

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Annie Stone, 215-409-6687
astone@constitutioncenter.org

Merissa Blum, 215-409-6645
mblum@constitutioncenter.org

**CIVIL WAR AND RECONSTRUCTION EXHIBIT TO HAVE PERMANENT HOME AT NATIONAL
CONSTITUTION CENTER, BEGINNING MAY 9, 2019**

Civil War and Reconstruction: The Battle for Freedom and Equality will explore constitutional debates at the heart of the Second Founding, as well as the formation, passage, and impact of the Reconstruction Amendments

Philadelphia, PA (January 31, 2019) – On May 9, 2019, the National Constitution Center’s new permanent exhibit—the first in America devoted to exploring the constitutional debates from the Civil War and Reconstruction—will open to the public. The exhibit will feature key figures central to the era—from Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass to John Bingham and Harriet Tubman—and will allow visitors of all ages to learn how the equality promised in the Declaration of Independence was finally inscribed in the Constitution by the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, collectively known as the Reconstruction Amendments.

The 3,000-square-foot exhibit, entitled ***Civil War and Reconstruction: The Battle for Freedom and Equality***, will feature over 100 artifacts, including original copies of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments, Dred Scott’s signed petition for freedom, a pike purchased by John Brown for an armed raid to free enslaved people, a fragment of the flag that Abraham Lincoln raised at Independence Hall in 1861, and a ballot box marked “colored” from Virginia’s first statewide election that allowed black men to vote in 1867. The exhibit will also feature artifacts from the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia—one of the most significant Civil War collections in the country—housed at and on loan from the Gettysburg Foundation and The Union League of Philadelphia. A detailed list of confirmed artifacts is featured below, with more being added in the months ahead.

“The post-Civil War amendments that emerged during Reconstruction represent the most important changes to the Constitution since the adoption of the Bill of Rights,” said Jeffrey Rosen, president and CEO of the National Constitution Center. “The National Constitution Center is thrilled to open the first permanent gallery in America that will tell the story of how the freedom and equality promised in the Declaration of Independence was thwarted in the original Constitution, resurrected by Lincoln at Gettysburg, and, after the bloodiest war in American history, finally enshrined in the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution.”

The exhibit will also bring together artifacts, images, and interactive elements to tell the stories of African-American officeholders who held local and national elective office during the period following the Civil War, including Hiram Rhodes Revels, Robert Smalls, and P.B.S. Pinchback. Along with other multimedia elements, the exhibit will use interactive technology to encourage visitors to explore the creation and drafting of each of the three Reconstruction Amendments. This new experience will be incorporated into the Center’s online *Interactive Constitution* platform, which has received more than 20

million views since its launch and will ensure key content in the exhibit is accessible to classrooms across America.

For a limited production run beginning on June 19 (Juneteenth)—the holiday that commemorates the emancipation of enslaved African Americans throughout the Confederate States of America—visitors can also experience **FOURTEEN**, a moving theatrical performance that sheds new light on the Reconstruction era and the ratification of the 14th Amendment. Through dramatic interpretation of original texts, such as Frederick Douglass’s open letter to his former master, the 30-minute performance will bring to life the leaders, influential figures, and everyday Americans who were central to the era. This production is created in collaboration and consultation with nationally recognized, award-winning artists and scholars, and has been supported by The Pew Center for Arts & Heritage. *FOURTEEN: A Theatrical Performance* will be performed in the Center’s Bank of America Theater select weeks throughout 2019 and 2020.

Civil War and Reconstruction will be a permanent addition to the National Constitution Center’s main exhibit experience, which includes three signature attractions: *The Story of We the People*, the museum’s interactive main exhibit, which illuminates America’s constitutional history; *Signers’ Hall*, which allows visitors to walk among life-size bronze statues of the Founding Fathers; and *Freedom Rising*, a multimedia theatrical production that highlights the American quest for freedom. Located on the ground floor, this new permanent gallery will be adjacent to the *American Treasures* gallery, which features the five rarest original drafts of the Constitution. Together, these two exhibits will ensure that the most significant original documents from America’s founding and from the Reconstruction era—which some have called the Second Founding—can educate and inspire visitors in perpetuity.

To assist in the development of this exhibit, the National Constitution Center convened America’s leading scholars to serve as an advisory board, including **Randy Barnett**, Carmack Waterhouse Professor of Legal Theory at Georgetown University Law Center; **Laura Edwards**, Peabody Family Professor of History at Duke University; **Garrett Epps**, professor of law at the University of Baltimore; **Eric Foner**, DeWitt Clinton Professor of History at Columbia University; **Thavolia Glymph**, professor of history and African-American studies at Duke University; **Jamal Greene**, the Dwight Professor of Law at Columbia Law School; **Allen Guelzo**, Henry R. Luce III Professor of the Civil War Era at Gettysburg College; **Kurt Lash**, E. Claiborne Robins Distinguished Chair in Law at University of Richmond School of Law; **Earl Maltz**, distinguished professor of law at Rutgers University School of Law; **Kate Masur**, associate professor of history at Northwestern University; **Darrell Miller**, Melvin G. Shimm Professor of Law at Duke University School of Law; **Janai Nelson**, associate director-counsel of the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc.; **Matthew Pinsker**, professor of history and Brian Pohanka Chair in American Civil War History at Dickinson College; **Rick Valelly**, Claude C. Smith ‘14 Professor of Political Science at Swarthmore College; and **Kimberly West-Faulcon**, professor of law and James P. Bradley Chair in Constitutional Law at Loyola Law School.

