

PRESS RELEASE
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Virginia Museum of History & Culture Announces Advisory Committee and Collecting Initiative for a New Exhibition on 400 years of African American History

Richmond, VA — The Virginia Museum of History & Culture has named eleven prominent and influential Virginia historians and community leaders to a new advisory committee that will consult on an upcoming major exhibition on 400 years of African American history—from the arrival of the first Africans in English North America in 1619 to the present day. The museum is also announcing a new initiative to collect items related to this important story. Opening in June of 2019, this exhibition reflects the museum’s commitment to representing *all* Virginians and sharing their diverse stories.

“With the help of some of the most distinguished history professionals and community leaders in the Commonwealth, this exhibition will be a deeply meaningful and moving survey of the African American experience in Virginia,” said President and CEO, Jamie O. Bosket.

The new exhibition is a legacy project of AMERICAN EVOLUTION™, the state commission formed to commemorate the 400th anniversary of key historical events that occurred in Virginia in 1619 and continue to influence America today. 1619 was a pivotal year in the establishment of the first permanent English colony in North America. In addition to the arrival of Africans at Jamestown, 1619 witnessed the first representative legislative assembly in the Americas and the immigration of English women in significant numbers. AMERICAN EVOLUTION™, along with notable Virginia institutions and national partners, is launching a series of projects of national and international significance. These programs and events will build awareness of Virginia’s role in the creation of the United States.

This new advisory committee, working with the Virginia Museum of History & Culture’s staff, will provide guidance throughout the development of this important exhibition. The committee consists of the following distinguished scholars, museum professionals, public historians, and civic leaders who bring a diverse range of expertise to this project:

Dr. Edward L. Ayers, Tucker-Boatwright Professor of the Humanities and President Emeritus, University of Richmond

Victor Branch, Senior Vice President, Richmond Market President, Bank of America

Rev. Benjamin P. Campbell, Episcopal Priest & Pastoral Associate, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church (Richmond)

Dr. Spencer Crew, Clarence J. Robinson Professor of History, George Mason University (former director of the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of American History)

Dr. Claudrena Harold, Professor of African American and African Studies and History, University of Virginia

Dr. Julian Maxwell Hayter, Assistant Professor of Leadership Studies, University of Richmond

Dr. James Horn, President, Jamestown Rediscovery Foundation

The Honorable Delores L. McQuinn, Delegate, Virginia House of Delegates

Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander, Interim Dean, Professor of History, and Director of the Joseph Jenkins Roberts Center for the Study of the African Diaspora, Norfolk State University

Justin G. Reid, Director of African American Programs, Virginia Humanities

Dr. Susan P. Schoelwer, Robert H. Smith Senior Curator, George Washington’s Mount Vernon

Throughout this 400-year-long history, African Americans have played a pivotal role in shaping America’s national identity and culture. This exhibition focuses on key Virginians and Virginia events that defined the meaning of American democracy, equality, and justice. Works of art, manuscripts, and artifacts, along with interpretive content, will showcase the significance and rich complexity of African American history. A full slate of educational programming will accompany the exhibition.

As part of this ongoing effort, the Virginia Museum of History & Culture is asking for the public’s help to build the museum’s collections to better preserve the complex experience of African Americans in Virginia. Items of interest are those that represent African American achievements in Virginia politics, business, culture, and other arenas in the 20th and 21st centuries. In addition, items or materials related to life under Jim Crow segregation, the Civil Rights Movement, expressions of black pride, and the recent fight against persistent racism and injustice as seen in the Black Lives Matter movement and Charlottesville protests, are needed. If you have objects (such as documents, letters, family mementos, personal effects, and images) that you would like to share with the museum, please contact Dr. Karen Sherry, Curator of Exhibitions, at (804) 342-9683 or ksherry@VirginiaHistory.org.

The Virginia Museum of History & Culture is owned and operated by the Virginia Historical Society — a private, non-profit organization established in 1831. The historical society is the oldest cultural organization in Virginia, and one of the oldest and most distinguished history organizations in the nation. For use in its state history museum and its renowned research library, the historical society cares for a collection of nearly nine million items representing the ever-evolving story of Virginia.

The Virginia Museum of History & Culture is located at 428 North Boulevard in Richmond’s Museum District. Hours are Monday – Sunday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. for the galleries and museum shop, Monday – Saturday 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. for the research library. For more information call (804) 358-4901, visit VirginiaHistory.org, or connect with the Virginia Museum of History & Culture on Facebook and Twitter.

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