

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER CELEBRATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH SPECIAL EVENTS AND EXHIBITS

Philadelphia, PA (January 11, 2010) – During Black History Month, the National Constitution Center will feature special events and exhibits that highlight the influence of African Americans on our nation's history. Guests will have the opportunity to pay tribute to inspirational African Americans from the past, and recognize those who are making history today.

The schedule of events includes:

Breaking Barriers Show

Daily throughout February

Program times vary; check the visitor guide upon arrival for daily show times

FREE with museum admission

During the *Breaking Barriers Show*, visitors can examine the lives of Thurgood Marshall, Bessie Coleman, Jackie Robinson, and other extraordinary African Americans throughout history, in order to learn more about the issues they faced and the rights they secured for all Americans. Participants can try on recreations of Bessie Coleman's flight jacket and goggles, Jackie Robinson's Dodgers jersey, Dr. Patricia Bath's white coat, and Thurgood Marshall's black Supreme Court robe. Audience members will also use clues to guess the identities of groups and people such as the Little Rock Nine, Venus and Serena Williams, and President Barack Obama.

Teachers can book an extended version of the *Breaking Barriers Show* in advance as a special school group package, which includes the award-winning presentation, "Freedom Rising," the *Breaking Barriers Show*, and an educational workshop about the Center's main exhibition, *The Story of We the People*. The package costs \$14 per person. Please note: Dates for themed museum packages fill quickly. Book your group early for the best selection of available dates. Packages can be scheduled at 215.409.6800.

Educators can also bring *the Breaking Barriers Show* to their schools through the Center's Traveling History and Civics Program. Details and prices are available at www.constitutioncenter.org/thcp.

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ADD ONE/BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2010

Decoding the Document: Emancipation Proclamation

Daily throughout February

Program times vary; check the visitor guide upon arrival for daily show times

FREE with museum admission

Visitors can take a closer look at the Center's rare printing of the Emancipation Proclamation, signed by Abraham Lincoln, to learn more about its history, the Civil War, and the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution. Participants will take on the role of a museum curator, carefully examining high quality scans of the document and discovering the secrets of this almost 150-year-old artifact.

Highlight Tour

Daily throughout February

Program times vary; check the visitor guide upon arrival for daily show times

FREE with museum admission

Visitors can take a self-guided tour of the museum, arranged by the Center's curators. The tour will highlight artifacts and exhibits exploring African American history from the Dred Scott Decision, the passing of the 13th Amendment, and the March on Washington to the historic election of President Barack Obama.

Finding the Children of Slaves: A Generation's Untold Story

Monday, February 22, 2010, 6:30 p.m.

FREE; reservations required at 215.409.6700

In honor of Black History Month, the Center welcomes *Newsweek's* Sana Butler for a conversation about her ten year odyssey to find and interview the children of slaves. A dynamic and captivating speaker, Butler will discuss how freed slaves raised their children in the years following the end of the Civil War. Based on her remarkable interviews, the lecture will detail a race against time to crisscross the country to reveal the hopes and dreams of the first generation of free African Americans. She will discuss the immigrant mentality black parents carried after 1865 as they believed in the Constitution and the potential of a new America.

In addition, visitors to the Center's main exhibition, *The Story of We the People*, will have the opportunity to view artifacts that highlight African American contributions to the country's constitutional history, including a copy of the first printing of the Dred Scott Decision from 1857, California Representative Don Edwards' pen used to sign the Voting Rights Act, a button from the March on Washington, an NAACP Voters Guide and Poster from 1965, and a poll tax receipt from Travis County, Texas.

Guests can also learn about African Americans' impact on the Constitution in the "American National Tree", which highlights people who have helped shape the Constitution over the last 200 years. The Tree includes information about influential African Americans such as Rosa Parks, Muhammad Ali, Jackie Robinson, Barbara Jordan, Booker T. Washington, Harriet Tubman, and Elizabeth Eckford.

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ADD TWO/BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2010

The exhibition also features panels illustrating the fight of African Americans to become recognized as an integral part of “We the People.” Topics include the Dred Scott Decision, the Emancipation Proclamation, voting rights, and the 1960s Civil Rights movement, which includes pertinent details about the *Brown v. Board of Education* case, the March on Washington, the signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Additionally, the Center’s world premiere exhibition, *Ancient Rome & America* – which opens on February 19, 2010 – will feature a section on slavery. Both ancient Rome and America before 1865 were slave societies. Slave collars from ancient Rome and the United States will be on display in the exhibition. Made in the early 1800s, the slave collar from the U.S. is a rare artifact that can be tied to one man’s quest for freedom. Visitors can also view John Quincy Adams Ward’s *The Freedman*, a bronze sculpture created in response to Abraham Lincoln’s issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation. The abolitionist piece depicts an African American with broken chains on the cusp between slavery and freedom. A selection of poems by Phillis Wheatley, acclaimed poet who served as a house slave to the Wheatley family of Boston, will also be on display in the exhibition.

The National Constitution Center, located at 525 Arch St. on Philadelphia’s Independence Mall, is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization dedicated to increasing public understanding of the U.S. Constitution and the ideas and values it represents. The Center serves as a museum, an education center, and a forum for debate on constitutional issues. The museum dramatically tells the story of the Constitution from Revolutionary times to the present through more than 100 interactive multimedia exhibits, film, photographs, text, sculpture and artifacts, and features a powerful, award-winning theatrical performance, “Freedom Rising”. The Center also houses the Annenberg Center for Education and Outreach, which serves as the hub for national constitutional education. Also, as a nonpartisan forum for constitutional discourse, the Center presents – without endorsement – programs that contain diverse viewpoints on a broad range of issues. For more information, call 215.409.6700 or visit www.constitutioncenter.org.

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