

400 Years

SUMMER 2019

of African American History Commission



Washington, DC June 12, 2019 — Ten years after a House and Senate Concurrent Resolution acknowledged the plight of African Americans since 1619 and called upon all people of the United States to work toward eliminating racial prejudices, injustices, and discrimination from our society, Senator Mark Warner, Congressional host, and the 400 Years of African American History Commission convened ***Let's Talk About Our Dream: A 400 Year Journey of Trials, Triumphs, and Trailblazing.***

Close to 450 attendees and presenters gathered for the official legislative launch of Public Law 115-112 at the United States Capitol Visitors Center in the Congressional Auditorium among whom were legislators, students, educators, historic icons, federal representatives and a diverse, intergenerational public.

The U.S. Capitol was built by the labor of enslaved workers, thus a consequence of the arrival of Africans in America. The Capitol also symbolizes the work of Congress from which legislation evolved, ultimately signed by President Donald Trump, which authorized the 400 Years of Africans in America Commission.

Milestones Inside This Issue

Let's Talk About Our Dream June 12 and
beyond

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400 Years: Looking Back, Moving Forward



LET'S TALK ABOUT OUR DREAM
400 Years of Trials, Triumphs and Trailblazing
June 12, 2019

Let's Talk About Our Dream



Following the Letter of the Law

On Thursday, Feb. 11, 2016, Senator Tim Kaine was joined by leaders from the NAACP, Sen. Mark Warner (D-VA), Reps. Bobby Scott (D-VA) and Don Beyer (D-VA), and Chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus Rep. G.K. Butterfield (D-NC) to introduce the 400 Years of African American History Act. Signed into law by President Donald Trump on January 8, 2018, pursuant to Public Law 115-102, directives of the 400 Years African American History Commission include:

- to plan, develop, and carry out programs and activities throughout the United States appropriate for the commemoration of the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Africans in the English colonies, at Point Comfort, Virginia in 1619;
- to recognize and highlight the resilience and contributions of African- Americans since 1619;
- to acknowledge the impact that slavery and laws that enforced racial discrimination had on the United States;
- to educate the public about the arrival of Africans in the United States;
- and to encourage civic, patriotic, historical, educational, artistic, religious, economic, and other organizations throughout the United States to organize and participate in anniversary activities to expand understanding and appreciation.



The Honorable Bobby Scott. U.S. Representative
3rd District of Virginia



The Honorable Mark R. Warner. U.S. Senator
State of Virginia

"Obviously, this history does not end there. The commission established by this bill will be charged with the important task of planning, developing, and implementing a series of programs and activities throughout 2019 to tell the full story of African Americans over the last 400 years."

U.S. Representative Bobby Scott, Congressional Record

LET'S TALK ABOUT OUR DREAM

Per Public Law 115-102, the Commission receives no appropriated funds and is authorized to solicit, accept, use, and dispose of gifts, bequests, or devises of money or other property for aiding or facilitating the work of the Commission. The legislative launch, **"Let's Talk About Our Dream"** on June 12, 2019 was made possible by a generous contribution from celebrity host, Mr. Nick Cannon through the Nick Cannon Foundation.

As the Commission's initial sponsor, Mr. Cannon now serves as Honorary National Chair of the Commission's *"Writing A New History"* educational campaign during which 400 schools will be designated as commemorative partners in conversations which recognize and highlight the resilience and contributions of African- Americans since 1619 and acknowledge the impact that slavery and laws that enforced racial discrimination had on the United States.

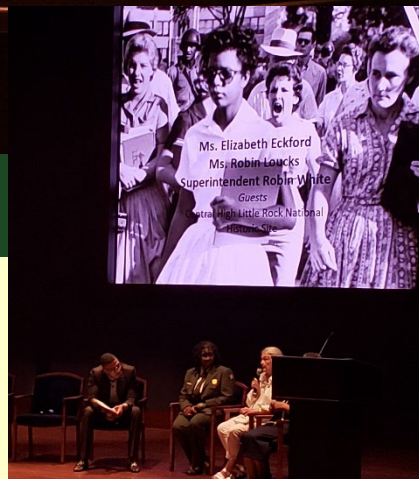
Images and text below feature special program guests and historic icons designed to attract a broad public audience as well as target students underserved by history content and humanities.



Watch ***America's Hope News*** with Kelly Wright featuring acclaimed Actor, Celebrity, and National Ambassador, Nick Cannon, as he interviews Dr. Bernice King, CEO, Martin Luther King, Jr., Center of Non-Violent Social Change.

