

For Immediate Release

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NATIONAL CONSTITUTION CENTER, AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM IN PHILADELPHIA AND THE HISTORIC DISTRICT MUSEUMS JOIN FORCES TO CELEBRATE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE 13TH AMENDMENT

Philadelphia (November 30, 2015) – The National Constitution Center and the African American Museum in Philadelphia joined with Historic District of Philadelphia museums and organizations today to announce plans to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the 13th Amendment on December 6. Ratified by the states on December 6, 1865, the 13th Amendment formally abolished slavery in the United States.

Joining the National Constitution Center and the African American Museum in Philadelphia are the Historic Philadelphia Center, Independence National Historical Park, Independence Seaport Museum, Independence Visitor Center Corporation, the National Liberty Museum and the National Museum of American Jewish History.

“The National Constitution Center has launched a five year initiative to commemorate 150th anniversaries of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution, ratified after the Civil War,” said Jeffrey Rosen, President and CEO of the National Constitution Center. “We are thrilled that our partners in the historic district are joining us to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the ratification of the 13th Amendment, which began to fulfill President Lincoln’s promise at Gettysburg of a ‘new birth of freedom.’”

“One hundred and fifty years ago, our nation came together to abolish slavery,” said Patricia Wilson Aden, President and CEO of the African American Museum in Philadelphia. “Today we again stand together, now with our neighboring institutions in commemorating this momentous anniversary.”

Recognition of the anniversary on December 6 will include a 2 p.m. simultaneous public reading of the 13th Amendment by the National Constitution Center, the African American Museum in Philadelphia and a number of participating museums and institutions. Visitors to the National Constitution Center will also be able to view an original copy of the 13th Amendment, signed by President Abraham Lincoln and lent to the National Constitution Center by the philanthropist David Rubenstein. Programming at the National Constitution Center will take place from **12 p.m. – 5 p.m.** with scholarly discussions, document workshops, and film screenings.

The Center’s programming continues on **Monday, December 7 at 7 p.m.** a special *America’s Town Hall* program at the National Archives in Washington DC examining emancipation and America’s Second Founding. On **Wednesday, December 9 at 6:30 p.m.** preeminent historian Eric Foner will be at the National Constitution Center for an *America’s Town Hall* discussion titled *Why Reconstruction Matters*.

Historic District Exhibits, Programming and Events

African American Museum in Philadelphia

Following an 11:30 a.m. public reading of the 13th Amendment, visitors to the African American Museum in Philadelphia are encouraged to experience AAMP's core exhibit "Audacious Freedom" which speaks directly to life for Black Philadelphians during this time. AAMP looks forward to welcoming visitors to view "Audacious Freedom" as well as "Africans in India" during this week of celebration. *Open Thursdays – Saturdays, 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. and Sundays 12 – 5 p.m.*

Historic Philadelphia Center

Visit the Historic Philadelphia Center where award winning Once Upon A Nation Storytellers share interactive tales highlighting the roles of African Americans played in our nation's history from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Saturday, December 5 & 12 to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the ratification of the 13th Amendment. While you are at the Center, be sure to catch the high-tech look at history in the Liberty 360 3D Show in the PECO Theater. Narrated by Dr. Benjamin Franklin, this 20-minute show explores the symbols of liberty throughout American history, highlighting important themes including the abolitionist movement, the Underground Railroad and more.

Independence Seaport Museum

At Independence Seaport Museum's *Tides of Freedom: African Presence on the Delaware River*, visitors explore the changing meaning of "freedom" in today's world through objects and first-person accounts of those who lived, worked, and traveled along the Delaware River. Curated by PBS's Tukufu Zuberi of History Detectives, *Tides of Freedom* examines 300 years of African-American history by looking at four moments in Philadelphia's history: the Middle Passage and enslavement, emancipation, Jim Crow, and the Civil Rights era. The interactive exhibit features recently uncovered artifacts from Independence Seaport Museum's collection. *Open daily 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.*

Independence National Historical Park

- **The Underground Railroad Exhibition**

On display inside the Independence Visitor Center, this exhibit chronicles enslaved Africans' long road to freedom pre 1865. Using the railroad as a metaphor for travel, this secret organization brought slaves out of the southern United States to free northern states and to Canada. Conductors escorted slaves on treacherous journeys north relying on the participation of those opposed to human bondage. *Open daily 8:30 a.m. – 6 p.m.*

- **The President's House Site**

Executive Mansion during the federal era, this is where the Washingtons brought nine enslaved Africans during the first presidency. Washington feared the influence of Philadelphia's free African community on his enslaved people. To prevent them from gaining their freedom under Pennsylvania's Gradual Emancipation Act, he rotated them out of state at least every six months. One bondswoman, Oney Judge, self-emancipated to New Hampshire where she evaded recapture. Another enslaved man, Hercules, escaped from Mount Vernon before the Washingtons returned from Philadelphia. Here, Washington signed the Fugitive Slave Act in 1793. *Open 24 hours daily.*

- **Independence Hall**

A World Heritage Site, visitors can see the room where the Constitution of the United States was created in 1787; visitors can hear stories of the nations' founders' heated debates, including the divisive issue of chattel slavery, which resulted in compromise by many factions and a document that did not mention slavery by name. Tours conducted by knowledgeable National Park Service rangers with free tickets available at the Independence Visitor Center or by calling 1-877-444-6777. *Open daily 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.*

National Constitution Center

The National Constitution Center brings the Constitution to life for visitors of all ages through interactive programs and exhibits. Special programming on December 6 will include a closer look at a rare copy of the 13th Amendment signed by President Abraham Lincoln, a reading of the 13th Amendment, Historic Character Meet and Greet in the Grand Hall, film screenings of *The Abolitionists* and *Slavery by Another Name*, and a discussion on *The History of the 13th Amendment* with Matthew Pinsker, the Brian Pohanka Chair of Civil War History at Dickinson College. *Open Mondays – Saturdays, 9:30 a.m. – 5 p.m., and Sundays 12 – 5 p.m.*

National Liberty Museum

The voyage to liberty is never-ending. People of courage have stood together throughout time to protect freedom for all, but why isn't the struggle over? Visit the National Liberty Museum's exhibit on slavery and emancipation, *When Liberty Was Denied*, inside the *Voyage to Liberty Gallery*, to explore this question. *The Glass Chess Set*, by Gianni Toso, will inspire questions to consider as you explore the exhibits on social change in the gallery's left corridor. You'll find George Washington declaring, "To bigotry, no sanction," alongside heroes who overcame daunting and dangerous challenges in their struggle to make this declaration a reality. *Open daily 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.*

National Museum of American Jewish History

Jews permanently settled in Colonial America in 1654, the same year a court in the Colony of Virginia declared slavery legal in North America. They came in search of religious liberty and economic opportunity but, as NMAJH's core exhibition illustrates, Jews, like their neighbors, were not unified their response to slavery or the Civil War. NMAJH's galleries include stories of Jews who spoke out and fought for freedom, some at great personal risk. Visitors can also learn about families who owned enslaved Africans and the few Jewish merchants that participated in the triangle trade, as well as those who fought for the Confederacy. *Open daily 10 a.m. – 5:45 p.m.*

About the National Constitution Center

The [National Constitution Center](#) in Philadelphia inspires active 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 non-partisan 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.

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