

I'd like to take an act, but I'm going to ask you to close your eyes.

Okay. Now, I want you to kinda inhale and exhale, and think about being in a forest, in a lovely forest, and it's really dark and beautiful. And you're watching the leaves on the trees go back and forth. And you're in Denton. You're over here, and it's just beautiful and sweet and nice. Now, don't think about the fact that you can use your GPS. I want you to think about how would you get from here to Schenectady, New York.

It's not an easy trip. You can open your eyes. Most of us are used to GPS. When I told... when my daughter was little and we started this whole Moses Viney thing, the first thing she said was, "Well, Mom, he could just Google."

And I said, "No, no, it's not- it's not gonna work that way." Union is proud of Moses Viney. Moses Viney was a major figure. And I'm going to give you the history from the time you took off and from where we are. We're so proud of it, we came up with a T-shirt that the kids...

It was Moses Viney- Wow

... who celebrated him on Founder's Day in the college. That year was the 100th year of his death, I believe, the year that we did that, which is how you got to talk to the sister about Moses Viney. It was a big year for us, and I'll get to that in a minute. So, Moses winds up in the forest behind Union College and gets hired for pay by the president, Eliphalet Nott. And Eliphalet is a major figure. He's a standing president of 62 years. He will probably always be the

longest-standing president at a college. And he was against slavery, the whole time he was up there, which meant he also had issues when it comes to accepting students from the South- .. who had major issues about slavery. And their whole piece was, it should be kept, and they were fighting in the war and their family fought in the war on the other side. So, you have Eliphalet Nott. He's very strong against slavery. One of the quotes is that, "Slavery cannot stand against the progress of society." That was one of his quotes in his speeches. And he was one of the most outspoken presidents to talk about that. He was actually really close to William Seward. And I don't know if you, you know who William Seward is.

Seward's folly, he talked everybody into buying Alaska, okay? Seward was a student at the college, and Seward worked very closely with Harriet Tubman. They were really good friends. Did you folks know this? Up in New York. That's where he lived, in Auburn, New York. They are, their houses are right down the street from each other. And when he heard what Harriet was doing, and they had already been friends, he actually sold her a piece of his land for a dollar-... with a house already on it for her to live in, and for her to bring the slaves up. And a lot... She brought a lot of children up. She brought a lot of adults up.

So there was a big connection with Union College and the abolition, the abolitionist movement. Then I found out, I was digging through the dusty library, which has archives that's unbelievable. I found out that Union had an abolitionist club on campus. Now, we have ski clubs, we have-

... golf clubs. Didn't know we had an abolitionist club up on our campus, so, so we did. When he escaped, when he turned up in Schenectady, Eliphalet Nott hired him, knowing he was an escaped slave, and paid him, for the work that he did. And they became very good friends. McPherson, the very famous historian, was quoted at Founder's Day, he was our speaker at Founder's Day, as saying that they had a father-son kind of a relationship, in that household.

Nott, uh, was in the city of Schenectady. Moses drove him around in his car. That's not, that's not really... it's not what I would call a car. It had four wheels and a seat.

I don't know what era it is, but we still have the car on our campus. And it's more like a carriage-looking thing, but it did have wheels. And Moses Viney would drive Nott around, and he was kind of like his valet and his butler, but he was also kind of a confidant to the president. To the point where if you didn't wake up as a student to, to make it to church, he would actually send Moses over and wake you up.

Chester Arthur, the famous president here, got scolded a number of times by Eliphalet Nott, and he had to go get him, kinda calm him. He... That's what students liked about him, that they would calm him on the way over to the president's house to get scolded about something that they should not have been doing. So he really was a confidant.

Moses was in the city, and, thought he saw the son of his master. Went back, told Nott, and Nott said, "Oh, I'll just buy you freedom," as if it was nothing. Tried to work it out with

the owner, and had his grandson, Nott had his grandson try to do the bargaining for him. The owner wanted \$1,900 for Moses Viney, which is about four grand, 40 grand now. And he said no. There was no way that he could put out that kind of money to save him. So, he sent up Moses Viney to Canada with what I call the first credit card. He sent him with a letter, um, and \$300 at the time, and said that, "This man is a man of integrity. If he needs any more money, please take it out of my bank account." So Moses went up to Canada for his freedom, and the grandson took two years to buy his freedom, working the price down, working it down and bought his freedom for \$250.

We're still looking for that documentation, but it is an actual, in a letter that stated that that's what was paid for him, but not the actual documentation, which we've heard that it's around. We've just got to find it.

Moses loved both, I think, Mrs. Nott and Mr. Nott. And you have to understand that that was the third Mrs. Nott [laughs], um, that Moses got to know, very well towards the end, even in her life. Eliphalet Nott- Nott died first. It was a rainy day. We have a history of Community College Book and it talks about Eliphalet Nott's death. It was a long-going, illness that he had. Moses Vining physically carried him upstairs and downstairs, in what is still the president's house. Our president of the college, still lives there. And I send you great regards from our president, Steven Amon, who's absolutely a fantastic person and loves history. So when he hooked onto this story, he made it a big thing on our campus. But Moses Viney would, would carry him up and down the

steps and his... We believe that his wife was making the major decisions for the college at the time, but of course, not getting acknowledged for it. And Moses, but the two of them are making the major decisions. So, Eliphalet Nott dies, and he is buried in the cemetery right near the college. And the last scene, as described by a writer, who... In the newspaper, was to see a lone figure up at the top of the hill on a very rainy day as everybody was moving away from the casket. When he walked up to see who it was, it was Moses Vinely.

