

CELEBRATING African-American History Month



The Virginia Capitol Square Civil Rights Memorial celebrates Barbara Johns and her fellow African-American students whose 1951 walkout protest led to the 1954 *Brown vs. the Board of Education* decision by the U.S. Supreme Court banning segregated public schools. It includes the inscriptions “It seemed like reaching for the moon,” by Barbara Johns and, from Thurgood Marshall: “The legal system can force open doors and sometimes even knock down walls, but it cannot build bridges. That job belongs to you and me.”



Origins of the Celebration

While African-American History Month wasn't officially recognized by the United States government until 1976, the celebration has a long history dating back to 1926.

Originally observed for only a week, it was developed as an educational event to inspire African-Americans to learn the history of their culture and educate the rest of the country in overcoming stereotypes.

DR. CARTER G. WOODSON

The man behind African-American History Month was born in 1875 in New Canton, Va.

Dr. Carter G. Woodson was the fourth of seven children to



NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

parents who were former slaves. As a young man, he performed jobs as a sharecropper and a miner to support his family's income. It wasn't until he was in his late teens that he attended high school.

His commitment to education would allow him to complete his four-year schedule in less than two years. It would also later change the world.

THE EARLY BEGINNINGS

Woodson helped found the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History in 1915. Its purpose was to put African-American historical contributions in the spotlight. The following year, he created the Journal of Negro History.

The scholarly publication quickly caught fire and led Woodson to urge schools and public organizations to partake in programs that promote studies of black history. This campaign began in February of 1926 and was known as Negro History Week.

According to the National Center for Public Policy Research, Woodson chose February to honor the birthdays of important figures Frederick

Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

Woodson would continue educating Americans until his death on April 3, 1950. The movement did not end with his death. It continued to grow and eventually turned into a month-long celebration.

AFRICAN-AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

Today, the entire month of February is deemed African-American History Month by government officials. It is intended to create awareness of the struggles and obstacles African Americans have overcome in America.

It is a month of reflection, education and a time the entire country can come together to understand our history.



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Prominent Women

Many women have played important roles in civil rights for African-Americans. Through hard work and incredible perseverance, these women shined a light on racial inequality.

HARRIET TUBMAN

Born around 1820, Araminta “Minty” Ross would grow to be one of the most influential people in overcoming

ing slavery — under a different name.

It was 1849 when she changed her name to Harriet — after her mother — and took her husband’s last name, Tubman.

It was also the same year that Harriet Tubman broke free from slavery and eventually became the most famous conductor of the Underground Railroad.

She used her freedom to earn money which would be used to fund Underground Railroad excursions to free more Americans. Truly a selfless woman, she eventually freed her family as well as 300 other slaves.

SEPTIMA CLARK

Born in 1898 to a father who was once a slave, the importance of education was ingrained into Clark’s lifestyle. While attending public school, she worked to obtain the money to begin classes at a private school for African Americans – the Avery Normal Institute.

Her commitment to education earned her a bachelor’s degree in 1942 and a master’s degree in 1943. She was an educator of young children and held literacy classes for adults in her spare time.

Clark eventually lost her teaching job in 1956 when she refused to comply with South

Carolina banning membership to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

She then became the Director of Workshops at a school in Tennessee, where she would eventually create a curriculum to educate blacks in literacy, government and voting procedures.

Clark was acknowledged by Martin Luther King, Jr., during his Nobel Peace Prize speech in 1964 for her persistence in education.

CLAUDETTE COLVIN

A little-known hero in the civil rights movement, Colvin refused to give up her seat on a

bus when she was only 15 years old. In 1955, her class learned of black leaders who stood up for their rights.

She is quoted as saying, “It’s my constitutional right to sit here as much as that lady. I paid my fare. It’s my constitutional right,” as a police officer demanded she move to the back of the bus. This resulted in Colvin being placed under arrest.

Rather than become discouraged, she used the experience to bring awareness of civil rights into her city. The occurrence gave the public the strength to support Rosa Parks, when the same situation happened nine months later.

