

Press Release
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Virginia Museum of History & Culture to Display Special Graphics to Honor Enslaved African Americans at the Arthur Ashe Boulevard Dedication and Grand Opening of Groundbreaking Exhibition, *Determined: The 400-Year Struggle for Black Equality*

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*. The event is free and open to the public and will take place on the museum's front lawn (weather permitting).

To mark this important occasion, a large-scale artful graphic installation will be displayed on the steps of the Museum. It will feature the names of approximately 11,000 enslaved African Americans. These names are drawn from *Unknown No Longer*, a database of enslaved people whose names and biographical information were identified through research of early documents held in the museum's collections. Begun in 2011, archival staff have spent hundreds of hours meticulously combing through unpublished works in the museum's nine-million-item collection. This unique resource is now combined with a similar database created by the Library of Virginia, called *Virginia Untold*. Both databases were generously supported by Dominion Energy.

"In 2019, we mark the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first captive Africans in British North America. In many ways, Virginia and the United States of America were built upon the labor of millions of enslaved black people who came after them," said Jamie O. Bosket, president and CEO of VMHC. "We hope our guests, and passersby, will take a moment to reflect on their contributions and sacrifices."

Determined explores the black experience from the 1619 arrival of the first enslaved Africans in English North America to the present day. The exhibit 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 exhibit 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 exhibit, 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., tennis shoes worn by Arthur Ashe, 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 exhibit 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 exhibit 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 this graphic installation at the Museum, please contact Tracy Schneider at tschneider@virginiahistory.org or call 804.342.9661 or Emily Lucier at elucier@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 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, or connect on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

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