Moses really cared for him, and after he died, cared for the wife, who got to live in the house mainly because of the little clause that said if your husband dies, before you, and you're the president's wife, you get to stay in the house. So she stayed in the house and Moses took care of her. He also, which is very rare that this happens, he receives a lot of money, land, property, and the car in the will that Eliphalet Nott left for him. And that was, that was very rare at the time. And that we actually have documentation of.

I'm really glad you mentioned Neil Yetwin. Neil Yetwin got the youngsters in the high school excited about the story. And the other... If you could ever meet him, bearded man, lots of hair. Students love him, and he's a great storyteller. So he would just tell the story, then he had the students do the research, and that's how we tapped into really understanding and knowing Moses Vinely. Moses Vinely is mentioned throughout a lot of our tabloid, we have, school newspapers, and until we did this project, we didn't know. So the year I wind up being the director of campus diversity,

we're trying to get the students to think about their own history in relationship to why they're at Union College, and we came up with this year that we had called the, uh, Union College Year of a- Year of Abolitionist Movement. And we looked to see what kind of things that we... That the college did. That's how we found out we had an abolitionist club, but we we did this over an entire year. Students were excited. They got to know this little bit of history. At the same time, we had them learn about their history. They had to make a square for a quilt, and we have this humongous now quilt, with their history involved in the quilt.

Then the president decided that for Founder's Day, it's a day we honor the college family. It's a big day. It is the... The auditorium is packed. Students like to, to go ... and we should get a major speaker. We had this McPherson come, and he gave a talk about Union's college history to the students.

And on that day, we also had Simmie Knoxx. You know who he is? Famous portrait artist. He did the Clinton's picture for the White House. African American portrait, portraits artist. And Simmie met with my president. We don't give money away quickly. We're a private nonprofit. It is the first painting ever done of an, a person of color at the college for a portrait. We'd never had one before. It took us a long time first to get a portrait of a woman, so .. you know it was gonna take a long time to do that. And it was because of the sensitivity of our president that this day became big. We had been working up the hype, okay? We had the T-shirts. The kids are running around, "Who is Moses Viney?"

They had a Moses Viney Jeopardy! Um, they really got into to learning. And these are fraternities, sororities, the Asian Student Union, Black Student Union. These are... All these students were, were gathered for this, learning about the history.

Then we decided, to find where Moses Viney was buried. And that research had actually already been done. The Vail Cemetery, where, which is also where Eliphalet Nott is buried, but only on the white side of the cemetery. Vail Cemetery has a spot called the Colored Plot. We now call it the African American Burial Ground, but at the time, they called it the Colored Plot.

Before the Civil War, it was mixed, the cemetery was. Once the Civil War started, Schenectady decided to uplift all the people who were Black and put 'em all together in a plot, and they didn't bring the tombstones. But they kept written records of who went where. So we had RPI come over and do MRIs. Have you ever not taken an MRI? And we figured out where everybody was, and now we have the clear map where we could figure out where Moses and his wife was. Moses went, wound up working in this livery, this taxi service. There were only two Black businesses, Moses was one of them, in Schenectady. Outlived his wife, and then, died of a very quick illness. He, it was almost as if, he had got a cold and then he died. I think that's how it went. Died of a very quick illness.

The odd thing was he had stopped working for Union for about 20 years, 30 years. But every year he would come for homecoming... and the students would

recognize him. It was a big thing, them having him there, as if he was a major celebrity, way before that he died. And when he had his funeral, it was a huge funeral, in the city. One of the few interracial funerals that you could've had for a person at that time. He was buried and no tombstone. So we decided, the students and I, to raise money, because you can't... We're non-profit, we can't just go out and buy you a tombstone. And put up his tombstone design, and I read in our history book that on his coffin. So, it depends, it's the coffin. There were flowers, and across that flower was a ribbon- And on the ribbon was the word 'free.' So, on the tombstone I had them put flowers and a ribbon across, and it says 'free,' in order to recognize this man. Then we had this, actually a ceremony, memorial service for both Moses and his wife at the cemetery. Walked over to a little bit not... Glad I hadn't seen him at that time. He's a big figure now in Schenectady. We love the story. We love telling the story to everyone.

We were shocked at this connection when Kathy gave me this call. So we decided that we needed to give something back to you guys. Now, the portrait of Moses Viney is about, well, my height. It's a pretty big portrait. And so, I'm gonna ask JOK to stand up here with, with Kathy.

We have an amazing photographer on campus who also loves Moses Viney, and, um, and Don. So, you know, can you take a picture so we can put this-

Okay. This is our job.

Okay. The photographer left. Um, so we wanted to, to-

That's fine. We wanted to make sure that you have the legacy here, and you know, it cost a pretty penny. We knew you were a non-profit, but we decided to, that you folks needed Simmie Knox version of Moses Viney.

Oh, wow.

Wow. Thank you very much.