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NEW PROGRAM BUILDS BUSINESS IN BUFFALO ARTS COMMUNITY

BUFFALO, NY (3/23/10) – Young Audiences of Western New York has created an in-school artist residency based on the local history of the Underground Railroad. Debuting this spring at Ujima Company's TheaterLoft, and piloting in Buffalo's Academy for Visual and Performing Arts and Lovejoy Discovery School #43, as well as Holley Elementary School. The intensive multi-arts educational series has created meaningful business partnerships, and put artists to work.

"The *Underground Railroad in Western New York* residency was designed to increase literacy and understanding regarding racial disparities," said Young Audiences WNY Executive Director Cynn timer Gaasch, "the series has also created income earning opportunities for African American artists and built professional relationships within the artistic and educational communities of Buffalo."

Throughout development of the residency, Young Audiences worked closely with Ujima Company's Rahwa Ghirmatzion, Executive Director, and Lorna C. Hill, Artistic Director. Ujima provided links to artists, and excellent direction for theatrical work by Ms. Hill.

Additional Advisory Committee members include W. Charles Brandy, Director of the Buffalo Public Schools Department of Social Studies; Bishop William Henderson, Michigan Baptist Church; Carol L. Murphy, Executive Director of the McClew Interpretive Center in Burt, NY; Sara Rodland, co-Chair of the Buffalo Teachers Resource Center; and a number of other historians, educators, and veteran teaching artists. Additionally, the residency's interactive workshops and performances feature some of the area's most outstanding African American Artists including Rodney Appleby, Annette Daniels-Taylor, Ntare Ali Gault, Robin Monique, and Reynold Scott. The residency program is designed to fit into classroom curriculum at elementary, middle and high school levels, and incorporates theatre, music, dance, and creative writing.

The foundations for the Underground Railroad residency were modeled on Young Audiences' successful Erie Canal residency, which incorporates hands-on participation in theatre, music, and creative writing. This residency has been offered in 18 schools in Western New York over the past several years, the majority Buffalo Public. "It is our goal to offer the Underground Railroad residency in 20 schools in the 2010-2011 school year," said Gaasch.

Remaining *Underground Railroad in Western New York* premiere performances are scheduled for 1 p.m. on March 27 and April 3 at Ujima Company's TheaterLoft, 545 Elmwood Avenue, in Buffalo. Fee for attendance is \$5 per family or individual educator or \$10 for a subscription to the entire series. Accommodations may be made for limited finances by calling 716-881-0917. Visit www.yawny.org for advance ticket purchase, additional resources and information on bringing this residency to your school.

The press may also visit performances and workshops at Lovejoy Discovery School #43. Contact Young Audiences for further details. Images available at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/42060677@N07/sets/72157623363515265/>

ABOUT YOUNG AUDIENCES: Founded in 1962, Young Audiences WNY programming is designed around the fact that an arts-rich education provides a child with the ability to look beyond facts and figures; to creatively meet new challenges as they arise. Plus, the arts make learning fun. Introducing curriculum-supportive, arts-based learning provides a varied and compelling environment—engage even the most reluctant learners and give day-dreamers a classroom as rich as their imagination.