

# Tulane graduate hikes the Underground Railroad

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Recent Tulane University graduate Chyna Johnson is following in the footsteps of abolitionist Harriet Tubman this week as part of a 100-mile trek along the route of the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad, a network of secret routes and safe houses used by African-American slaves to escape to free states, ran north to the free states and Canada.

Johnson is part of the national [GirlTrek](#) team responsible for organizing the journey.

The group started Tuesday on the eastern shore of Maryland and will end their trip by crossing the Mason Dixon Line into Delaware on Saturday, March 10 — Harriet Tubman Day.

“She gave us a roadmap to our own personal freedom.”

*Chyna Johnson, alumna*

Johnson, who earned a master’s degree in International Health and Development from the Tulane School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in 2017, works for GirlTrek as director of data management.

Just like Tubman, who helped others to freedom after escaping to her own, Johnson said that GirlTrek advocates for women to become leaders in their communities.

“It means the opportunity to continue a legacy that Harriet Tubman started,” Johnson said. “She gave us a roadmap to our own personal freedom. She did it as a fight for her life and we can walk in that, in honor of that.”

The 10-woman team will walk about 20 miles per day hoping to stand as role models for the organization's 125,000-plus members across the country. Johnson said the women trained for three weeks before embarking on the journey, a process that also include mental preparation such as prayer and yoga.

Johnson's work with GirlTrek began as a summer intern in 2017, thanks to the Tulane Prevention Research Center's Health Promotion Practicum Program, which matches qualified Tulane students with community partners for public health internships. She continued with the organization after the internship and became a full-time staff member based in Atlanta this year.

Follow their journey on social media using [#HarrietsGreatEscape](#).



Alumna Chyna Johnson, center, discusses the logistics of the journey at the national GirlTrek office in Washington, D.C., on the day before the journey began. (Photo from GirlTrek)