



Smithsonian *National Museum of African American History and Culture*

Overview History of the Museum

Beginning with African American veterans of the Civil War, and the children of slaves who marched with them in Washington in 1915, African Americans have desired a space on the National Mall. The work started by Union veterans and their supporters and descendants led to 1929 legislation that authorized the construction of a National Memorial Building to serve as a museum and “a tribute to the Negro’s contributions to the achievements of America.”

Congressman John Lewis, D-GA, picked up the charge and The National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) Plan for Action Presidential Commission was established on December 28, 2001 by Public Law 107-106 to create an implementation plan for the NMAAHC. Following the work of the Plan for Action Presidential Commission which investigated eleven potential sites in Washington D.C., four sites were chosen by Congress for further investigation. After the completion of the Commission’s work, Congress considered legislation to establish the Museum.



President George W. Bush signs H.R. 3491, the National Museum of African American History and Culture Act, in the Oval Office Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2003. The act authorizes the creation of a Smithsonian Institution museum dedicated to the legacy of African Americans in America. White House photo by Paul Morse

Unless otherwise noted, the attendees are members of the Presidential Commission on the Development of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. From left, they are: Dr. Robert Wright, commission Chairman; Renee Amooore; Vicky Bailey; Andrew McLemore, Jr.; Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton, D-D.C.; Senator Rick Santorum, R-Penn.; Michael Lomax; Congressman John Lewis, D-Ga.; Harold Skramstad, Jr.; Barbara Franco; Robert Wilkins; Senator Sam Brownback, R-Kan.; Cicely Tyson; Lerone Bennett, Jr.; Congressman John Larson, D-Conn.; Eric Sexton; Claudine Brown; Larry Small, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution; Currie Ballard

Milestones and Benchmarks

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- *President Bush signs the legislation creating the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC)* December 16, 2003

 - *19 member Founding NMAAHC Council appointed by the Smithsonian Board of Regents* October, 2004

 - *Lonnie G. Bunch named Founding Director of NMAAHC* March 14, 2005

 - *Smithsonian Board of Regents select the Museum site on the National Mall* January 30, 2006

 - *Anniversary of the selection of the Site* January 30, 2007

 - *Programming for building complete* (est.) April, 2008

 - *Environmental and Historic Preservation Documentation complete* (est.) May, 2008

 - *Selection of Architect* (est.) April, 2009

 - *Completion of Design Development/ Construction drawings* (est.) October, 2011

 - *★ Start of Construction* (est.) July, 2012

 - *★ Complete Construction* (est.) December, 2015
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