This art installation was collaboratively created by 84 seventh and eighth grade young men of color and their educators from Buffalo Public School’s My Brother’s Keeper program. It was designed and facilitated by MBK curriculum designer and instructor Jason M. Hall and the MBK instructional team under the direction of Dr. Fatima Morrell, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction.

The MBK Team sincerely thanks all who take the time to view our scholars’ work and interact with their exhibit.
The Freedom Collage Symbolism

**Burlap** – A common material used for the storage and shipping of goods on the triangular trade routes, burlap was also used by slaves to make clothing and a variety of other items.

**Colored scraps of clothing** – The red, yellow, green and black clothing scraps represent the colors of the Freedom Seekers’ homeland. The jean and colorless scraps represent the few types of materials given to slaves to make their own clothing. In joining these scraps of clothing, we represent the origin and the return of the vibrant color patterns of the Freedom Seekers and their ancestors. The colored cloths also honor the vibrant work of Gullah artist Diane Britton Dunham which we studied for inspiration.

**Drift wood** – The drift wood was collected on the rocky shores of Lake Erie, near the Peace Bridge and Broderick Park, in the exact location where Freedom Seekers crossed the swift paced Niagara River into Canada. This wood is soaked with the same water that soaked the Freedom Seekers as they made their way across the border.

**Broken chain link** – We incorporated a broken chain link to honor and symbolize the Freedom Seekers who began their journey to freedom the exact moment they broke free from their chains. With this chain link, we also honor the Tula Monument of Curacao, the Path to Freedom sculpture in Facer Park in Sandusky, Ohio, and the Emancipation Statue in Barbados, all of which we studied for inspiration and also of which incorporate chains or broken chains in their symbolic tributes to Freedom Seekers.

**Hand print** - We incorporated a hand print to allow our students to imagine themselves as a Freedom Seeker, pushing up on the ground below, using any strength they had left to continue their courageous journey to freedom.

**Creek Stones** – The stones seen at the bottom of our exhibit were taken, with permission, from a creek in Allegany County, NY. It was one of the creeks on which, according to a local Seneca historian, Freedom Seekers traveled on the last segment of their journey to Canada.
In what ways might gallery visitors of all ages add their contribution to the MBK Freedom Collage?

Join us in honoring the Freedom Seekers who once walked on the same ground on which you stand today. To do so, please:

1. choose 1-3 scraps of clothing
2. take one safety pin
3. step on one of the creek stone below the collage
4. attach the scrap of clothing to any area you wish

A suggestion from our MBK Scholars on how to heighten your experience:

Our MBK Scholars suggest that you remove your shoes before you step on the creek stone. This will allow you to authenticate your experience by making a physical connection to our Freedom Seeking ancestors as they too, many years ago, walked barefoot across the same stones on which you will stand today.
SAMPLE Press Release:

For More Information Contact:
Jason M. Hall
Cell: 716-864-7175

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
XX-XX-XXXX

MY BROTHER’S KEEPER STUDENTS INSTALL A “LIVING” UNDERGROUND RAILROAD FREEDOM COLLAGE AT THE ALBRIGHT-KNOX ART GALLERY

In a field-work expedition designed to honor WNY’s unique Underground Railroad heritage, 85 seventh and eighth grade scholars from Buffalo Public Schools’ My Brother’s Keeper program, joined by their teachers, created an original and symbolic Underground Railroad Freedom Collage after gaining inspiration during fieldwork expeditions to Buffalo’s Michigan Street African-American Heritage Corridor and the Niagara Falls Underground Railroad Heritage Center.

From approximately (TIME) on (DATE) the MBK student artists will become docents at the Albright-Knox and welcome their families, friends, and community members to join them at the gallery for a formal reception to officially open the MBK Freedom Collage and invite all in attendance to add to the collage by attaching symbolic cloths and other materials. The collage will then remain on display as the MBK artists will welcome all future visitors to the Albright-Knox to also add to their work.

The MBK Freedom Collage reinforces the value of gaining deeper knowledge regarding WNY’s Underground Railroad heritage while adding another layer of creative experiences to the portfolios of the young men in the My Brother’s Keeper. It also provides a personalized gift to honor our local heritage while reflecting MBK’s goal of community service and outreach.

Please join the BPS MBK Scholars and the Albright-Knox Art Gallery for this amazing event. Contact Mr. Jason M. Hall for more information.