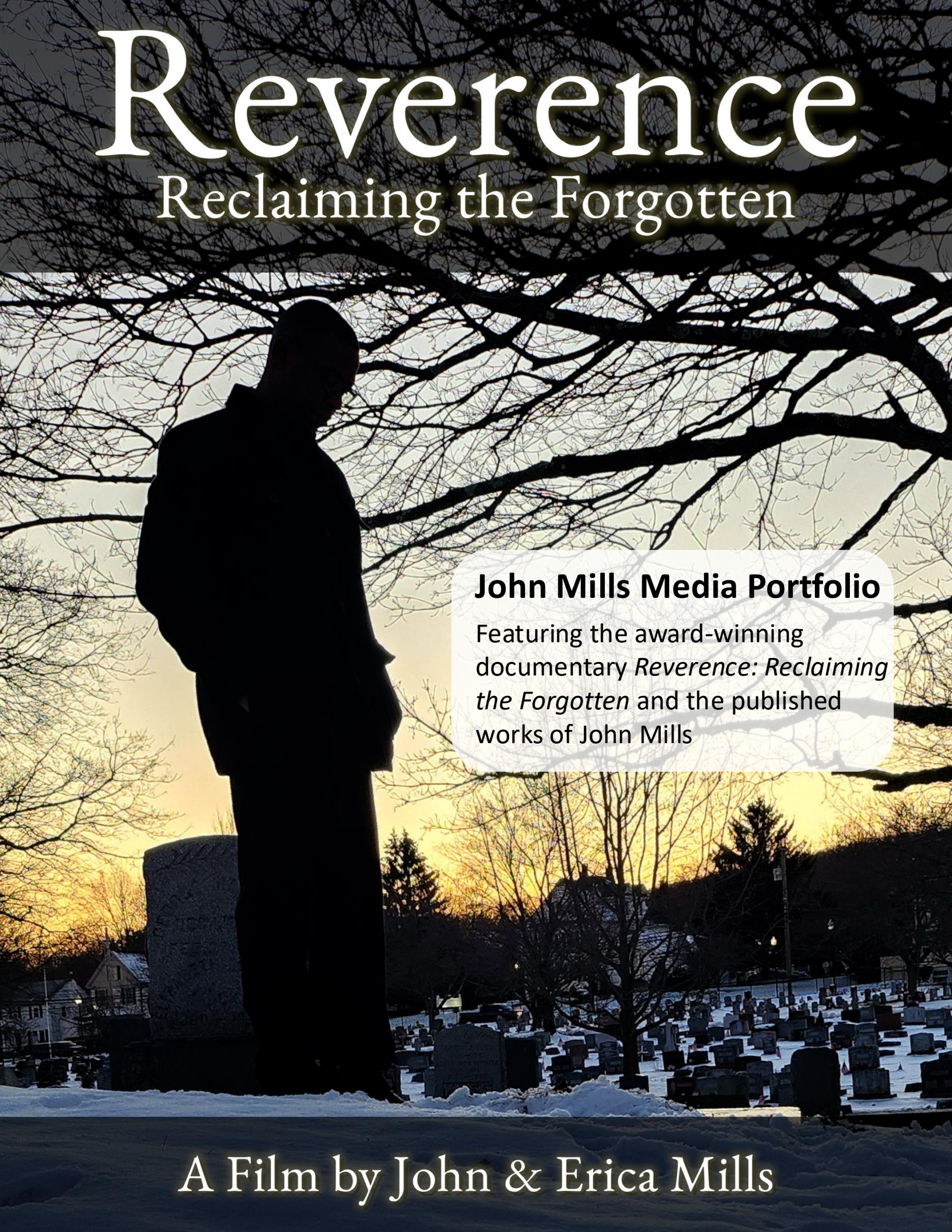
Reverence

Reclaiming the Forgotten



John Mills Media Portfolio

Featuring the award-winning documentary *Reverence: Reclaiming the Forgotten* and the published works of John Mills

A Film by John & Erica Mills



A Personal Mission

"My goal is to give others the same gift my ancestors gave me: reverence."

Reverence is not simply a film about the past. It is about what becomes possible when forgotten people are remembered.



