

## Gateway to Freedom Monument

The Gateway to Freedom Monument stands proudly in the US and Canada reminding us of the dangerous and collaborative efforts of the Underground Railroad through Detroit, Michigan. The Detroit side features eight people getting ready to cross the river to freedom in Ontario, Canada. The central figure is George DeBaptiste pointing the way. On the Canadian side of the river, two people face the promised land.

George DeBaptiste was a free black man who lived in the 1800s and helped hundreds of African Americans escape to freedom through the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad was a system of guides, hiding places, financial support, and information that moved people who were formerly enslaved from the American South to freedom in Canada.

There were many Black and white people who helped others escape to freedom. These people were known as "conductors" and "stationmasters." Conductors helped slaves travel along the Underground Railroad, while stationmasters provided them with food, shelter, and clothing.

As a conductor on the Underground Railroad, DeBaptiste was a philanthropist. A philanthropist is someone who gives their time, talent, and resources to help others, in this case, people who were denied their rights. His philanthropic actions provided him and the people he helped a source of power they couldn't access through government or business channels. DeBaptiste formed a secret group and purchased a steamboat and secretly carried people across the Detroit River to Canada. He was a tireless advocate for the abolition of slavery and the rights of African Americans during and after the Civil War. He was a respected leader, and he is remembered as a hero of the fight for civil rights.

Detroit's role in the Underground Railroad was significant. With its location across the river from Canada, Detroit was the last stop, known as "Midnight" on the Underground Railroad. There were more than 100 stops in Detroit, protecting over 50,000 people on this dangerous journey. The city's role in the Underground Railroad is a reminder of its commitment to freedom and equality. This monument honors Detroit's legacy that continues today.

The Monument, which was designed and created by sculptor Ed Dwight in 2021, pays tribute to DeBaptiste and the many people who helped and journeyed on the Underground Railroad. It also honors Detroit and Canada's role.

Questions:

1. What is a philanthropist? In what ways is George DeBaptiste a philanthropist?
2. Why do you think George DeBaptiste wanted to put himself in danger to help people who are denied their rights?
3. How does the monument serve the community of Detroit? What impact does it have on the cause of freedom and equity in the past and today?
4. What people and organizations are working for racial equity today?
5. How do women and minority groups use philanthropy as a means to gain power or influence?
6. What is Detroit's legacy they can be proud of?
7. What is an example of a change in laws or practices - today or in history - prompted by voluntary action?