History of the NAACP

This organization works tirelessly to eliminate race-based discrimination by informing Americans of educational, social and economic equality. Founded on Feb. 12, 1909, the NAACP is the nation's oldest and largest civil rights organization.

Formed in response of the race riot of 1908, in Springfield, Ill., the NAACP committed to securing for all people the rights guaranteed in the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments of the U.S. Constitution.

In the following decades, the group has helped underprivileged students acquire the proper education they deserve.

INCEPTION

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People established its office in New York City in 1910.

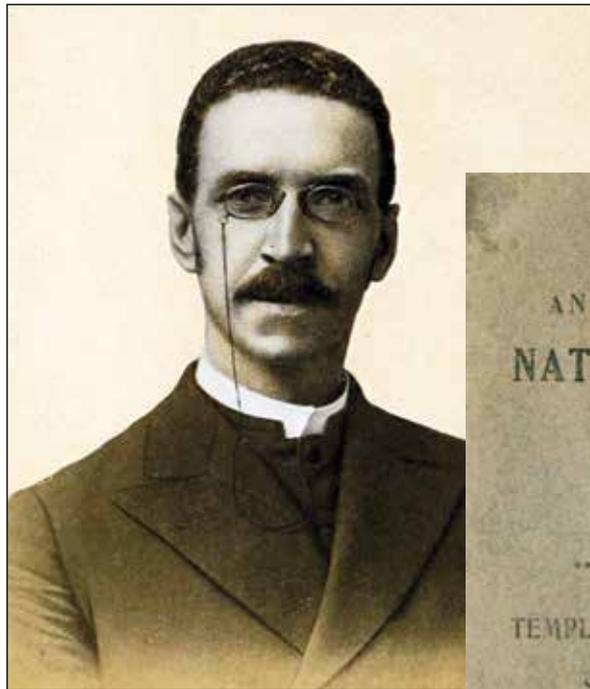
The organization's initial mission was to campaign against lynching. Its publication, "Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1919" opened the country's eyes to the savagery, and ultimately decreased incidents.

By the 1940s, the NAACP had gained a tremendous following, with an estimated 600,000 members standing up against anti-lynching policies.

