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News Release

For Immediate Release

"Changing America" exhibit coming to Springfield

A traveling exhibition, "Changing America: The Emancipation Proclamation, 1863, and the March on Washington, 1963," will open July 9-Aug. 22 at the Library Center as part of an ongoing, citywide Civil Rights Celebration and discussion of race and race relations today.

The Springfield-Greene County Library District will collaborate with community partners including the Greater Springfield Race & Faith Collaborative, NAACP Springfield Branch and Minorities in Business to develop programs to help all ages of audiences understand and discuss the relationship between these two great peoples' movements. Programs will include scholarly lectures, art and photo exhibits and the showing of four PBS documentaries including "The Abolitionist," "The Loving Story," "Freedom Riders" and "Slavery by Another Name."

"Changing America: The Emancipation Proclamation, 1863 and the March on Washington, 1963" is presented by the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture and the National Museum of American History in collaboration with the American Library Association Public Programs Office. The tour of the exhibition is made possible by the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the Human Endeavor. It will travel to 50 venues across the nation.

"We are very excited at being a partner with the library district while we work together for a discussion of our history that will lead toward greater understanding of race and race relations today," said Cheryl Clay, president of the NAACP Springfield Branch. "As we and partners plan a year's worth of events with individuals, churches and communities, the NAACP will commit our support and participation with the Springfield-Greene County Library District for such a timely and important project."

Library Executive Director Regina Greer Cooper added, "We are pleased to have been selected as a site for this exhibition. The dramatic story of how these two pivotal events came into being, a century apart, and how each helped put the nation on a course toward fulfilling its commitment to liberty and justice for all, is one that can inspire all Americans. Decades of work, struggle and sacrifice by many dedicated individuals and groups preceded both of these events. The exhibition tells the story of these struggles and their impact on American history and on the extension of equal rights to all Americans."

Background

Both historical events grew out of decades of bold actions, resistance, organization, and vision. One hundred years separate them, yet they are linked in a larger story of liberty and the American experience ó one that has had a profound impact on the generations that followed.

... product of one act but of many. In the 19th century, ... way at slavery through daily acts of resistance, organized rebellions, and political pressure on politicians, generals, and the U.S. government. Finally, on September 22, 1862, Abraham Lincoln issued the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, which ordered that as of January 1, 1863, all enslaved individuals in all areas still in rebellion against the United States "henceforward shall be free," and under the protection of the military.

The Emancipation proclamation was limited in scope and revolutionary in impact. It committed the nation to ending slavery. The U.S. Congress responded with Constitutional amendments abolishing slavery, expanding citizenship rights, and giving black men the right to vote. These acts changed the political landscape, but the new freedoms were stripped away in the following years. However, on each Emancipation Day anniversary, Black Americans organized parades and speeches reminding the black community and the entire nation of a commitment that remained unfulfilled.

These local Emancipation Day celebrations and many other actions set the stage for the national push for freedom in the 20th century. On August 28, 1963, an estimated 250,000 Americans gathered at the Lincoln Memorial in the District of Columbia to mark the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. People traveled from every state, united across race, class, and ideological lines, and representing organizations, unions, churches or simply themselves. The prayers, electrifying speeches, and stirring music of that day served to remind Americans of the nation's commitment to fulfill its founding principles of liberty and equality for all.

In the months following the march, demonstrations and violence continued to pressure political leaders to act. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were turning points in the struggle for equality. The bills outlawed segregated public facilities and prohibited discrimination in employment and voting. The success of the March on Washington and the achievements of the modern struggle for civil rights have provided a lasting model for social change.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture was established as a Smithsonian museum by an Act of Congress in 2003. It is the only national museum devoted exclusively to the documentation of African American life, art, history and culture. Groundbreaking for the \$500 million museum took place in February 2013 in a ceremony featuring remarks by President Barack Obama; former First Lady Laura Bush, a member of the museum's advisory council; and Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.) who submitted the legislation that created the museum. It is now under construction on Washington's National Mall, on a five-acre site adjacent to the Washington Monument. It is scheduled to open in winter 2015. For more information, visit www.nmaahc.si.edu.

The National Museum of American History collects, preserves and displays American heritage through exhibitions and public programs about social, political, cultural, scientific and military history. Documenting the American experience from Colonial times to the present, the museum looks at growth and change in the United States. For more information, visit www.americanhistory.si.edu.



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ral agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities philosophy and other areas of the humanities. NEH grants enrich classroom learning, create and preserve knowledge and bring ideas to life through public television, radio, new technologies, exhibitions and programs in libraries, museums and other community places. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at www.neh.gov.

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