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CSCL WELCOMES 2025 PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING AUTHOR

FOX CHAPEL, PA – Cooper-Siegel Community Library's (CSCL) next Community Ink Series installment will feature Pittsburgh author Dr. Edda Fields-Black, winner of the 2025 Pulitzer Prize for History.

"Our audience is voraciously hungry for history presentations and local authors, so we're especially thrilled to add Dr. Edda Fields-Black to our series lineup," CSCL Information Services Department Head Kelley Beeson said. "Our library joins other organizations like Pittsburgh Arts and Lectures, NPR and the U.S. National Archives in celebrating this Pulitzer Prize-winning local author. Hosting Dr. Fields-Black to share this story of courage, resistance and the struggle for freedom is an incredible honor."

Dr. Fields-Black will stop by the library at 6:30 p.m. September 30 to discuss her book, "COMBEE: Harriet Tubman, the Combahee River Raid, and Black Freedom during the Civil War," which also won the Gilder Lehrman Institute's 2025 Lincoln Prize.

Pulitzer Prizes are awarded annually by Columbia University of New York City for achievements in the United States in journalism, arts and letters, while the Gilder Lehrman Lincoln Prize is awarded annually for the finest scholarly work in English on Abraham Lincoln, the American Civil War soldier, or the American Civil War era.

While Harriet Tubman's legendary life – escaping enslavement, leading others to freedom via the Underground Railroad and tirelessly fighting for change – is widely known, "COMBEE" covers what Dr. Fields-Black describes as an "often overlooked" and "crucial chapter" of Tubman's lifetime: her daring Civil War service as a spy for the United States Army.

As a direct descendant of a soldier who fought in the June 1863 Combahee River Raid, Dr. Fields-Black's book unveils Tubman's command of spies and pilots; and intelligence gathered from freedom seekers, which led to a raid that liberated 756 enslaved people from bondage on seven rice plantations. Through unexamined documents, Dr. Fields-Black brings to life the largest slave rebellion in U.S. history and the untold stories of those freed, their resilience and the lasting impact of Tubman's heroism.

Of her presentation, which is currently sold out and has a long waitlist, Dr. Fields-Black said she will "set the stage of the Combahee River Raid" for attendees, talk about her "vision of the book" and introduce its main characters. She hopes guests will learn more about, not only Harriet Tubman's Civil War service, but the Second South Carolina Volunteers' soldiers who fought in the raid and the freedom seekers who were liberated.

Dr. Fields-Black said being able to share her Pulitzer Prize-winning work with so many readers is an "indescribable" feeling.

"It still doesn't quite feel real. I have enjoyed introducing readers across the country to "COMBEE" throughout my book tour for over a year and a half. Now it's extra special that I have won (both

awards)," she said. "The gratification is twofold: meeting people of all walks of life for whom Harriet Tubman is more than a hero, a guiding spirit; and humanizing all the freedom seekers to people and changing the way readers think about the enslaved and their experiences in bondage."

Beeson said "COMBEE" is "rich and informative and challenges myths about slavery, freedom and Black Agency."

"It sheds light on an underrepresented historical event – one that expands the story of Black contributions to the Civil War. It offers a much-needed corrective to outdated or sanitized narratives of our complicated and inspiring past," Beeson said. "Attendees will have the chance to hear about one of the most daring operations of the Civil War, told vividly by the author herself."

In addition to being an award-winning author, Dr. Fields-Black teaches history at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Mellon University and serves as director of the Dietrich College Humanities Center. She has written extensively about the transnational history of West African rice farmers, including in such works as "Deep Roots: Rice Farmers in West Africa and the African Diaspora," and was a co-editor of "Rice: Global Networks and New Histories," which was selected as a Choice Outstanding Academic Title.

She consulted for the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture's permanent exhibit, "Rice Fields in the Low Country of South Carolina," and is the executive producer and librettist of "Unburied, Unmourned, Unmarked: Requiem for Rice," a widely performed, original, contemporary classical work by celebrated composer John Wineglass.

Her determination to illuminate the riches of the Gullah dialect, and to reclaim Gullah Geechee history and culture, has taken her to the rice fields of South Carolina and Georgia to those of Sierra Leone and Republic of Guinea in West Africa.

Throughout her career, Dr. Fields-Black has used interdisciplinary sources and methods to uncover the voices of historical actors in pre-colonial West Africa and the African Diaspora who did not author written sources. She is a descendant of Africans enslaved on rice plantations in Colleton County, S.C., and her great-great-great grandfather - a USCT soldier from Beaufort County, S.C. - fought in the Combahee River Raid.

Beeson said Dr. Fields-Black's CSCL visit "supports our ongoing work to be an equitable, diverse and inclusive community resource.

"This event upholds the library's mission to embrace diversity, equity and racial understanding; and our commitment to lifelong learning," she said. "Our Community Ink Series is designed to spotlight and celebrate the literary talent of Western Pennsylvania, creating space for local authors to share their work, discuss their creative process and connect directly with readers. We are thrilled to host Dr. Fields-Black and provide a platform for her and this important story."

Riverstone Books of Pittsburgh will be on site during the CSCL event, selling copies of "COMBEE," and attendees will enjoy a question-and-answer session with Dr. Fields-Black following the presentation.

In addition to the Pulitzer and Lincoln Prizes, "COMBEE" has also won the Society of Civil War Historian's 2025 Tom Watson Brown Award; South Carolina Historical Society's 2024 George C. Rogers Jr. Award; and Association for Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society's 2024 Marsha M. Greenlee History Award. Additionally, the book earned Honorable Mention for the Organization of American Historian's 2025 James A. Rawley Prize and was a finalist for the Columbia School of Journalism's 2025 Mark Lynton

History Prize and finalist for the Association for the Study of African American Life and History's Book Prize.

"COMBEE" was also named one of "The Best Nonfiction Books of 2024" by Bloomberg.com; "Also Recommended" among the "Best Books of 2024" in the *New Yorker*; "Best Civil War Books of 2024" by *Civil War Monitor*; "Top 10 History Books: 2024" by Booklist; and one of the "Best Books of 2024" by Oxford University Press.

Prior to her presentation, Dr. Fields-Black recommends that attendees check out her July 4, 2025, *Washington Post* Op-Ed, "Actually, Secretary Hegseth, Harriet Tubman Was a War Hero!"

To learn more about Dr. Edda Fields-Black and her work, visit www.eddafieldsblack.com.

For more information about Cooper-Siegel Community Library, including upcoming programming, visit www.coopersiegelcommunitylibrary.org.

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For media inquiries, contact Communications & Marketing Specialist Kaylie Glaze at 412-828-9520, ext. 5012, or glazek@coopersiegelcommunitylibrary.org. Cooper-Siegel Community Library serves all Fox Chapel School District communities.