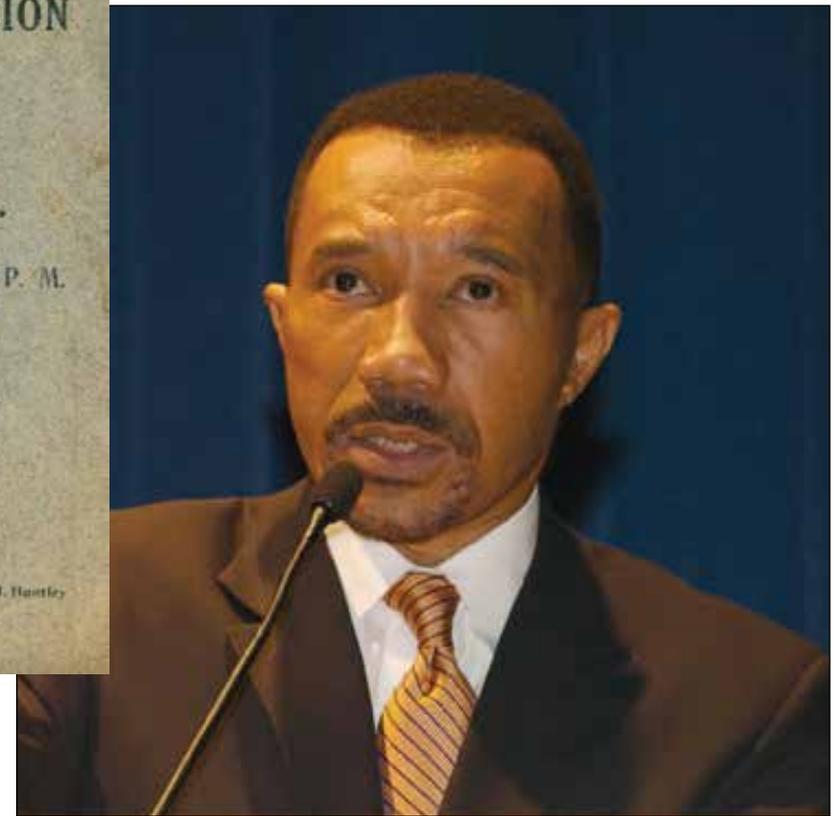
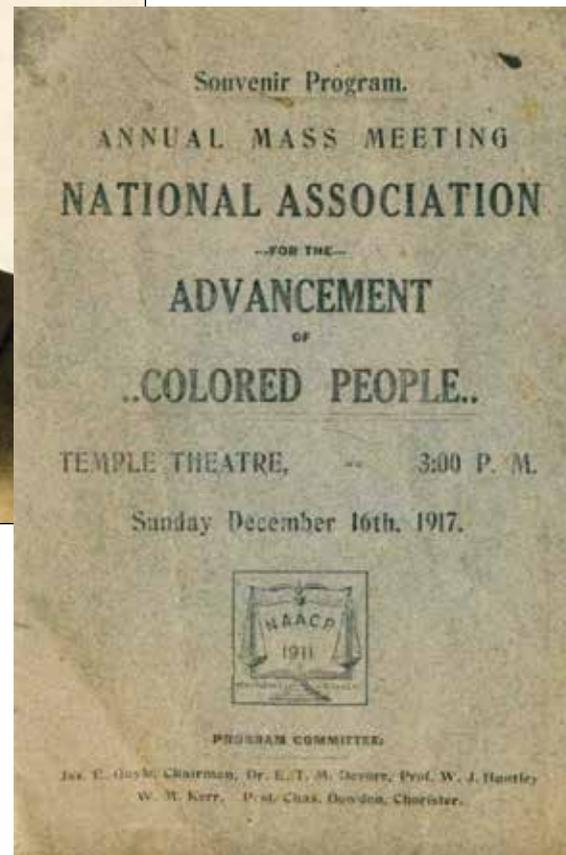
TODAY'S MISSION

Today, the group is focused on several objectives to better America. Here a few highlights from its mission statement:

- To achieve equality of rights and eliminate race prejudice among the citizens of the United States.
- To inform the public of the adverse effects of racial discrimination and to seek its elimination.
- To educate persons as to their constitutional rights and to take law-



Francis James Grimke (Oct. 10, 1850– Oct. 11, 1937) was an American Presbyterian minister who helped found the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909.



Kweisi Mfume, former NAACP president and former congressman from Maryland.

ful action to secure the exercise thereof.

The group is committed to bettering the education experience of African American youth and promoting equal rights for the entire country.

HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT THE CAUSE

The NAACP relies on us to keep its cause going. You can easily find the "Donate" section on its website, www.naacp.org.

It's also easy to become a member of the group. It encourages members from the youth community as well as adults, to join their cause and share stories of equality and the strength of our country.

How To Get Involved

February is a time for celebration for all of America. Standing as one to support those who struggled to gain freedom brings a sense of unity for the entire country. Learn how you can do your part in showing support.

TEACHERS

Educators have a responsibility and the advantage when it comes to teaching the youth about African-American History Month. It's easy to create awesome lesson plans that benefit children by informing them of the struggles our country has faced.

These are a few great lessons you can take advantage of from the National Education Association:

Older children: Discuss advancements and contributions by African-American scientists. Play an interactive game to simulate the path of the Underground Railroad. Urge students to choose from different decisions while traveling the path. Ask students to bring in items that portray their favorite African-American figures. Some ideas are political figures, scientists, athletes, authors or musicians.

Young children: Introduce figures who played major roles in the Civil Rights movement, such as Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Frederick Douglass. Have your students report on someone of their choosing. Show students different music styles, poetry and dances associated with African-American culture.

Community involvement: You don't have to be a teacher, community leader or activist to show your support during African-American History



Month. Here are some ways you can get your neighborhood or workplace involved. Hold a fundraiser. Invite guests to a gathering to celebrate elite

African-American figures in your neighborhood.

