

**BOSTON  
LYRIC  
OPERA**

**JUNE 13, 2026**  
The West End Museum

# SHE WAS THERE

**FILM SCREENING &  
PANEL DISCUSSION**



**BOSTON  
LYRIC  
OPERA**



**Museum of  
African American  
History**  
Boston | Nantucket

**ROX  
ROXBURY INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL  
FILM**

**WEM**  
THE WEST END MUSEUM

**Everyone250**

**MA  
250**

**OPERA  
AMERICA**

**VOICES OF  
REVOLUTION**

# GREETINGS FROM BOSTON LYRIC OPERA AND SHE WAS THERE PARTNERS

As we gather for *She Was There*, we invite you into a shared act of remembrance, reflection, and recognition. Across these two days of film, music, conversation, and community, we honor Black women whose courage and imagination helped shape this nation — even when history failed to fully record their contributions.

*She Was There* emerged through a spirit of partnership and trust among organizations committed to exploring history through multiple lenses. This collaboration asks us to consider not only the past, but our relationship to it. And we'll explore how we might listen differently when we place Black women — revolutionaries, abolitionists, organizers, mothers, artists, and world-builders — at the heart of the American story.

The women honored throughout this program acted from profound motivations: love, self-preservation, care for children and community, devotion to family, and the determination to build freer futures than society would otherwise allow. As historian Dr. Karen Cook Bell wrote, "Under the daily threat of bodily harm [Black women] imagined the possibility of freedom and transformed that possibility into a lived reality." Through their agency, ingenuity, love, fearlessness, and unwavering dedication, these women carved a new path into a world that did not yet exist.

Thank you for joining us to honor the bold stories and contributions of these important women throughout history. We hope it is a meaningful experience.

With appreciation,

**Sebastian Belfanti** *Executive Director, The West End Museum*

**Ashleigh Gordon** *Artistic Director & Co-Founder, Castle of Our Skins*

**Nina Yoshida Nelsen** *Artistic Director, Boston Lyric Opera*

**Lisa Simmons** *Artistic & Executive Director, Roxbury International Film Festival*

**Dr. Noelle N. Trent** *President & CEO, Museum of African American History*

**Bradley Vernatter** *Stanford Calderwood General Director & CEO, Boston Lyric Opera*

**Dr. Ciyadh Wells** *Executive Director, Castle of Our Skins*

# SHE WAS THERE

Curated by the **Roxbury International Film Festival**,  
this program connects two extraordinary  
women across centuries:

**Elizabeth Freeman (Mumbet)**,  
who bravely sued for—and won—her freedom in 1781,  
helping to end slavery in Massachusetts.

**Fannie Lou Hamer**,  
a force of the Civil Rights Movement  
whose moral courage reshaped  
voting rights advocacy in the 1960s.

Following the screening, journalist **Tina Martin McDuffie**  
moderates a conversation with:

**Joy Elaine Davenport**  
*filmmaker*

**Dr. Noelle N. Trent**  
*President & CEO, Museum of  
African American History*

**Kyera Singleton**  
*Executive Director, Royall House  
& Slave Quarters*

Guests are invited to explore the West End Museum's  
permanent exhibition ***Rise, Fall, Rebirth: Stories of the West End***,  
including interactive biographies of Black women abolitionists  
and a neighborhood Black History scavenger hunt.

The films shown at today's event are *Fannie Lou Hamer's America*  
and *Elizabeth Freeman: Trailblazer for Freedom*.

# BOSTON LYRIC OPERA

**BRADLEY VERNATTER**

Stanford Calderwood General Director & CEO

**NINA YOSHIDA NELSEN**

Artistic Director

**DAVID ANGUS**

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