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Virginia Museum of History & Culture and the Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia Partner to Tell an Inclusive Story of Virginia

Richmond, VA — The Virginia Museum of History & Culture (VMHC) and the Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia (BHMVA) are partnering to share collections and resources to connect more people to the story of Virginia. Under the agreement, select collections from the Black History Museum will be housed at the Virginia Museum of History & Culture, which has expanded storage and conservation facilities as well as expert personnel for the preservation and storage of collections. While BHMVA artifacts are at the VMHC they will be digitized and made broadly accessible through their online public catalog as well as the BHMVA website. The partnering institutions will also share their collections with each other for use in research, programs, and exhibitions.

“Our institutions have much in common,” said VMHC President Jamie Bosket. “We are both committed to revitalizing our programming to preserve Virginia’s past and to using the power of history to inspire. This is a noble partnership for two museums devoted to voicing meaningful stories from our communities, and the public stands to benefit immensely from this collaboration.”

The Black History Museum & Cultural Center of Virginia was founded in 1981 by Carroll Anderson, Sr., who led the effort to create the Bill “Bojangles” Robinson monument in Richmond’s Jackson Ward neighborhood. The BHMVA was founded in 1981 and opened in 1991 at 00 Clay Street where it operated until 2016. The museum relocated to the Leigh Street Armory, which quartered Black troops in the mid-1890s, served as a recreation center for Black soldiers during World War II, and then became an extension of Richmond Public Schools for several years. The new museum features permanent galleries exploring Emancipation, Reconstruction, Jim Crow, Desegregation, Massive Resistance, and the Civil Rights Movement. Changing galleries feature exhibitions ranging from visionary artist Murry DePillars to the experience of Black soldiers during World War II. BHMVA executive director, Adele Johnson, says “Our mission is to preserve stories that inspire. As we expand our collections and curate larger exhibitions, space has become a challenge. When VMHC offered to digitize and store items for us, we thought it was a valuable opportunity to continue growing while also sharing our stories with the broader community.”

The Virginia Historical Society was founded in 1831 and is the oldest cultural organization in the Commonwealth. Its collections total nearly nine million items chronicling 14,000 years of history from Pre-Contact Virginia to the present. In 2018 the historical society launched a new vision and name for its headquarters facility—The Virginia Museum of History & Culture. This transformation was marked by expanded public programming and statewide outreach and a commitment to tell a more inclusive story of Virginia. The VMHC’s current marquee exhibit is “Determined: The 400 Year Struggle for Black Equality,” which opened in June 2019 to mark the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first captive Africans in English-speaking North America.

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