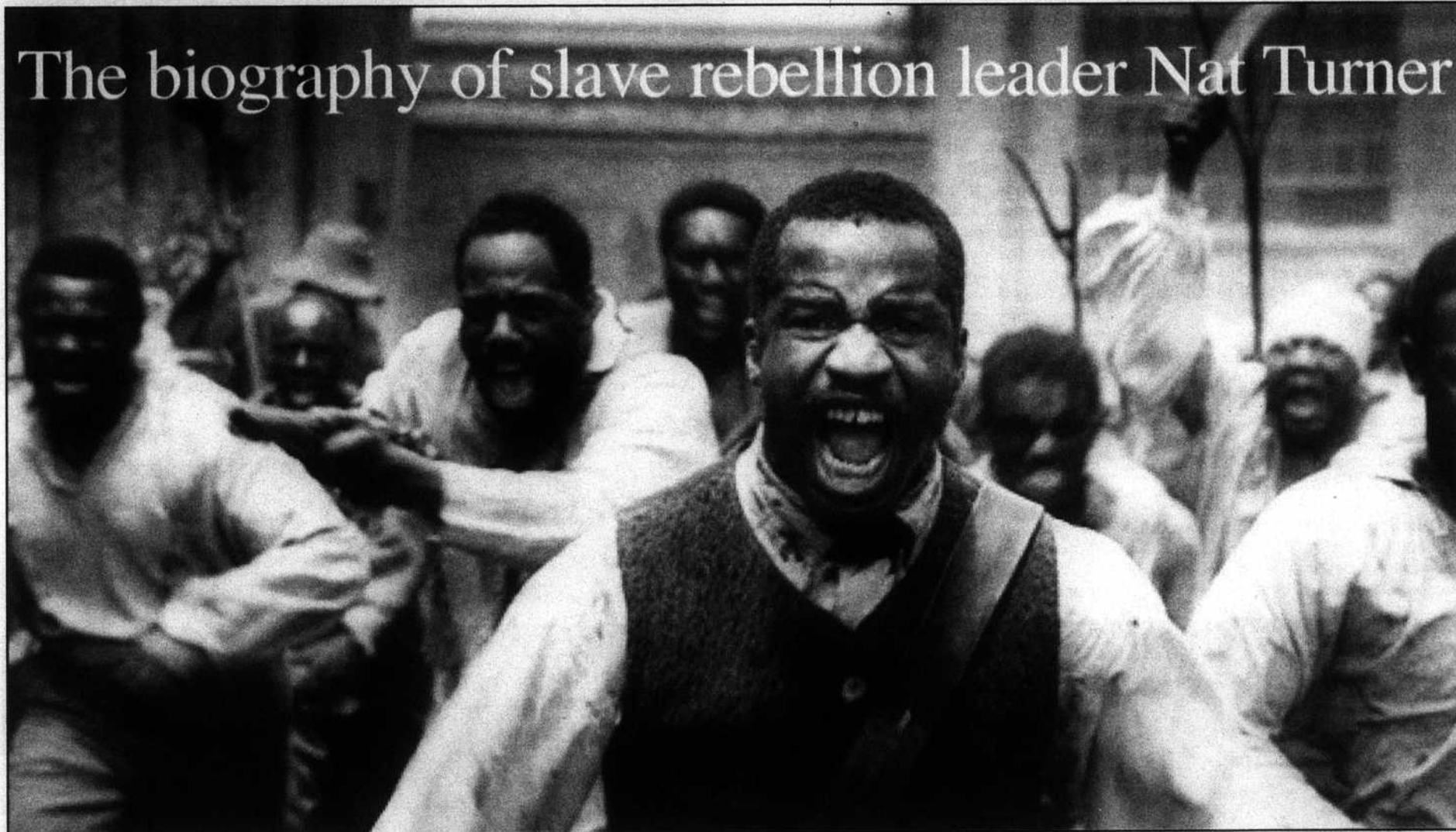


## AT THE MOVIES

# The biography of slave rebellion leader Nat Turner



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THE CHRONICLE

Nat Turner was born into slavery on Oct. 2, 1800 in Southampton County, Virginia. Deeply religious, Turner learned to read and write at a young age and was frequently seen immersed in reading the bible. On Aug. 21, 1831 Turner led a rebellion of slaves and free men that resulted in the deaths of up to 65 white people.

Early in his adult life Turner's religious convictions manifested themselves as visions, which he interpreted as messages from God. As a child, his mother and grandmother frequently told him he was intended for some great purpose.

Over the years, Turner worked for a number of different plantations including Samuel Turner's, his former owners brother. Nat ran away from Samuel Turner's plantation in 1821 but returned after 30 days on the run. He returned because he believed he received a sign from God that told him to do so.

Turner's belief in signs and hearing divine voices led to his affirmation of a vision he had in 1825 of a bloody

conflict between black and white spirits. He later confessed "the Spirit instantly appeared to me and said the Serpent was loosened, and Christ had laid down the yoke he had borne for the sins of men, and that I should take it on and fight against the Serpent." Turner would soon receive another message that told him when to fight.

A solar eclipse happened in February of 1831 which Turner took as a signal that the time to rise up had come. Turner started recruiting fellow slaves from his neighborhood and began the rebellion by killing the Travis family, his current slave owners.

Turner then began to gather more followers by traveling from house to house freeing the slaves and killing the white people they encountered. Reportedly the group grew to be as large as 70 men. To avoid alarm initially the men used knives, sharp objects and blunt instruments instead of firearms.

The rebellion targeted all whites including the elderly, women and children. The goal of the rebellion was to reach the armory in nearby Jerusalem, Virginia and secure more weapons. A few homes were spared during the uprising as Turner said the poor whites inhabitants

thought no better of themselves than they did of Negroes. Turner thought a rebellion would open the eyes of whites to the reality of the inherent brutality in slave holding.

The rebellion was quickly suppressed within two days as the whites organized a militia to quell the uprising. Turner eluded capture and fled into the woods to hide. While in hiding local whites took their revenge on local blacks of Southampton County killing an estimated 100 to 200 blacks, many having nothing to do with the rebellion.

On October 30 farmer Benjamin Phipps found him. Turner was tried for conspiring to rebel and making insurrection on November 5 and subsequently was found guilty and sentenced to death. 30 slaves and one free black were convicted of insurrection and related crimes and 18 were hanged along with Turner.

African Americans have generally regarded Turner as a hero of resistance, who made slave-owners pay for the hardships they had caused so many Africans and African-Americans. Even in modern day times Turner is still regarded as a hero amongst many African-Americans.