

# Voyage to Discovery

Untold Stories of African-Americans and the Sea



Clockwise from top left: Seamen on a fishing boat leaving from the coast; African-American sailor at the wheel; Rear Admiral Michelle Howard; African-American crewmen on deck; Robert Smalls; members of the National Association of Black Scuba Divers. Center: Captain William T. Shorey and his family.

While still a slave, Frederick Douglass worked as a ship caulker at Fell's Point in Baltimore, Md. Ralph Ellison, arguably one of the greatest writers in American history, sailed as a United States merchant mariner during World War II. James Forten, a prominent abolitionist who owned a successful sail-making company, became one of the wealthiest blacks in post-Colonial America.

For African-Americans who worked waterlogged docks in long-ago autumns, and those who today sail the ocean on sleek, high-tech sloops, the call of the sea reverberates across generations and time.

In recognition of African-American contributions to the nation's maritime heritage, NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries, Murrain Associates, Inc., and the National Association of Black Scuba Divers present "Voyage to Discovery," a multimedia education initiative. This initiative aims to inspire more African-Americans to pursue marine career opportunities by highlighting their maritime heritage through *education, archaeology, science, and underwater exploration!*

## African-Americans in Maritime History Inspire Opportunity

- Captain Absalom Boston, a free black born in 1785, headed an all-black crew aboard the whaling schooner *Industry* and amassed substantial real estate holdings.
- Robert Smalls was a slave who became a Civil War hero in the Union Navy and served as a congressman from South Carolina during Reconstruction.
- Captain Hugh Mulzac became the first African-American merchant marine naval officer to command an integrated crew during World War II.
- Bill Pinkney became one of the first black men to sail solo around the world in 1992. In 1998, he set sail on a historic voyage to retrace the "Middle Passage" slave trade routes.
- Rear Admiral Michelle Howard, three days after taking command of the U.S. Navy's counter-piracy task force, coordinated the tactical plan to rescue the captain of the cargo ship *Maersk Alabama*, who had been taken hostage by pirates.

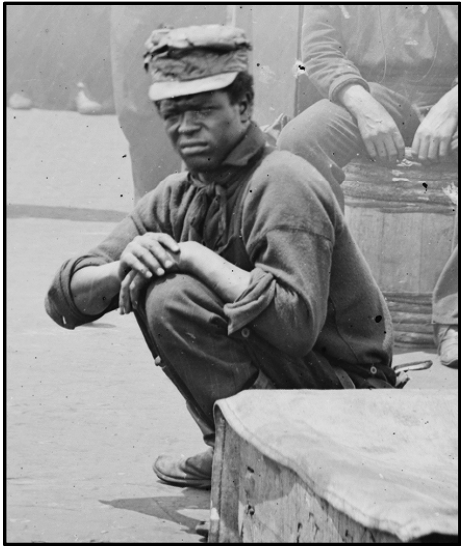
### Dive Deeper

To learn more about African-American maritime heritage and marine career opportunities, visit:

<http://voyagetodiscovery.org>

Connecting Communities to the Ocean  
A Journey through African-American Maritime Heritage





Siah Carter on the deck of the USS *Monitor*. Credit: The Mariners' Museum

Journey with NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries' Maritime Heritage Program as scuba divers embark on the program's core mission: To explore the ocean depths in an effort to **identify** a sunken shipwreck that best illustrates African-American maritime experience and underscores notable seafaring achievements of the past and present.

Voyage to Discovery represents an unprecedented opportunity to **educate** the public about African-American participation in U.S. maritime affairs from the period of pre-Civil War slavery to today.

According to historian W. Jeffrey Bolster, author of "Black Jacks: African-American Seamen in the Age of Sail," African-American seafarers were an important sector of the country's maritime labor force from the 1740s to the 1860s.

Blacks **shaped** mariner culture and the identity of free black communities. Both free blacks and slaves found opportunity, dignity, and freedom as seamen despite harsh working conditions.

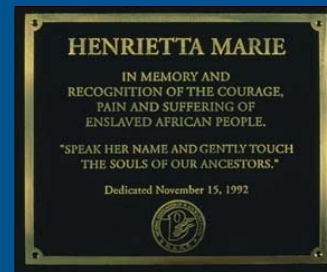
African-Americans **worked** as skippers and captains as well as whalers, lobstermen, fishermen and cooks. They also managed lighthouses, steered paddleboats and warships, and owned seaside businesses.

Voyage to Discovery **aspires** to bring the stories of these largely unheralded pioneers to the public's attention, with additional **outreach** directed toward African-American communities and students. In collaboration with our partners, we hope these stories will become a source of community pride and inspiration; foster increased participation in marine science **education and careers**; and help encourage greater ocean conservation awareness among African-Americans.

Voyage to Discovery honors African-Americans' deep connection to the sea and celebrates the optimism of the human spirit. Your **participation** in Voyage to Discovery is critical to the project's success, and we invite you to join us in our quest at <http://voyagetodiscovery.org>.

## Remembering the *Henrietta Marie*

In 1699, the *Henrietta Marie* sailed from London to West Africa with a cargo of pewter, beads, and other English goods, which were to be exchanged for ivory and enslaved Africans. The next stop was Jamaica, where the captain sold the cargo of Africans to plantation owners. On the journey home in July 1700, a storm sank the ship off the coast of Key West, Fla. Treasure salvagers found the *Henrietta Marie* in 1972, the only slave ship ever found in U.S. waters.



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Shackles, cannon balls, and the ship's bell were among the artifacts recovered from the vessel. In 1993, members of the National Association of Black Scuba Divers placed a memorial plaque and monument on the wreck site to commemorate the people who died aboard the *Henrietta Marie* and those lost during the Middle Passage.



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**Take a Voyage to Discovery and Join Us on the Journey!**

**For additional information on Voyage to Discovery, contact us at:**

**Email:** [info@voyagetodiscovery.org](mailto:info@voyagetodiscovery.org)

**Web:** <http://voyagetodiscovery.org>