



THE
POPPAW
QUEEN



FILM GUIDE



TABLE OF CONTENTS

A LETTER FROM MALACHI E. ROBINSON	3
THE POPPAW QUEEN	4
THE VOICES OF POWER	5
THE POSTER	7
THE FREEDOM SUITS	8
THE GU272	10
THE CALL FOR REPARATIONS	11
THE RESOURCES	12



MALACHI E. ROBINSON

DIRECTOR OF 'THE POPPAW QUEEN'

The journey that led to **The Poppaw Queen** documentary began in December 2022, but in truth, it started long before that. As a descendant of **Mary Queen**, I have felt a deep calling to share her story—her resilience, her courage, and her fight for justice. **Mary Queen** never stopped telling her story, and it is now our mission to carry on her legacy, to say her name, and to keep her voice alive for future generations.



Throughout this journey, I have been determined to continue sharing the history of **Mary Queen** and her descendants because their story is not just one of the past, but one that resonates deeply with the struggles we face today. This documentary is more than just a film; it is a call to action, a catalyst for reflection, and a way to foster meaningful conversations around reparative justice.

As a filmmaker, storyteller, and creative director, my work has always been driven by a desire to inspire a revolution—whether through film, music, wellness, or collaborative art. With **The Poppaw Queen**, I have aimed to honor the powerful legacy of my ancestors while igniting new conversations about justice and healing. This film recently won 'Best Documentary' at the 2024 Prince George's Film Festival, an honor that strengthens my resolve to continue elevating stories that matter.

I invite you to join me in this movement—not just to watch this film, but to engage with its message, reflect on its implications, and be part of the ongoing fight for justice. Now, more than ever, we must stand up, say who we are, and ensure that the legacy of **Mary Queen** lives on.

With gratitude and hope,
Malachi E. Robinson, Director of **The Poppaw Queen**

WHO IS THE POPPAW QUEEN?

Mary Queen, often referred to as the "**Poppaw Queen**" or "Queen Mary," was a free woman of color born between 1680 and 1690 near the Popayán Province in South America. Her remarkable life journey began during the tumultuous period of Queen Anne's War when she embarked on a two-year voyage to England after the British privateer Captain Woodes Rogers attacked the port town of Guayaquil, Ecuador. Around 1715, Mary found herself in the colony of Maryland, brought to the South River Hundred in Anne Arundel County by Captain Thomas Larkin.

Despite entering an indenture with merchant-planter James Carroll at his Fingaul plantation, Mary was never set free. Instead, she was illegally enslaved, a fate she shared with her children and their descendants. James Carroll's will passed Fingaul Plantation and other properties to the Jesuits, who continued to enslave Mary and her family for generations. Her daughters, Nanny and Phillis, remained at Fingaul, while Mary and her son, Ralph, were moved to the Jesuit-owned 'Old Bohemia' plantation in Cecil County, Maryland.

Mary Queen's descendants, including those from the maternal lines of Nanny and Phillis, would carry her legacy forward. By 1796, some of these descendants bravely petitioned for their freedom in the courts of Maryland and Washington, D.C., on the grounds that Mary was born a free woman. While some were able to reclaim their freedom, others remained enslaved by the Maryland Jesuits.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How does **Mary Queen's** story reflect the complexities of race, freedom, and enslavement in colonial America?
- What impact do you think Mary's illegal enslavement had on her descendants, and how does that connect to the ongoing conversations around reparations?
- Why is it important to remember and tell stories like **Mary Queen's** in today's world?
- How does the resilience of **Mary Queen** and her descendants inspire reflection on the broader history of enslaved families in America?



By engaging with the story of Mary Queen, we honor her struggle for freedom and justice, and her fight continues to inspire critical conversations today.

THE VOICES OF POWER

MEET THE POETS

Rina Campbell, also known as Pi-Anir the Poet, is a seasoned writer, spoken word artist, and published author whose work explores themes of resilience, love, and empowerment. With over two decades of experience, she has captivated audiences through performances that blend passion with profound introspection. Her words seek to elevate the voices of the underrepresented, creating spaces for healing and transformation. As a producer, Rina crafts dynamic experiences through live shows, workshops, or films, engaging audiences in meaningful dialogue and artistic expression. Her storytellings reflect her commitment to nurturing the next generation of creatives. Rina's artistry is deeply influenced by her upbringing with her great-grandmother and her life as a wife and mother, bringing an authentic warmth to her work. Dedicated to the power of words, Rina continues to innovate and inspire, leaving a lasting impact on her community.



**“We hold these truths to be self-evident:
Yet we know the lies to be our lived experience.”**

**“To thy kingdom, I come in chains
For your will to be done
Over, and over, and over, and over
again without our consent”**



Austin Brown a.k.a “Sound Cloud Poet” is a Georgia raised, Maryland based lyrical artist who experiments with spoken word poetry, written verse, narrative prose, and screenwriting. Drawing heavily from artistic influences such as beast coast hip-hop, 70's soul music, and contemporary jazz, Brown's head bopping brand of poetry has become easily recognizable across reoccurring audiences who often cite his work as sounding more like rap lyrics than reflective poetry. Above all, his creative goal is to utilize the maximum capability of the written word in advocating for those who have been neglected or disenfranchised.



