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**Contact**

Brenda Shufelt, History Room Coordinator  
518-828-1792 x106  
brenda.shufelt@hudsonarealibrary.org

***So Many Souls: the Magnitude of Dutch Slavery in the Hudson Valley* by Michael Douma**

On **Sunday, October 5, 2-4pm** the African American Archive of Columbia County in collaboration with the Hudson Area Library will host the first of four talks in its Speaking about History lecture series.

Slavery in the North is a topic that not many people talk, or even know, about. Researchers have only in the past decade or so begun to take a deep look at urban northern areas, such as New York City – whose enslaved population was second only in size to that of the South.

Undoubtedly, whatever you heard about slavery reflects the southern perspective. Large plantations of poorly treated uneducated enslaved people living in ramshackle quarters under the ever vigilant and, oftentimes violent, eye of a white overseer. Enslaved mothers living in constant fear their children would be sold and sent far away. Tales of map-like quilts and dangerous escape routes abound.

But there is a far richer, more complex and unique slavery story just waiting to be told. It is not a better story, certainly not more humane. It is just different.

- It is the story of slavery in the Dutch settled upper Hudson River Valley (e.g. Columbia County). The story of the enslaved Africans who were brought to, what is now, Albany in 1627 - only a few years after Henry Hudson explored the river which would come to bear his name. By the late 1700s, Kinderhook had more enslaved people than any other place outside of New York City.
- It is the story of the Dutch farmers and the African people they enslaved for more than 200 years (until 1827). Having no more than a handful of enslaved, the farmers worked side-by-side with them in the fields and slept in the same house (albeit in different areas, the enslaved were relegated to the kitchen, cellar, or attic).
- It is the story of the enslaved who spoke Dutch, were skilled in several trades so that they could be leased out to other farms and as manumission approached, negotiated a status similar to an indentured servant. After emancipation, they often took the Dutch surnames of their former enslavers. And, - like other members of the Columbia County community - established their roots. They worked, married, established homes, had families, eventually died and were buried here.

In his ground-breaking work, *The Slow Death of Slavery in Dutch New York: A Cultural, Economic and Demographic History, 1700-1827* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2025), Professor Michael Douma provides a framework which brings these topics into context. Many issues come to the fore, are defined; while questions are raised and answered.

This book provides a new interpretation of Dutch American slavery which changes much of the traditional assumptions about slavery in New York.” Douma’s emphasis on demographics and economics shows that slavery in the 18<sup>th</sup> century was mostly rural, heavily Dutch and generally profitable through the cultivation of wheat.

Copies of Dr. Douma’s book will be available for sale. This is an in-person and Zoom event. To register for this program visit:

[https://www.eventbrite.com/e/so-many-souls-the-magnitude-of-dutch-slavery-in-the-hudson-valley-tickets-1702367871129?utm\\_experiment=test\\_share\\_listing&aff=ebdsshios](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/so-many-souls-the-magnitude-of-dutch-slavery-in-the-hudson-valley-tickets-1702367871129?utm_experiment=test_share_listing&aff=ebdsshios)

Michael J. Douma is an Associate Research Professor at Georgetown University's McDonough School of Business, where he is the director of the Institute for the Study of Markets and Ethics. He teaches courses in American and world history for Georgetown University. He has published widely on the history of Dutch Americans, slavery, and immigration.

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The **African American Archive of Columbia County**, New York exists to document, preserve, and share the deep history of Black people in the upper Hudson Valley. From their arrival with the Dutch Patroons in the 17th century, through today, the roots of our African forebears have been profoundly intertwined with the land and people of Columbia County. While hardly secret, this narrative is seldom told or taught in schools. Our mission is to lift the voices of our ancestors, bring our stories to light and life, and create a living chronicle that will honor our past and enlighten our future.

The **Hudson Area Library History Room** houses a collection that pertains to the history of the City of Hudson, Greenport and Stockport; as well as Columbia County and New York State. The History Room also hosts the Local History Speaker Series at the library, offering free monthly talks on diverse topics related to local history.

The **History Room** is open Saturdays, 10am-1pm and Wednesdays 6 - 8pm and by appointment. Online research requests for information on local history are available at [historyroom.hudsonarealibrary.org/](http://historyroom.hudsonarealibrary.org/). This is a free service to the public. To inquire about an appointment email [brenda.shufelt@hudsonarealibrary.org](mailto:brenda.shufelt@hudsonarealibrary.org) or call 518-828-1792 x106.

The **Hudson Area Library** is located at 51 N. 5th St. in Hudson, NY. The mission of the library is to enrich the quality of life by providing free and equal access to programs, services and

resources, and by creating opportunities for all members of our community to connect, create, learn and grow.

PHOTO CAPTION: Michael Douma, the author of *The Slow Death of Slavery in Dutch New York, 1700-1827* by Michael Douma (Cambridge Univ. Press, 2025)



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