My Journey

"As a child, my father taught me to value Blackness."

As an adult, I realized I was presenting myself to the world as though I believed I was less valuable than white Americans.

I wanted to make sure my daughter never arrived at that same place."



Why “Reverence”

On July 4, 2003, I walked into the woods looking for my ancestors.

Instead of finding them in the cemetery, I found them beyond the fence in an overgrown segregated burial ground.

I expected anger. Instead, I found **Reverence**. Reverence for people who endured enough suffering that I could exist. That moment reshaped my understanding of identity, history, and inheritance, and ultimately led to this film.



The Film

Logline:

A Connecticut genealogist uncovers forgotten stories of formerly enslaved people, reconnecting descendants with their ancestors while challenging how America remembers its past.

Synopsis:

Through archival research, descendant reunions, cemetery preservation, memorials, murals, and public history, Reverence shows that recovering forgotten lives transforms the living.



About John Mills

John Mills is an author, filmmaker, public historian, and genealogist whose work reconnects descendants with forgotten ancestral stories through archival research, documentary filmmaking, and public history.

John is also the president and founder of the **Alex Breanne Corporation**—a Connecticut-based non-profit focused on reconnecting descendants of formerly enslaved people with their ancestral stories.

John's work has been featured by *The Kelly Clarkson Show*, *The Washington Post*, Connecticut Public Television, *Junior Scholastic*, and *The Areva Martin Show*. He is the author of *The Narrative of Primus* and a contributor to *A Century in Captivity*.