Artifacts in *Civil War and Reconstruction* will be generously lent to the National Constitution Center thanks to a path-breaking partnership between the Center, the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia, and the Gettysburg Foundation. The Civil War Museum formally transferred ownership of its three-dimensional artifacts to the Gettysburg Foundation in 2016 on the condition that a selection be permanently displayed in Philadelphia at the National Constitution Center. The Museum’s two-dimensional collection of archives and books is housed at The Heritage Center of The Union League of Philadelphia under a stewardship agreement with the Abraham Lincoln Foundation where researchers and others can access it.

The exhibit also brings together artifacts from a wide range of institutions across the country, from Illinois, Louisiana, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

The National Constitution Center will host special programming to celebrate the opening of the new exhibit. More details to come. Additional exhibit details will also be posted to constitutioncenter.org/upcoming-exhibits when available.

###

About the National Constitution Center

The [National Constitution Center](https://constitutioncenter.org) in Philadelphia inspires citizenship as the only place where people across America and around the world can come together to learn about, debate, and celebrate the greatest vision of human freedom in history, the U.S. Constitution. A private, nonprofit organization, the Center serves as America's leading platform for constitutional education and debate, fulfilling its Congressional charter "to disseminate information about the U.S. Constitution on a nonpartisan basis." As the **Museum of We the People**, the Center brings the Constitution to life for visitors of all ages through interactive programs and exhibits. As **America's Town Hall**, the Center brings the leading conservative and liberal thought leaders together to debate the Constitution on all media platforms. As a center for **Civic Education**, the Center delivers the best educational programs and online resources that inspire, excite, and engage citizens about the U.S. Constitution. For more information, call 215-409-6700 or visit constitutioncenter.org.

EDITOR'S NOTE: A list of confirmed artifacts follows.

Confirmed Artifacts

- Dred Scott's signed petition for freedom, 1846 (*St. Louis Circuit Court, Missouri State Archives–St. Louis*)
- One-cent token used to advertise a slave auction house in South Carolina, 1846 (*Courtesy of Angelo Scarlato*)
- Printing block depicting a runaway slave that was used for newspaper advertisements, early 1800s (*Courtesy of Angelo Scarlato*)
- Pike purchased by John Brown for his planned Harpers Ferry Raid, an armed raid to free enslaved people, 1857 (*From the Collection of the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia on loan from Gettysburg Foundation*)
- *The Anti-Slavery Alphabet* children's book, 1847 (*The Library Company of Philadelphia*)
- First edition of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, 1852 (*The Library Company of Philadelphia*)
- Fragment of the flag that Abraham Lincoln raised at Independence Hall, 1861 (*From the Collection of the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia on loan from Gettysburg Foundation*)
- Major General George Meade's sword and scabbard (*From the Collection of the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia on loan from Gettysburg Foundation*)
- Dress spurs worn by Major General George Meade (*From the Collection of the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia on loan from Gettysburg Foundation*)
- Major General John Reynolds's sash that he was wearing when he was killed at Gettysburg in 1863 (*From the Collection of the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia on loan from Gettysburg Foundation*)

- Illustrated letter from a Civil War soldier complaining of the heavy loads they are required to carry, 1863 (*Courtesy of The Civil War Museum of Philadelphia and The Abraham Lincoln Foundation of The Union League of Philadelphia*)
- Portrait of Abraham Lincoln by David Bustill Bowser, an African-American artist, ca. 1864-1868 (*From the Collection of the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia on loan from Gettysburg Foundation*)
- *Hymn Book for the Army and Navy*, ca. 1860s (*Courtesy of The Civil War Museum of Philadelphia and The Abraham Lincoln Foundation of The Union League of Philadelphia*)
- “Housewife” sewing kit printed with the Emancipation Proclamation, 1864 (*Courtesy of Angelo Scarlato*)
- Commemorative copy of the Emancipation Proclamation signed by Lincoln, 1864 (*On loan from The Galbraith Family 2012 Trust*)
- Telegram sent to Jefferson Davis when Virginia voted to secede from the Union, 1861 (*Louisiana Research Collection, Tulane University*)
- Tin dressing kit used by a female volunteer at the Union Volunteer Refreshment Saloon and Hospital, ca. 1860s (*From the Collection of the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia on loan from Gettysburg Foundation*)
- Thaddeus Stevens’s cane, 1860-1868 (*Loan courtesy of LancasterHistory.org, Lancaster, Pennsylvania*)
- Ballot box for “colored” voters to use during the Virginia state elections in 1867 (*Courtesy of the Library of Virginia*)
- Carpetbag luggage likely used by a carpetbagger (nickname for Northerners who traveled south after the war in search of financial and political opportunities), ca. 1800s (*The Abraham Lincoln Foundation of The Union League of Philadelphia*)
- Letter from Representative John Bingham regarding the 14th Amendment, 1867 (*Ohio History Connection*)
- Ford’s Theatre playbill from the night Lincoln was assassinated, 1865 (*From the Collection of the Civil War Museum of Philadelphia on loan from Gettysburg Foundation*)
- Eyewitness accounts of the Lincoln assassination recorded in the Petersen House, 1865 (*The Abraham Lincoln Foundation of The Union League of Philadelphia*)
- Presidential pardon of a former Confederate who took part in the rebellion against the U.S., 1866 (*Edward J. Gay Family Papers, Special Collections, LSU Libraries, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA*)
- Note from Senator Charles Sumner declaring, “Equality of rights is the first of rights,” 1869 (*The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC02095.30*)
- Final Report of Congress’s Joint Committee on Reconstruction, 1866 (*The Library Company of Philadelphia*)
- “The Death of Slavery” poem by William Cullen Bryant, ca. 1866 (*The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, GLC01543.02*)
- Telegraph enforcing the Reconstruction Act, 1867 (*Brickell Papers, Special Collections, LSU Libraries, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, LA*)