You can raise money by holding a silent auction, raffling gift cards or tickets to

events in your area and donating them to a worthy charity that supports African culture.

You also can do research about the Civil Rights move-

ment in your area and share your findings with your peers. This is a great way to educate your community on local history.

African-American History Milestones

Slavery was made prevalent in North American around 1619. Historians estimate that 6 to 7 million slaves were brought from Africa to satisfy the needs of the rapidly growing North American colonies.

Africa was soon deprived, as its strongest men and women were taken away to develop North America.

This dark time in American history lasted for centuries as African-Americans were forced to perform manual labor under the supervision of Caucasian owners. It wasn't until 1865 that slavery was abolished throughout the United States.

1865

FEB. 1, 1865

This was the day that President Abraham Lincoln signed a proposal for the 13th amendment to abolish slavery. By Dec. 6, 1865, it was ratified and met with great joy in the north.

It stated, "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction."

This, along with the 14th and 15th amendments, made great strides in the Civil Rights movement.

1869

FEB. 26, 1869

The 15th amendment stated, "The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude."

It was a year later, in February 1870, when the bill was ratified but according to the Library of Congress, it would be nearly a century before it was actually recognized. Southern states used poll taxes, literacy tests and different means to discourage African-Americans from voting.

It wasn't until the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was established that most African-Americans in the South were actually registered. Even with all the obstacles, the 15th amendment showed the country that leaders were serious about equal rights.

2009

JAN. 20, 2009

On this date, one of the most monumental instances in black history occurred. The country watched as Barack Obama was inaugurated as the first African American President of the United States of America.

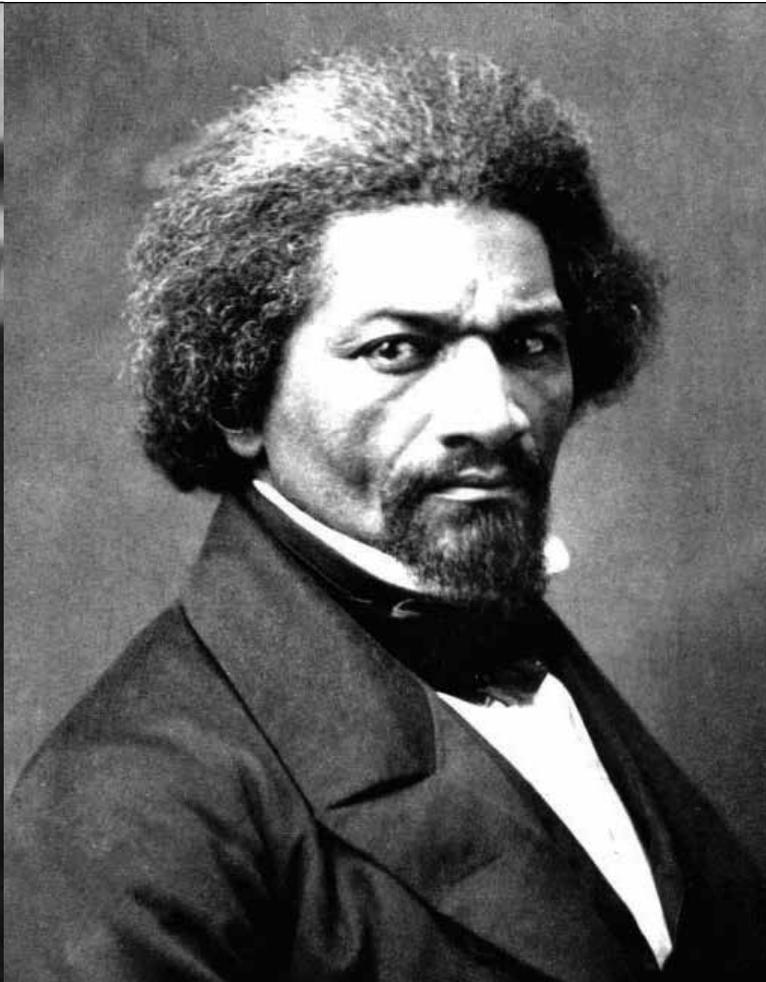
As president, Obama accomplished a major overhaul on American healthcare, promoted clean energy and supported equal rights.