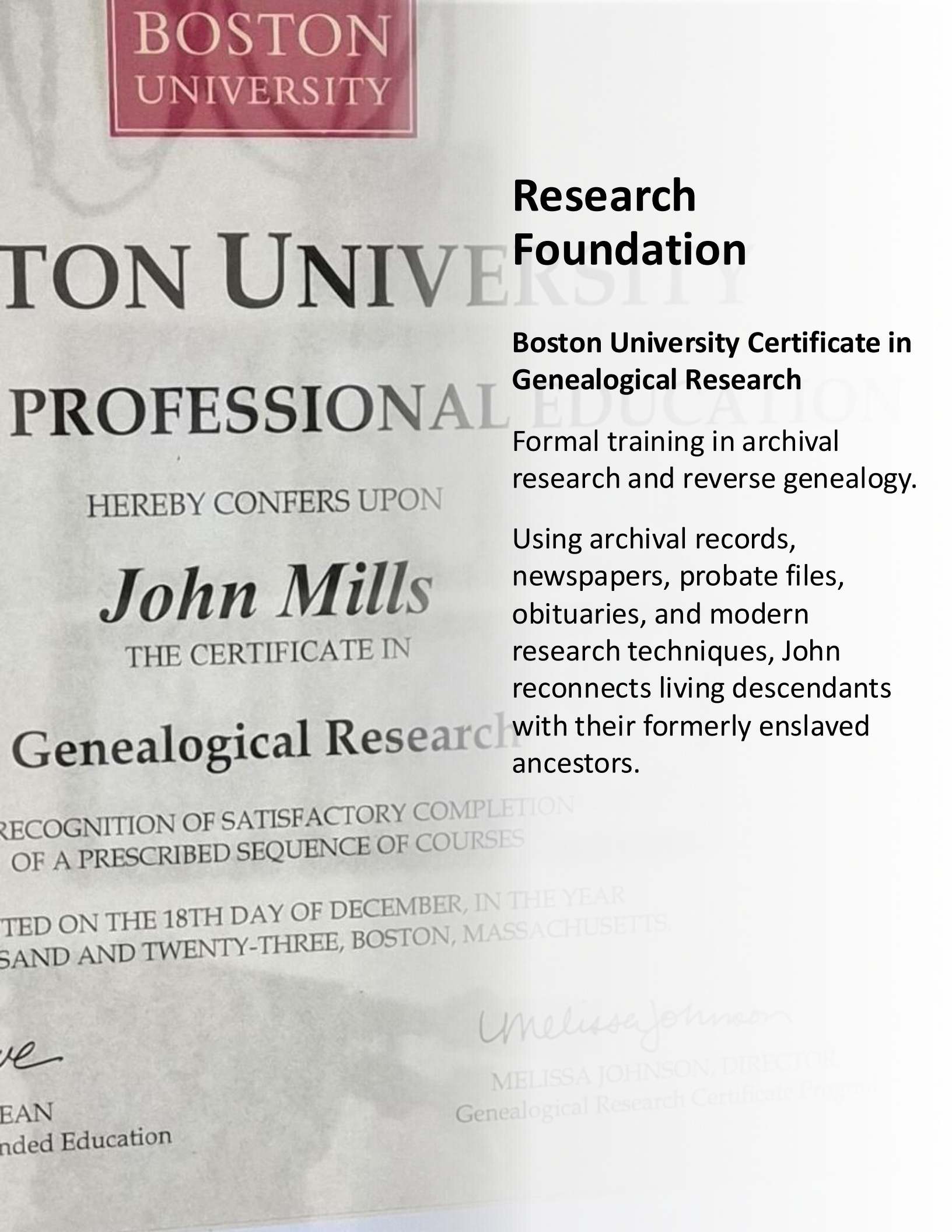


Beyond the Film

Most genealogists trace families into the past. John Mills specializes in tracing the past forward—finding living descendants of people whom history nearly forgot.

Every story ultimately ends with a conversation between people who discover they have been connected by history all along.

John has been doing genealogical research for over 25 years. Each discovery ends not with a document, but with a family learning who they are.



Research Foundation

Boston University Certificate in Genealogical Research

Formal training in archival research and reverse genealogy.

Using archival records, newspapers, probate files, obituaries, and modern research techniques, John reconnects living descendants with their formerly enslaved ancestors.



The National Conversation

The work featured in *Reverence* contributes to a broader national conversation about the lives of formerly enslaved people.

This research has brought the lives of formerly enslaved people into classrooms, museums, national media, and public history initiatives.

This work has resulted in historical corrections, descendant reunifications, educational curricula, and permanent public memorials.



Festival Recognition

➢ Official Selections

- San Antonio Black Intl. Film Festival
- Twin Cities Black Film Festival
- Independent Shorts Awards
- Columbia Maryland Film Festival
- Greater Cleveland Urban Film Festival
- Mystic Film Festival
- Diaspora Festival of Black and Indy Film
- Oscar Devereaux Micheaux BFAB Festival
- Grand Rapids Film Festival
- Black Indie Filmmakers Assoc. Houston Film Festival
- Bermuda Black Film Festival
- International Multicultural Film Festival

➢ Semi-Finalist

- Flickers' Rhode Island Intl. Film Festival

➢ Awards

- Independent Shorts – Best Editing (Bronze)
- Oscar Devereaux Micheaux BFAB Festival – Best Documentary Short
- Activists Without Borders Film Festival - Honorary Award for Efforts in Social Filmmaking

National Media

Kelly Clarkson Show

June 19, 2024



The Washington Post

February 6, 2024


The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

He unearthed his roots. Now he digs up lost stories of enslaved people.

'Once I find depths of information, I want to give it to the people I think it was stolen from,' John Mills said

