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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Schuyler Flatts Burial Project lays former enslaved to rest**

Memorial service and burial scheduled for June 17 and 18

**Albany, NY** – In 2005, the human remains of 14 individuals—6 women, 1 man, 2 children, and 5 infants—were discovered during a construction project in Colonie. Hartgen Archeological Associates and the bioarchaeologists from the New York State Museum were contacted, and they were able to ascertain that the remains were nearly 200 years old and they were found on land that once belonged to the colonial Schuyler family, the family that had enslaved them.

This summer, after many years of study, the remains will finally be laid to rest, with the dignity and respect they deserve.

The effort to honor and rebury these individuals has been a dream of many, including Evelyn Kamili King, who chairs the Schuyler Flatts Burial Ground Project, and has insisted from the beginning that these individuals receive a proper burial. "I want to make sure the Capital District will be known as a city that has an African Burial Ground and landmark, and to educate all people concerning the history of slavery in NYS," says King. "These types of conversations can help to remedy the problems of racism in the U.S."

On June 17, from 12pm to 8pm, the remains will lie in state at Schuyler Mansion State Historic Site.

"We thought it was proper that they be honored in this way. This was something that never would have happened to an enslaved individual, to someone of African descent, and so we thought that it would be appropriate," says Cordell Reaves, a member of the Schuyler Flatts Burial Project, and Historic Interpretation and Preservation Analyst for the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. During the service, the individuals will be on view in containers constructed by local artists and craftsmen.

Music and poetry will be performed and the public is invited to attend and pay their respects, and learn more about the life that these individuals endured.

"Slavery was part of life in New York, they were a large part of the population, and I think these individuals deserve to be remembered," Reaves says.

On June 18, 11am -12pm, the remains will be buried in the Founder's Hill section of historic St. Agnes Cemetery, in plots provided and prepared by the Albany Diocesan Cemeteries. The interdenominational ceremony will be presided over by local clergy and community leaders. An engraved marker, donated by the Town of Colonie, will stand at the head of the graves.

"The wholeness of the living is diminished when the ancestors are not honored," says Manye (Queen Mother) Leah Penniman. Initiated and enstooled in Odumase-Krobo, Ghana, Penniman practices Vodun, and will be among the clergy presiding over the burial on June 18. "I believe that the dead are not under the earth. They are with us in our breath, our hearts, our thoughts, and in the natural environment that surrounds us. They are a source of guidance and the compass needle pointing toward good character. In showing respect to our ancestors, we move our community in the direction of justice, compassion, and truth."

Sister Katherine Arsenau, a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet Leadership Team, will also assist with the burial services for these individuals. "I am thrilled to be involved. More importantly, we strive to be Catholics who recognize others far beyond their reverence....this is wonderful," says Sister Katherine.

CDTA has donated a bus to transport people to and from the memorial service free of charge. Pick up will take place at the "Best for Less" store on the corner of Clinton and Lark Street at 9:30 and 10:15am. Please sign up in advance with Brother Anthony at (518) 210-7368 or Ms. Keen at the Arbor Hill Community Center, (518) 434-0583.