



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MARYLAND WOMEN'S HERITAGE CENTER HOSTS NATIONAL BOOK LAUNCH AND FREE BOOK SIGNING SPECIAL EVENT WITH AWARD-WINNING LOCAL CHILDREN'S AUTHOR JERDINE NOLEN

Meet Children's Author Jerdine Nolen of Ellicott City, Md., as She Speaks about her Newest Book and First Novel, "Eliza's Freedom Road: An Underground Railroad Diary," on Saturday, January 22, 2 – 4 p.m., at the Maryland Women's Heritage Center

BALTIMORE – Award-winning local children's author Jerdine Nolen of Ellicott City, Md., speaks about her newest book and first novel, "Eliza's Freedom Road: An Underground Railroad Diary," on **Saturday, January 22, 2 – 4 p.m.** This official national book launch takes place at the Maryland Women's Heritage Center located at 39 West Lexington Street (at the corner of Lexington and Liberty Streets) in downtown Baltimore.

Co-sponsored by the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture, Girl Scouts of Central Maryland, and WomanTalk Live, this special event includes a meet and greet and book signing with children's author Jerdine Nolen. Copies of "Eliza's Freedom Road: An Underground Railroad Diary," are also available for purchase. Admission is free.

"Eliza's Freedom Road: An Underground Railroad Diary" is Jerdine Nolen's first novel and latest book. Geared towards readers' ages 8 – 12 years old, it is an historical fiction book written in a diary format telling the story of a 12-year-old slave girl named Eliza and her journey to freedom.

About the book, Jerdine Nolen notes, "This story draws much of its inspiration from a constant theme in human experience: the act of traveling to go to a better way of life."

Alma Powell, wife of former Secretary of State Colin Powell, said, "A story of hope, determination, and the triumph of human spirit."

Jerdine Nolen is an award-winning children's author and former elementary school teacher from Ellicott City, Md. She is the author of numerous picture books. Her best-known books include *Raising Dragons*, illustrated by Elise Primavera, which was a SHOW ME Readers Award winner and received the Christopher Award, and *Harvey Potter's Balloon Farm*, illustrated by Mark Buehner, which was an ALA Notable Book and an IRA-CBC Children's Choice. She and Kadir Nelson collaborated on *Thunder Rose*, winner of a Coretta Scott King award for illustration, and *Hewitt Anderson's Great Big Life*, which received the Society of Illustrators' Gold Medal. Recently, *Plantzilla*, illustrated by David Catrow, was named a BOOKSENSE 76 Selection. Her most recent picture book is *Christmas in the Time of Billy Lee*, a family story about a young girl and her imaginary friend, Billy Lee, released in September 2010.

For more information, visit www.MDWomensHeritageCenter.org or call 410-767-0675.

Editor's Note: To arrange an interview with Jerdine Nolen, please contact Cheryl Knauer at cknauer@nevinspr.com or 410-568-8808.

Images of Jerdine Nolen and the "Eliza's Freedom Road: An Underground Railroad Diary" book jacket are available upon request.

The Maryland Women's Heritage Center was established to preserve the past, understand the present, and shape the future by recognizing, respecting, and transmitting the experiences and contributions of Maryland women of diverse backgrounds and from all regions of the state.

The first comprehensive state-based effort of its kind in the nation, it provides a place to learn and teach about the contributions of Maryland women through the State's history, to develop leadership by girls and women, and to hold forums to address issues impacting girls, women and their families. The Center is an outgrowth of the Maryland Women's History Project that began in 1980 as a collaborative venture between the Maryland Commission for Women and the Maryland State Department of Education. It provides a home to the Maryland Women's Hall of Fame, which has inducted outstanding women since 1985, coordinated by the Women Legislators of Maryland and the Maryland Commission for Women.

Partners of the Maryland Women's Heritage Center are the Maryland Commission for Women, Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland State Education Association, WomanTalk Live, Maryland Public Television (MPT), Girl Scouts of Central Maryland, YWCA of the Greater Baltimore area, Center for Transnational Women's Issues, School Girls Unite, Focus on Women Magazine, and The Women's Journals.



S I M O N & S C H U S T E R
CHILDREN'S PUBLISHING DIVISION

"ELIZA'S FREEDOM ROAD: AN UNDERGROUND RAILROAD DIARY"

By Jerdine Nolen

In the year 1854, the only life Eliza has ever known is the life of a slave in Alexandria, Virginia. Ever since Eliza's mother was traded to work for another family, she has been on her own, save for the guidance of her Master's cook, Abbey. At least Eliza has her mother's quilt and the years of stories her mother used to tell her. When her Mistress gets sick and Master talks of trading Eliza, she decides to finally escape and journey north to Canada.

Eliza's struggle for independence, interlaced with the narratives passed down to her by her mother, provides an inspiring tribute to the power of storytelling and the endurance of the human spirit. Young readers will love reading Eliza's mother's stories throughout the text, and educators will find this an excellent tool for units on slavery, American history and African-American heritage. Readers who follow Eliza on her trek can watch her character grow and will reap the rewards of an empowering end to this well-crafted historical tale.

ELIZA'S FREEDOM ROAD

By Jerdine Nolen

Paula Wiseman Books

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