OBAMA-BIDEN TRANSITION



U.S. NATIONAL ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ADMINISTRATION



ED FORD, WORLD TELEGRAM STAFF

Prominent Men

Without the dedication of these hard-working men, it might have taken much longer for African-Americans to gain rights.

These Civil Rights movement leaders changed the way Americans perceived equal rights and repaved the futures of young men and women.

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner of 1964, King attended segregated public schools as a child. Through perseverance and hard work, he graduated high school at the age of 15.

Education was an important part of

King's life as he would later earn bachelor's degrees before becoming a pastor in Montgomery, Ala.

In 1957, he was elected president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. This group was created to provide new leadership for the intensifying Civil Rights movement.

According to the organization behind the Nobel Peace Prize, King would travel more than 6 million miles from 1957 through 1968, speaking, protesting and making appearances where civil injustices occurred. King would pen five books and countless articles promoting equal rights for African Americans.

Unfortunately, his role in the civil rights movement ultimately cost him his life. King was assassinated on April 4, 1968, in Memphis, where he

intended to lead a protest march. His ultimate sacrifice ruffled the feathers of a nation fed up with injustice, leading to great strides in the Civil Rights movement.

FREDERICK DOUGLASS

Douglass was born a slave in February 1818 and would later escape at the age of 20. One of the most well-known anti-slavery activists, Douglass worked tirelessly to influence African-Americans to break away from slavery.

He gained international fame as a persuasive speaker and writer. During the Civil War, he worked as an advisor to President Abraham Lincoln and recruited African-American troops.

Before his death in 1895, Douglass was an activist, editor and true leader

in for civil rights.

MALCOLM X

Another African-American who gave his life in the fight for equal rights, Malcolm X grew up in a less-than-perfect environment. As a teenager, he fell into the dangerous world of drugs and wound up being arrested by the time he was 21.

While in prison, Malcolm X joined the Nation of Islam, which supported the segregation of black and white people. He eventually decided against the Nation's unpatriotic practices in civil rights and left the group.

He was assassinated by the Nation of Islam in 1965. His death changed the perspective of African-Americans who were taking a violent approach in the Civil Rights movement.

New Museum Opens in D.C.

To celebrate African-American History Month, take a trip to the only national museum to exclusively exhibit documentation of African-American life, history and culture.

Located in Washington, D.C., the National Museum of African American History and Culture features more than 36,000 artifacts that display the struggle, heartbreak and eventual hope of the Civil Rights movement.

