



DISCUSSION GUIDE



FIRE OF FREEDOM

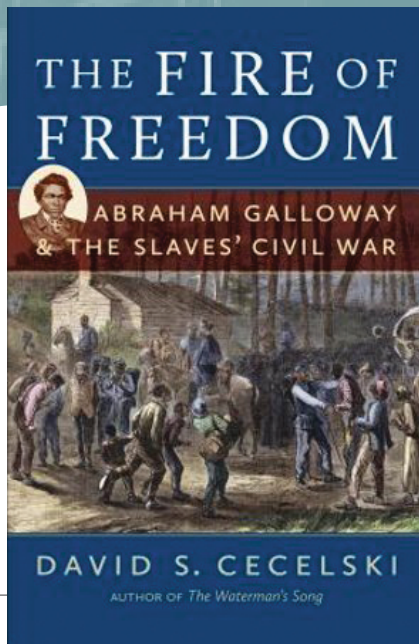


Mike Wiley Productions

FIRE OF FREEDOM DISCUSSION GUIDE

Synopsis

Abraham H. Galloway (1837-1870) was a fiery young slave rebel, radical abolitionist, and Union spy who rose out of bondage to become one of the most significant and stirring black leaders in the South during the Civil War. Throughout his brief, mercurial life, Galloway fought against slavery and injustice. He risked his life behind enemy lines, recruited black soldiers for the North, and fought racism in the Union army's ranks. He also stood at the forefront of an African-American political movement, even leading a historic delegation of black southerners to the White House to meet with President Lincoln and to demand the full rights of citizenship. He later became one of the first black men elected to the North Carolina legislature. Long hidden from history, Galloway's story reveals a war unfamiliar to most of us. This riveting portrait illuminates Galloway's life and deepens our insight into the Civil War and Reconstruction as experienced by African Americans in the South.



The Cast

Abraham Galloway: African-American male in his late twenties

Audience

Freemen and runaways

Place

Mary Ann Starkey's attic in New Bern, NC. A place where Sunday School and reading was taught to contraband, fugitive slaves and freed persons.

Time

Spring 1863

Other Referenced Historical Figures

Edward Kinsley – 19th century American businessman and abolitionist, envoy of President Lincoln

Mary Ann Starkey – Former slave who ran a New Bern boarding house NC frequented by Union Officers and an early social activist who co-founded the National Equal Rights League (1864), one of the South's first civil rights groups.

Abraham Lincoln – 16th President of the United States

Jefferson Davis – President of the Confederate States (1861-1865)

William Still – African-American abolitionist from Philadelphia, conductor on the Underground Railroad, businessman, historian, writer and civil rights activist.

John Brown – American abolitionist who advocated armed insurrection as the only way to eliminate slavery in the United States

George Stearn – American industrialist and merchant, abolitionist and recruiter of African-American soldiers for the Union Army

Governor Benjamin Butler – A major general of the Union Army and 33rd Governor of Massachusetts

Mary Elizabeth Bowser – Born a slave in Virginia, servant in the home of Jefferson Davis and Union spy

David Walker – A free Black man, a self-taught clothes dealer, abolitionist and writer

George Mink – A descendant of slaves brought to Canada, businessman and supporter of Black exiles from the United States.

Discussion Questions

- ▶ Consider Galloway's statement that "President Lincoln is no John Brown. His proclamation says we are free, but only in lands where white men have taken up arms against the government." Do you agree with his assertion that if the North could have won the Civil War without African-American soldiers they would have done so? Why or why not?
- ▶ Explain Galloway's statement that the North had to "sell" the civil war as the only way to hold the United States together. How is this different than history that teaches that the Civil War was fought to free slaves? What does this tell us about the perspectives from which history can be explained?
- ▶ Mary Elizabeth Bowser became an important Union spy based on her position in the home of Jefferson Davis. What does her ability to "hide in plain site" tell us about the perception of many southern citizens of the time regarding the abilities and intellect of African Americans? Are there other ways Galloway and his fellow abolitionists are able to take advantage of misperceptions like these to advance their cause?
- ▶ Discuss the story Galloway recounts of Young Thomas. He says, "Lives! That is the cost that is paid in this business. That is the way of it and the weight of it. That is what many more will have to pay, that is the tab Lincoln's man will give you with your commitment to the Union and fate will decide when it is due... So if death is the debt, so be it." How do you feel about Galloway's statement that he will gladly carry the weight of the death of young Thomas (and ultimately many others) for the rest of his life?
- ▶ Galloway asked for very specific conditions before he would agree to rally African-American troops for the Union cause - equal pay, Union uniforms, Union protection for captured African-American soldiers, financial support for the families of African-American soldiers, and education for African Americans. Do elements of the list surprise you? What does the fact that Union leaders agreed to the list tell us about their need for African-American troops?
- ▶ Galloway felt that in order for African-Americans to gain freedom from slavery, it was critical that they participate personally in the battle. Why was it important to him that African-Americans fight for freedom rather than wait for it to be bestowed upon them?
- ▶ Galloway believed that freedom should be gained through deception (slaves who served as spies), physical intimidation (a gun to Kinsley's head) and violence (the John Brown uprising) if necessary. Compare and contrast his beliefs with more modern civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X.