The targets placed on our backs ensure that equality is only found in the eye of the beholder.



Left on the block, disqualified before you ever could ever had the



There is royalty in my vocal cords.



It is hard when you aren't welcome in the house you built.



You could be worth your weight in gold but if your skin is just a little too bronze

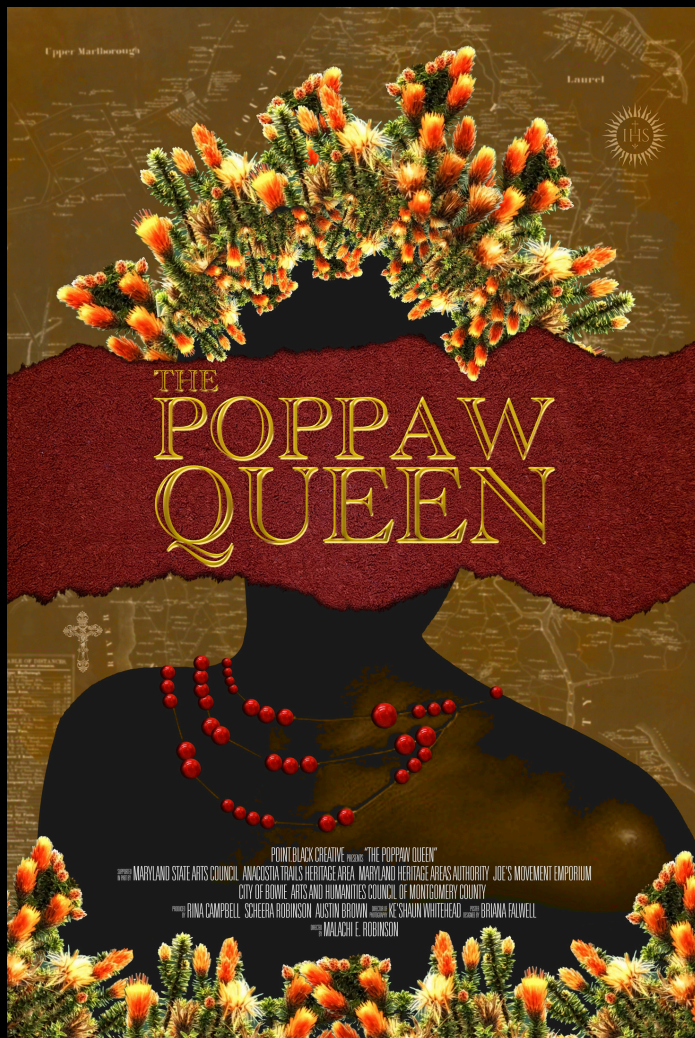


Yet we can't see the finish line if it's constantly being moved.

BEHIND THE POSTER

MEET THE ARTIST

Briana Falwell (she/her) is a versatile multimedia designer whose introverted personality and impeccable eye for detail offer her a unique perspective on life, which often translates into her art. She finds solace and inspiration in the quiet moments. Beyond design, Briana passionately creates inclusive spaces where everyone can find inspiration, peace, and connection. She loves to travel and is a cat mom to Delano and Biscotti.



“I wanted to channel the strength she had for not only others but herself. The gold title symbolizes power; her necklace is made of red coral, which symbolizes royalty and prestige in Nigeria; her crown and dress are made from the national flower of Ecuador, sometimes referred to as "the walking flower" which means: walk with your head held high.”

-Briana Falwell

THE FREEDOM SUITS

In **The Poppaw Queen** documentary, freedom suits play a pivotal role in the historical fight for justice for many Queen descendants. These lawsuits, filed by enslaved individuals in the Thirteen Colonies and later the United States, were courageous legal battles where enslaved individuals challenged their owners to claim their right to freedom. Often, these claims were based on their descent from a free maternal ancestor or their time spent in a free state or territory. Freedom suits became a powerful tool, revealing the deep cracks in the system of slavery and offering a glimpse into the resilience and determination of those who sought their own liberation against tremendous odds.

John Ashton, a complex figure, is a Jesuit missionary whose role in early American Catholicism is deeply entangled with the dark legacy of slavery. Born in Ireland in 1742, Ashton became a prominent leader in Maryland's Catholic community, helping to establish Georgetown University and serving as Procurator General under the leadership of Rev. John Carroll. Yet, beneath his influential contributions to the Church, Ashton was also a slaveholder, owning as many as 82 enslaved people by 1790.

Ashton's story takes a dramatic turn with the brave resistance of the Queen and Mahoney families, whose lawsuits against him represent powerful acts of defiance. In 1791, Edward Queen sued Ashton for assault, battery, and false imprisonment—and won. This victory sparked a broader movement, leading to twelve members of the Queen family fleeing Ashton's control and others petitioning for their freedom, eventually gaining it through the courts. These events illustrate the relentless pursuit of liberty by enslaved individuals, even within the walls of the Church.



