

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER'S AWARD-WINNING "FREEDOM RISING" SHOW PERFORMED AT THE WHITE HOUSE IN CELEBRATION OF CONSTITUTION DAY

Philadelphia, PA (September 17, 2008) – The National Constitution Center's award-winning theatrical production, "Freedom Rising", was the centerpiece of a Constitution Day celebration in the East Room of the White House this morning for approximately 150 seventh – ninth graders from Washington D.C.-area schools. The show was performed at the request of First Lady Laura Bush who first saw the production last year during a visit to the National Constitution Center.

"On Constitution Day, people across America celebrate this founding document and we reaffirm our rights and responsibilities as American citizens," said First Lady Laura Bush. "Today is also a chance to remember the men and women who have helped our imperfect people live up to the ideals of the Constitution's most perfect ideals – people like Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony, who helped expand voting rights to all Americans."

"The inclusion of 'Freedom Rising' and our dramatic programming in this White House Constitution Day celebration is an incredible honor for the Center," said National Constitution Center President and CEO Joseph M. Torsella. "The Center's primary goal is to present the story of the Constitution in a direct, engaging and unforgettable way that inspires all Americans and helps people realize their role in the ongoing story of "We the People."

Following the performance, the children participated in an interactive discussion with a Constitution Center educator based on the final words of "Freedom Rising" – "What will you do with freedom?" The students shared ways in which they can make a difference in their communities.

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“Freedom Rising” is at the heart of the visitor experience at the National Constitution Center. Theatrical performances and interactive programming are signature ways in which the Center presents the constitutional narrative to the one million guests who visit the museum each year. This production, which is performed at the Center, as well as on the road, is just one of the important ways the Center creates a unique and personal experience for each individual visitor.

“Freedom Rising,” a state-of-the-art multimedia theater experience designed to connect visitors with the story of the U.S. Constitution, creates a stirring environment in which visitors come to see themselves as an important piece of the Constitution and the Constitution as a driving force in all of our lives. An abridged version of the 17-minute show was performed at the White House, containing many of the same multimedia components and dramatic storytelling as the original version performed at the National Constitution Center.

“Freedom Rising “ actors James Ijames, Justin Jain, and Susan Mckey were featured in this morning’s performance.

James William Ijames has worked in the Philadelphia area with The Arden Theatre Company, Gas and Electric Arts, New Paradise Laboratories, PTC, Philadelphia Young Playwrights and the Gloucester Stage Company. He has earned an Independent Reviewers of New England Award nomination for his work in *Ponies* with the Gloucester stage company.

Justin Jain’s credits include the Arden Theatre Company, Interact Theatre Company, People’s Light and Theatre Company, The Wilma Theatre, The McCarter Theatre, Mum Puppettheatre, PlayPenn, and several other Philadelphia-based companies. Recent original work includes Philly Fringe hits *The Jersey Devil* and *The Giant Squid*. Jain is also a teaching artist for Philadelphia Young Playwrights, Arden Theatre Company, the University of the Arts, and People’s Light and Theatre Company.

Susan McKey has been a member of the Artistic Company at People’s Light and Theatre in Malvern, PA for over 20 years. She has acted in more than 50 performances, including *Goodnight Desdemona*, *Good Morning Juliet*, for which she won the first ever Barrymore Award

ADD TWO/FREEDOM RISING AT THE WHITE HOUSE

for Excellence in Theater for a Supporting Actress in a Play in 1995. As a company member at People's Light and Theatre, she has performed in *Sherlock Holmes and the Case of the Jersey Lily*, *The Skin of Our Teeth*, and *Splittin' the Raft*.

The traveling version of "Freedom Rising" has been performed across the country. To book "Freedom Rising" for an upcoming event, call 215.409.6748 or e-mail freedomrising@constitutioncenter.org.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia's Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive, multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, "Freedom Rising". The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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