

Press Release  
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## **Virginia Museum of History & Culture Announces Keynote Speaker for 2019 Commemoration Exhibition Opening and Arthur Ashe Boulevard Dedication - Congressman John Lewis**

Richmond, VA — On Saturday, June 22, at 11:00 a.m., the Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC) in partnership with the City of Richmond and the Commonwealth of Virginia, will host an historic event featuring the official dedication of Arthur Ashe Boulevard and the opening of their groundbreaking exhibition, [\*Determined: The 400-year Struggle for Black Equality\*](#). Congressman John Lewis (GA-05), a renowned civil rights activist, will lend his voice to this significant occasion as keynote speaker.

Also, on that day, Congressman A. Donald McEachin (VA-04) will host members of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) at the museum for a State of Black America town hall where members of the CBC will discuss a variety of pressing issues affecting Black Americans. Participating members of Congress include CBC Chair Congresswoman Karen Bass (CA-37), Congressman John Lewis (GA-02), Congresswoman Barbara Lee (CA-13), Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee (TX-18), Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman (NJ-12), and Congresswoman Gwen Moore (WI-04).

“We are deeply thankful for Congressman McEachin’s leadership in coordinating the participation of the Congressional Black Caucus,” said Jamie O. Bosket, president & CEO of VMHC. “Having Congressman Lewis and other members of the CBC present as we open our *Determined* exhibition and dedicate the Boulevard to Arthur Ashe will add meaningfully to the occasion.”

*Determined* explores the black experience from the 1619 arrival of the first enslaved Africans in English North America to the present day. The exhibition traces the ways in which black people have profoundly shaped the course of American history and the nature of American democracy through their fight for freedom, equality, and justice. *Determined* features dozens of artifacts that tell the compelling story of a selection of remarkable Virginians, including Arthur Ashe, Jr. Other individuals highlighted in this four-century survey exhibition include Missy Elliott, James Lafayette, Mildred and Richard Loving, Mary S. Peake, Barbara Johns Powell, and Gladys West. These inspiring individuals showcase black contributions to America’s founding and development as a nation, the evolution of civil rights, and the shaping of contemporary culture.

Nearly 100 historically important artifacts will fill this new exhibition, including slavery-era restraints, an African-inspired banjo, freedom documents, letters, works of art, a lunch counter stool from Woolworth Department Store, a pamphlet signed by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Arthur Ashe’s 1970 Davis Cup championship ring, and a tear-gas canister from the events in Charlottesville in the summer of 2017. Perhaps the most significant items are extremely rare copies of the Emancipation Proclamation and 13th Amendment signed by Abraham Lincoln.

This 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. The exhibition is curated by Dr. Karen Sherry, VMHC Curator of Exhibitions, with the guidance of an advisory committee consisting of distinguished scholars, museum professionals, public historians, and government leaders who brought a broad range of expertise and perspective to the project.

*Determined* will be on display June 22, 2019 through March 29, 2020 at VMHC. The exhibition is presented by Altria Group, Inc. Bank of America is a supporting sponsor. After opening day, when access will be free, admission to the exhibition is included with suggested admission to the museum.

For more information about the CBC State of Black America Town Hall event, contact Ariana Valderrama, [Ariana.Valerrama@mail.house.gov](mailto:Ariana.Valerrama@mail.house.gov).

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 N Arthur Ashe Boulevard in Richmond's Museum District. Hours are Monday – Sunday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the galleries and museum shop, Monday – Saturday 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. for the research library. For more information call 804.340.1800, visit [VirginiaHistory.org](http://VirginiaHistory.org), or connect on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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