**Ineke La Fleur**

**Senior Individual Website**

**Lady Liberty: Virginia’s Female Runaways 1619-1865**

**How did you choose your topic?**

I chose my topic relatively recently after months of changing it. Originally, I was planning to do a project with a friend on school shootings, which expanded to gun laws internationally and nationally. I came to the conclusion that such a controversial and contemporary topic might not do well in competition, and I went through another two months of searching before I thought about doing a history of race relations in Virginia, since there has been a lot of conflict over how we as a state remember the past and teach it, as well as being inspired by my project on apartheid last year. However, that was far too big of a topic, so I narrowed it down to runaway slaves in Virginia, which had been an earlier idea for a project. But even that was too wide of a topic, so I narrowed it down even further to *female* runaways, since the narrative is oversaturated with stories of male runaways and I’m interested in women’s studies.

**How did you conduct your research?**

The majority of my primary resources came from the Geography of Slavery database that UVA has been working on, but the overwhelming majority of my secondary sources were found through searching for rare accounts and female-dominated sources. A class on runaway slaves in Virginia is being taught at UVA, and I used the syllabus and recommendations from the professor to find some of these books and websites.

**How did you select your presentation category and create your project?**

I’ve had the opportunity to compete in National History Day twice before this year, and every time I’ve chosen to do a website and designed it myself, even when I was in a group. I was heavily influenced by the judges’ feedback from all three levels of the competition, all praising the layout of the site and my use of primary sources and images to accentuate my point. I also feel that a website provides a better word count (1200) to make a point with than an exhibit (500 words). I created my project with simplicity and high contrast to both resemble newspapers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries over which my project mainly takes place, and to keep the focus on the topic and the primary sources.

**How does your project relate to the NHD theme?**

The tragedy of slavery shouldn’t have to be explained, but there are triumphs in this project that allow for some optimism. The triumph of a woman liberating herself from enslavement far from cancels out the tragedy that she had to do so in the first place, but it is still a triumph. This project shows triumph and tragedy intertwined, as the triumphs would not have been possible without the great tragedy that was the system that allowed one group of people to treat another like property, subjugating and demeaning them and affecting the the way they are treated even into the present day.