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## **'12 Years' descendants proud of family history**

### **Movie about Solomon Northup inspires relatives here**

**Byline: Donyelle Davis**

Born a free man in upstate New York - then later kidnapped and sold into slavery - Solomon Northup's story, now a film, is not just entertainment for his Rochester-native descendants.

Northup's biopic, *12 Years a Slave*, named after his 1853 memoir, details his treacherous journey through slavery from 1841 to 1853 on major Louisiana cotton plantations.

"My sufferings," Northup wrote: "I can compare to nothing else than the burning agonies of hell!"

Northup was born in Minerva, Essex County, and worked as a successful musician, cab driver and carpenter in Saratoga Springs, Saratoga County, for years before his abduction in Washington, D.C. He worked on different plantations, owned by some he praised for their humanity and others he criticized for their cruelty.

"I read the book myself three times, and each time I had a different emotion, but overall, I'm very, very proud," said Kevin Linzy, 51, Northup's great-great-great-grandson. "I really want not just Rochester, but the world to know about Solomon Northup, what he did and what he stood for at that time."

The family, including Linzy's sisters Deirdre Linzy and Melissa Archie, learned about their history in the late 1990s after visiting Saratoga Springs for the annual Solomon Northup Day celebration, held in July.

Northup's narrative presents a plethora of messages and lessons that his descendants believe could be placed in a modern context.

"He constantly faced all kind of adversities, but at the same time, he knew who he was inside," said Archie. "He had faith that sooner or later (he would be free). I would like young people to take from that, that you could do anything you put your mind to."

The Linzys said they were not directly involved in the movie's production and found out about the film shortly after its release, but agreed that the movie's portrayal was powerful and authentic. They wish their grandmother, Victoria Northup Linzy Dunham, who died in 2007 at 98 years old, could have had a chance to see the film, which is nominated for nine Academy Awards, including Best Picture.

"They didn't do the typical Hollywood-style and blow it out of proportion, they actually followed the book," said Deirdre Linzy. "Some of the scenes were really, really hard to watch."

Immediate Northup family members will be participating in a photo shoot Sunday with Hollywood Weekly at the Eastman House.

Beyond the film and pop culture buzz, Darren Wagner, Northup's great-great-great-grandson, read the book as a teenager and said he has learned lessons from it that he has taken with him throughout his life.

"As a younger black man, I will never be faced with any of those challenges or obstacles in my life that I can even imagine like what Grandpa Northup went through," he said. "So every challenge and obstacle that I do have, is somewhat nothing compared to his, so there is no reason that I can't accomplish or get past it."

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**Art caption:** An undated copied illustration of Solomon Northup "in his plantation suit."  
Provided by Kevin Linzy

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