

NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER

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NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER TO DISPLAY RARE COPY OF THE THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT ON PRESIDENT LINCOLN'S 200th BIRTHDAY

*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.*

--Thirteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, ratified on December 6, 1865

Philadelphia, PA (January 22, 2008) – The National Constitution Center announces that it has acquired for display a rare copy of the Thirteenth Amendment signed by President Abraham Lincoln. This treasured document will be on display for eleven weeks – beginning on Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 2009 – in the Center's main exhibition, *The Story of We the People*, and will coincide with the *America I AM: The African American Imprint* exhibition, which made its world debut at the Center on January 15, 2009.

"The Thirteenth Amendment serves as a poignant reminder of the struggle for all Americans to be included in 'We the People,'" said Joseph M. Torsella, President and CEO of the National Constitution Center. "It is a true honor to obtain this treasure, which had such a profound impact on American history."

Congress approved the Thirteenth Amendment on January 31, 1865. The original resolution was signed on February 1, 1865 by Abraham Lincoln (even though the Constitution does not give the president a say on constitutional amendments), Vice President Hannibal Hamlin, and House Speaker Schuyler Colfax. Over the next few days, Congressional clerks penned additional copies for elated supporters, including Lincoln, to sign. Of the 14 known copies of the Thirteenth Amendment signed by Lincoln, the Center's is one of only 7 also signed by the Vice President, the House Speaker, and the Senators (37) and Congressmen (114) who voted to abolish slavery.

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ADD ONE/THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT

Lincoln believed the Thirteenth Amendment would preserve for all time the emancipation he had ordered as a wartime measure. No piece of legislation received more of his attention.

Beginning in February 2007 with the acquisition of a rare copy of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Abraham Lincoln, and continuing with the acquisition of the signature made by Lincoln at Gettysburg and the Thirteenth Amendment, the Center is working to build a collection of treasures through long-term loans and permanent acquisitions, including rare and important documents and items with iconic status that uniquely capture crucial moments in American history.

“The Thirteenth Amendment loan is a remarkably generous display of support for the Center. We are grateful to the lender, who is helping us create ever-more-compelling experiences of our nation’s history for our visitors,” Torsella said.

The acquisition of the Thirteenth Amendment coincides with the premiere of Tavis Smiley’s *America I AM: The African American Imprint* exhibition at the Center, celebrating nearly 500 years of African American contributions to this country. *America I AM* will be on display through May 3, 2009, presenting a historical continuum of pivotal moments in courage, conviction, and creativity that solidifies the undeniable imprint of African Americans across the nation and around the world.

Featuring more than 200 artifacts culled from every period of U.S. history, the exhibit will include objects, texts, religion, music, narration, and media. An interactive component of the exhibition will allow visitors to leave their own video “imprints,” and this collection will grow throughout the life of the exhibition with the potential to become the largest recorded oral history project in U.S. history.

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

ADD TWO/THIRTEENTH AMENDMENT

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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