**“For us ...
Freedom
here, ain’t
free.”**

THE FREEDOM SUITS

The Mahoney family's battle for freedom against Ashton was equally fierce. Charles Mahoney sued Ashton in 1791, claiming his descent from a free ancestor, Ann Joice. Despite years of legal wrangling and an initial ruling in Mahoney's favor, the decision was eventually overturned on appeal. However, the fight continued, with Ashton eventually manumitting several members of the Mahoney family in the early 1800s, including Charles and his brothers.

This segment of the documentary reveals the deep contradictions within figures like Ashton, who, while shaping early American institutions, upheld a system of human bondage. The freedom suits brought by the Queen and Mahoney families highlight the powerful intersection of law, religion, and the quest for justice, offering a gripping glimpse into the courage of those who resisted enslavement against all odds.

The 1810 case of *Queen v. Hepburn* shines a powerful light on the legal hurdles faced by enslaved individuals fighting for their freedom. In 1813, Mima and Louisa Queen brought their case to the U.S. Supreme Court, seeking emancipation in Washington, D.C. Chief Justice John Marshall, however, ruled against them, citing property laws and dismissing crucial testimony as hearsay. This decision underscored the cold legal logic that prioritized property rights over human freedom. Not all justices agreed—Gabriel Duvall, in a bold dissent, argued that hearsay should be admissible in such life-changing cases. His stance highlighted how these legal battles weren't just about technicalities, but about recognizing the humanity of the enslaved. This landmark case not only impacted the Queens' fight for freedom but also became a cornerstone in American law for establishing "the hearsay rule," shaping legal proceedings for generations to come.

“Our ancestors, dreaming of Freedom while living in a nightmare, deferred prayers... their supplication to the creator for a place they could call home.”



THE GU272

In 1838, the Maryland Jesuits made a decision that would echo across generations. To save Georgetown University from bankruptcy, they sold more than 300 enslaved men, women, and children to sugar plantations in southern Louisiana. Over the next five years, from 1838 to 1843, 314 lives were uprooted, forever changed by this sale. Today, these individuals are remembered as the "The GU272". Through painstaking research, genealogists have traced the stories and names of many of the original enslaved people, along with nearly 10,000 of their descendants. Their legacies endure, connecting the past to the present, and casting new light on the hidden foundations of one of America's oldest universities.

REMEMBERING THE SURNAMES OF THE GU272 ANCESTORS

WARE

GOUGH

SCOTT

ADAMS

FORD

BUTLER

HAWKINS

BROWN

HARRIS

QUEEN

JONES

BLACKLOCK

MAHONEY

GREENLIEF

DIGGS

HARRISON

WEST

WINDERRY

BARNS

PLOWDEN

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Georgetown University has formally acknowledged its historical ties to slavery. In your opinion, what role should institutions play in addressing their past involvement in slavery? What steps might be meaningful for these institutions to undertake?
- Is it possible to separate an institution's achievements from the origins of its financial stability?
- Some have argued that institutions linked to slavery should offer reparations to descendants. What are some of the benefits and challenges associated with this idea? In what forms might reparations or other forms of acknowledgment be offered?
- How would you feel if you discovered your family's history was connected to a story like that of the GU272? How might you carry forward the legacy of those ancestors?

THE CALL FOR REPARATIONS

The story of Mary Queen, a South American woman trafficked to Maryland in 1715, embodies the haunting legacy of forced servitude and the generations impacted by unacknowledged injustices. Mary was brought to America as an indentured servant, yet she never attained the freedom she was promised. Her resilience, however, endured through time, empowering her descendants to seek justice in the courts. For others, like those who would later be sold to settle Georgetown University's debts in 1838, freedom remained out of reach, yet their enduring strength laid the groundwork for a call to action today.

The lasting impact of Mary Queen's legacy forces us to confront the pervasive debts owed by historical institutions that were built through the exploitation of enslaved labor. This documentary delves into the question: *What is owed to the descendants of free and forced labor?*

In calling for reparations, we advocate for resources essential to healing—mental health support, housing equity, maternal health services, and so much more. This is a call to acknowledge the profound contributions of those who came before us and to fulfill our moral obligation to their descendants. The time to advocate is now, as we seek to repair what history has too long ignored.

**"True progress will never be attained until this country acknowledges and atones for its original sin: slavery. Only through meaningful reparations can we begin to repair the damage and pave the way for a just future."
—Malachi E. Robinson**



THE RESOURCES

Start your journey today by visiting the links below.

“Reparations Now Toolkit” by M4BL ([click here to view](#))

“The Case For Reparations” by Ta-Nehisi Coates ([click here to watch](#))

“The History of Reparations” - PBS Series ([click here to watch](#))

“The Poppaw Queen Chronicles” - YouTube Series ([click here to watch](#))

Learn more about the film: bit.ly/thepoppawqueenfilm

