

Award-Winning Connecticut Documentary to Premiere at Mystic Film Festival with Live Filmmaker Q&A

Reverence: Reclaiming the Forgotten brings Connecticut's forgotten African American history to the big screen following national festival recognition.

BLOOMFIELD, CT, UNITED STATES, August 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Reverence: Reclaiming the Forgotten](#), the award-winning documentary by Connecticut historian, author, genealogist, and filmmaker John Mills, has been officially selected for the 2026 [Mystic Film Festival](#), where it will make its Connecticut Premiere on Friday, September 25, 2026, at 2:00 p.m. at Mystic Luxury Cinemas, 25 Coogan Boulevard, Mystic, Connecticut.

Immediately following the screening, Mills will participate in a live audience question-and-answer session exploring the historical research, genealogy, and preservation work that inspired the film.

Reverence: Reclaiming the Forgotten follows Mills as he uncovers the lives of African Americans whose stories have largely disappeared from Connecticut's historical narrative. Through years of genealogical research, descendant reunions, cemetery restoration projects, historical advocacy, and documentary storytelling, the film demonstrates how recovering forgotten lives can transform our understanding of Connecticut's past and America's shared history.



John Mills at the gravesite of formerly enslaved man Thaddeus Newton and his wife Mary in New Haven, CT.



John Mills with the descendants of Reverend Isaac J. Hill who was a 29th Connecticut Colored Regiment soldier during the Civil War.

The documentary has earned recognition on the national film festival circuit, receiving Official Selection honors from the San Antonio Black International Film Festival, Greater Cleveland Urban Film Festival, Twin Cities Black Film Festival, Columbia Maryland Film Festival, Grand Rapids Film Festival, and others. The film also received the Bronze Award for Editing from the Independent Shorts Awards in Los Angeles and was named a Semi-Finalist by Flickers' Rhode Island International Film Festival.



John Mills standing in Old Norwichtown Cemetery in Norwich, CT.

The film combines historical research with interviews and commentary from scholars, historians, museum professionals, public officials, and descendants, including Dr. Jesse Nasta of Wesleyan University; Morgan Bengel of Old New-Gate Prison & Copper Mine; Kevin Johnson of the Connecticut State Library; Nicole Thomas of Connecticut Landmarks; U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal; and Primus Armes descendants Dawn Lathrop-Goode and Michael Lathrop.

Mills' work extends well beyond the documentary itself. Working with professional artists, he has commissioned historically informed portraits of formerly enslaved individuals, reimagined through extensive genealogical research and the facial features of their living descendants. These portraits serve as visual introductions to many of the film's subjects and are currently on exhibit in museums across Connecticut as part of the state's commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Current exhibition locations include the Stowe Center for Literary Activism, the Museum of Connecticut History, Connecticut's Old State House, and the Slater Memorial Museum.

A published author and nationally recognized genealogist, Mills has dedicated his work to reconnecting descendants with their ancestral stories and restoring overlooked individuals to the public record. His research has resulted in books, museum exhibitions, commissioned portraiture, educational initiatives, descendant reunions, historical markers, and documentary films that continue to reshape the public understanding of Connecticut's African American history.

"I'm honored that Reverence will have its Connecticut Premiere at the Mystic Film Festival," said Mills. "The stories in this film happened here in Connecticut. My hope is that audiences leave the theater not only with a deeper appreciation for our state's history, but with a renewed understanding that the people who helped build our communities—whether remembered or forgotten—deserve their place in our shared story."

The Mystic Film Festival brings independent filmmakers and audiences together through screenings, discussions, panels, and special events. Members of the public are encouraged to attend.

EVENT INFORMATION:

- Film: Reverence: Reclaiming the Forgotten
- Event: Connecticut Premiere – Mystic Film Festival
- Date: Friday, September 25, 2026
- Time: 2:00 p.m.
- Location: Mystic Luxury Cinemas, 25 Coogan Boulevard, Mystic, CT 06355

Ticket and additional festival information are available through the [Mystic Film Festival website](#).

ABOUT REVERENCE: RECLAIMING THE FORGOTTEN:

Reverence: Reclaiming the Forgotten is a 33-minute documentary that follows Connecticut public historian John Mills as he uncovers the forgotten stories of African Americans whose lives helped shape Connecticut and the nation. Through genealogy, historical research, descendant reunions, museum collaborations, commissioned portraiture, and preservation efforts, the film demonstrates how recovering overlooked lives can transform our understanding of American history.

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