

Eileen Yanoviak

Eileen grew up in the South, both in Texas and Arkansas, in largely segregated towns where the legacies of enslavement and racism endure. She moved to Louisville, Kentucky in 2012 to pursue a PhD in Art History at the University of Louisville. She has worked in higher education and museums for twenty years. She is now the director the Carnegie Center for Art and History in New Albany, Indiana, a unique institution that brings together art and history in a historic Carnegie Library Building. One of the mainstays of that museum is an ongoing commitment to telling the story of the Underground Railroad along the Ohio River.

Eileen is passionate about arts and culture as a means of communication and method of addressing difficult subjects from our past and present. In addition to her work at the museum overseeing operations, she enjoys working with young children to introduce them to literature, visual art, and social justice. In her spare time, she writes both scholarly and popular articles and books about art and history. She also enjoys reading and hiking, and she is mother to a 17 year old girl Lorelai and a 5 year old girl Claire.

Eileen shares the following:

The Underground Railroad is not an isolated moment in time. It did not begin and end with specific dates, and it wasn't about a formalized set of routes or leaders. Instead, it was acts of resistance, made by real people, that took many shapes and forms, culminating with the abolishment of slavery. Its legacy is long, and particularly relevant in the current fight for racial justice in America. Telling stories of real people, like that of Lucy Higgs Nichols, reminds us of the power of individual and collective action to bring about change.

There are a number of organizations in New Albany, Indiana that are committed to preserving and sharing African American history. Besides the Carnegie Center for Art and History, the Friends of the Town Clock Church help maintain the historic site of the Underground Railroad and the Friends of Division Street School that preserve the history of one of the first schools for African American children, active from 1885-1946.