).

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