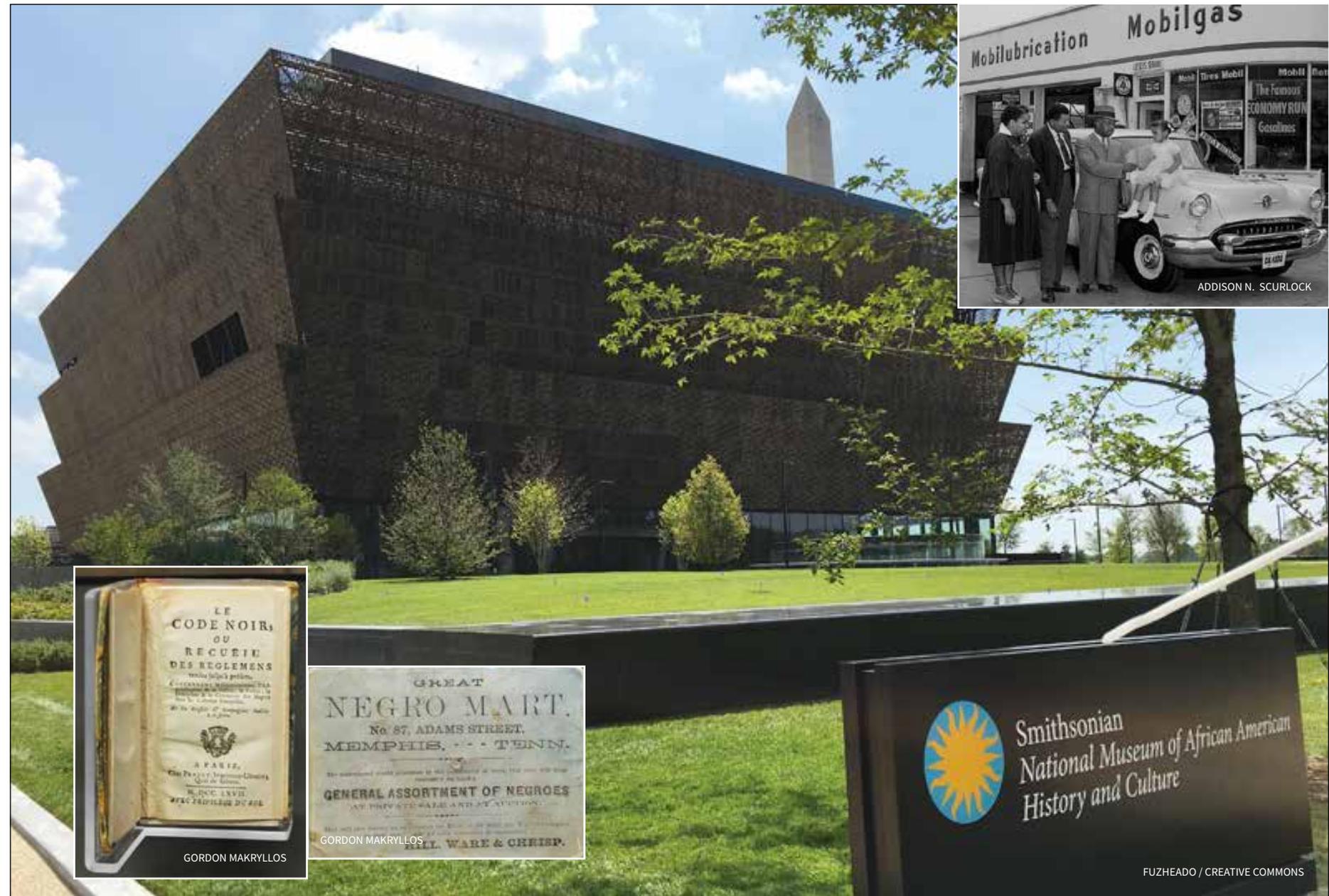
This museum is the product of decades of efforts to showcase historical contributions of African-Americans. In 2003, it was established by an Act of Congress.

On Sept. 24, 2016, the museum opened to the public. It has since gained nearly 100,000 charter members and has welcomed millions of guests.

BEAUTIFUL ARCHITECTURE

The NMAAHC paints a breathtaking picture before you even enter its doors. Designed with its surroundings in mind, visitors are welcomed to see important figures and buildings that helped in gaining equal rights for Americans.

From the north, visitors gain a great view of the White House. Setting your eyes to the



east reveals the U.S. Capitol building. Monuments of civil rights leaders sit to the south and west corners of the building.

The museum was designed by architects who borrowed popular styles from West Africa. One aspect is the corona, inspired by the three-tiered crowns used in an African art form called Yoruban.

You'll notice the entirety of

the building wrapped in a bronze-colored lattice. This design is similar to the complex ironwork enslaved African-Americans created.

FEATURES

When you walk the halls of the NMAAHC, you'll witness many humbling artifacts. According to the museum, these are a few categories and items you can expect to view.

• **Incredible literature:** Novels, song lyrics and poems telling the struggles of overcoming slavery and gaining equal rights are prominently displayed.

• **Family:** Intimate photographs of African-American families, overjoyed with their newfound freedom and adjusting to their new lives.

• **Civil rights memorabilia:** Posters and artwork used to

paint a picture of struggle for equal rights.

DONATE

The museum is made possible by artifact and financial donations. Celebrate African-American History Month by donating to a great facility that shares the highs and lows of the movement.

Donating or become a member on the museum's website.