By Sydney Page

February 6, 2024 at 8:05 a.m. EST

The Areva Martin Show

February 20, 2024



Junior Scholastic Magazine

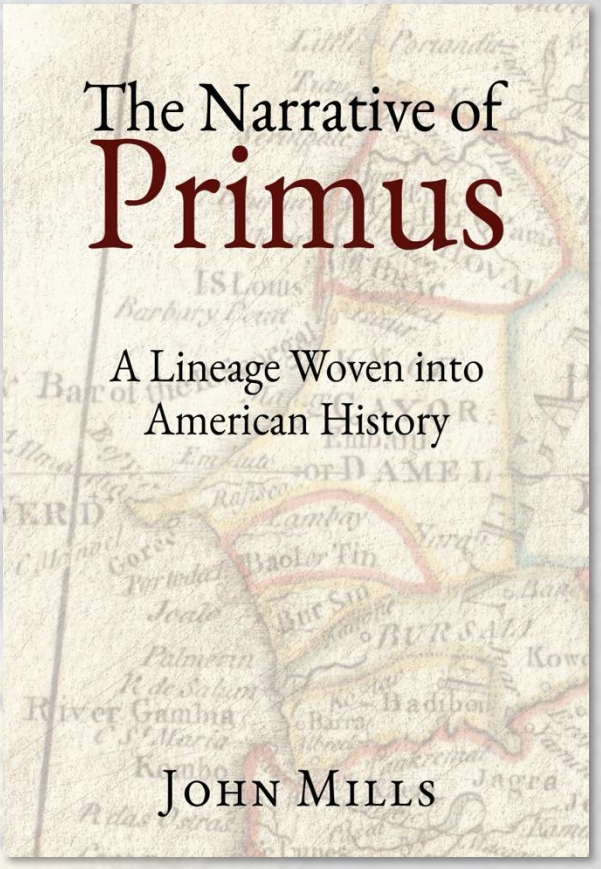
November 2025



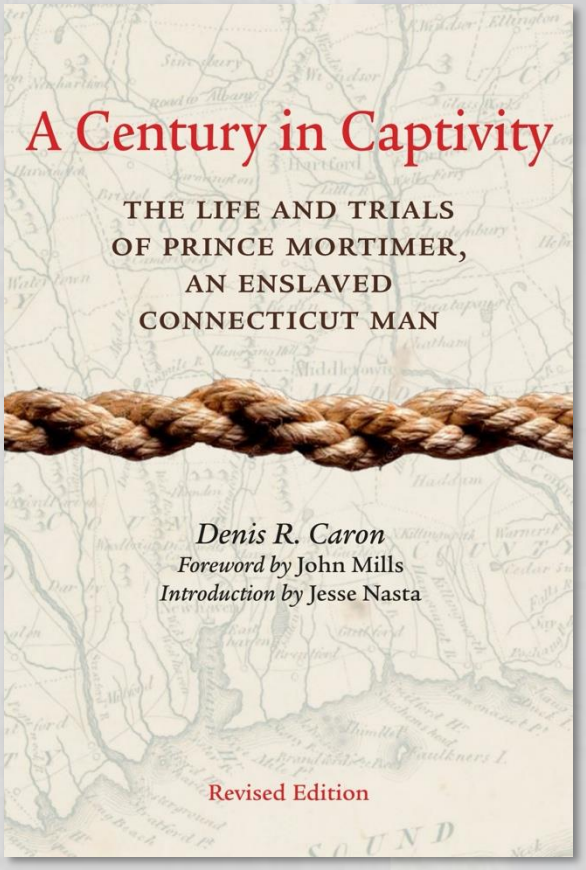
Published Works

The Narrative of Primus — *A multigenerational family history that traces an African man captured in The Gambia and enslaved in colonial Connecticut across generations.*

A Century in Captivity — *A deeply researched biography of Prince Mortimer that examines the intersection of slavery, justice, and the early American prison system through the life of one extraordinary man.*



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Hardcover ISBN: 979-8-9944118-3-4



Publication date: October 20, 2026
Publisher: Wesleyan University Press
Distributor: Wesleyan University
Paperback ISBN: 978-0-8195025-9-9

Restoring History to Families

Each of John's projects culminates in returning a forgotten story to descendants who inherited it. In that moment, history is no longer something they study—it becomes part of who they are.







Voices that Bring History to Life



John Mills
Filmmaker and Narrator



Dr. Jesse Nasta
Professor of African American Studies, Wesleyan University



Morgan Bengel
Curator, Old New-Gate Prison



Nicole Thomas
Historian, Connecticut Landmarks



Kevin Johnson
Historian, Connecticut State Library



Wayne Jones
Descendant



Dawn Lathrop-Goode
Descendant



Michael Lathrop
Descendant

Key Creative Team

Director
John Mills

Cinematographer
John Mills

Producer
John Mills

Editor
John Mills

Co-Producer
Erica A. Mills

Story Consultants
Roger J. Kuhns
Anne W. Schmidt

Film Information

Runtime:	33 minutes	**Format:**	Color
Country:	USA	**Audio:**	Stereo
Language:	English	**Aspect Ratio:**	16:9
Genre:	Documentary	**Year:**	2026



Contact

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https://facebook.com/reverencefilm

Visit the Reverence website

Private Screening Link Available Upon Request