Recommended Reading

[The Fire of Freedom](#) by Dr. David Cecelski

[Abraham Galloway: From Cartridge Box to Ballot Box](#) by Philip Gerard for Our State

[The Stories: They Were There](#) from NC Museum of History

[Abraham Galloway](#) from NCPedia

Mike Wiley

Actor Playwright | [Mike Wiley Productions](#)

Acclaimed actor and playwright Mike Wiley has spent the last decade fulfilling his mission to bring educational theatre to young audiences and communities across the country. In the early days of his career, Wiley found few theatrical resources to shine a light on key events and figures in African-American history. To bring these stories to life, he started his own production company.

Through his performances, Wiley has introduced countless students and communities to the legacies of Emmett Till, Henry “Box” Brown and more. His recent works include a one-man play based on Dr. Timothy B. Tyson’s memoir *Blood Done Sign My Name*, *The Parchman Hour* (celebrating the 1961 Freedom Riders), *Downrange: Voices on the Homefront* (chronicling the challenges of military families post 9/11).

Most recently, Mike completed *Leaving Eden*, a Playmakers Reporatory Company commissioned work and collaboration with musician Laurelyn Dossett, that explores the cycles of history, human behavior race and economic disparity through inhabitants of a small North Carolina town.

Mike Wiley has a Masters of Fine Arts from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and received UNC’s Distinguished Alumnus Award by 2017, which recognizes alumni who have made outstanding contributions to humanity. In 2010 and 2014, Mike was named the Lehman Brady Visiting Joint Chair Professor in Documentary Studies and American Studies at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. In addition to his numerous school and community performances, he has also appeared on Discovery Channel, The Learning Channel and National Geographic Channel and has been featured in *Our State* magazine and on PBS’ North Carolina Now and WUNC’s *The State of Things*.



Howard L. Craft

[Fire of Freedom Playwright](#)

Howard L. Craft is a poet, playwright and arts educator from Durham, N.C. He is the author of a book of poems, *Across the Blue Chasm*, and close to twenty plays. Craft is also the writer and creator of the radio drama, *The Jade City Pharaoh*, which airs on WUNC.

Craft has twice won the North Carolina Central University New Play Project and has received the N.C. Arts Council Playwriting Fellowship. His play *The Wise Ones* was selected as a 2005 top production by Raleigh’s News & Observer. His most recent work, *Caleb Calypso & the Midnight Marauders*, was selected as one of the best scripts for the 2009 Theatre Season by the Independent Weekly. His plays have been produced at North Carolina Central University, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, the Carolina Theatre of Greensboro, N.C., and Manbites Dog Theatre, in Durham, N.C. During the school year, Craft reaches hundreds of children through the United Arts “Artists in the Schools” program, where he has conducted poetry residencies and student workshops (grades 3-12) since 2000. He has twice been named North Carolina judge of the National Endowment of the Arts’ Poetry Aloud. He was a member of the Duke University Young Writer’s Camp faculty from 2000-2010, specializing in experimental poetry and screenwriting, and has taught playwriting workshops for adults through the N.C. Writer’s Network and the Taller Portobello Art Colony in Portobello, Panama. He is currently the artist in residence for the Sonya Haynes Stone Black Cultural Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

David Celcelski

Author of The Fire of Freedom book

Historian David Celcelski is the author of *The Fire of Freedom: Abraham Galloway and the Slaves' Civil War*, on which this play is based. His work focuses almost exclusively on the places, people and politics of his home state of North Carolina. He is the recipient of an Outstanding Book Award from the Gustavis Myers Center for the Study of Human Rights and a Walter Hines Page Award for Literature and the co-recipient (with Dr. Timothy B. Tyson) of the N.C. Literary and Historical Association's Crittenten Award for lifetime achievement.

His books include *The Waterman's Song: Slavery and Freedom in Maritime North Carolina* (2001), *A Historian's Coast: Adventures into the Tidewater Past* (2000), and *Along Freedom Road: Hyde County, North Carolina*, and the *Fate of Black Schools in the South* (1994). He co-edited *Recollections of My Slavery Days* (1999) and *Democracy Betrayed: The Wilmington Race Riot of 1898 and Its Legacy* (1998).

Dr. Celcelski is a graduate of Duke University and Harvard Graduate School of Education. Celcelski was the Whichard Distinguished Visiting Professor in Humanities at East Carolina University in 2000-01. In 2001, 2002, 2003, and 2007, Dr. Celcelski was named the Lehman Brady Visiting Joint Chair Professor in Documentary Studies and American Studies at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