Runtime: 25 mins.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4xZcBzTyD9M>



By Sept. 25, 1957, almost 3-1/2 centuries had passed since 20 enslaved Africans had landed at Point Comfort, Virginia when nine students enrolled at Central High Little Rock, Arkansas amidst mobs of angry protest. Isolated and brutally bullied was Elizabeth Eckford, one of several historic icons to join Nick on stage at the Capitol along with fellow student, Robin Loucks, and Supt. Robin White of the National Park Service.



In December 2003, Congress enacted a **museum** within the Smithsonian Institution to be known as the **National Museum of African American History and Culture**. In this segment, Nick was joined by Dr. Rex Ellis, Associate Director for Curatorial Affairs (Retired) for NMAAHC, and Ms. Edith Lee-Payne whose donated pennant is one of over 37,000 treasured artifacts on display.



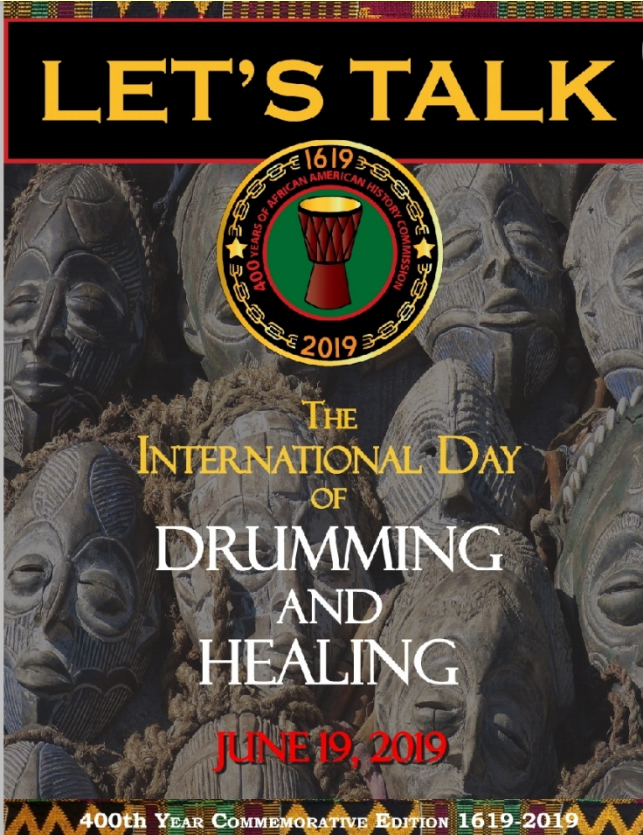
On July 19, 2019, the **400 Years of African American Commission** launched the ***“LET’S TALK”: The International Day of Drumming and Healing*** to symbolize the ongoing process of healing and pay tribute to drumming as a sustained cultural tradition.

Over 35 groups from the United States and as far away as Africa were among those who joined in the commemoration.

Pursuant to Public Law 115-102, the Commission and participating organizations and institutions united in mourning the trauma endured by African Americans over four centuries occasioned by the Transatlantic slave trade; forced family dissolution; centuries of degradation based on race (e.g., slavery, peonage, lynching, Jim Crow, and structural racism); myriad socioeconomic disparities; and, now, mass incarceration.

ABOUT THE EVENT CHAIR. The International Day of Drumming and Healing was spearheaded by Prophet N. Anyanwu Cox RN, M.Ed., a 400 YAAHC Commissioner (above left). For over 30 years, she has served diverse communities in her capacity of minister, mental health nurse, advocate, educator, activist, cultural and holistic practitioner.

Commissioner Cox has been the recipient of several awards and recognitions (e.g. Pi Lambda Theta – National Honor and Professional Association of Education, Augustus Calloway Scholarship). Her passion has been working with people across cultural, social, economic, ethnic, religious and gender lines as well as youth with special needs.





Traditionally, the drum was the heartbeat, the soul of most African communities. Drums have been an intrinsic part of African life for centuries and for countless generations, an ancient instrument used to celebrate all the aspects of life.

In Western culture drumming is, most often, about entertainment. In Africa, drums hold a deeper, symbolic and historical significance. They herald political and social events attending ceremonies of birth, death and marriage. They spark courtships, they herald home-coming and going and they accompany religious rites and rituals, calling up ancestral spirits.

They are used as an alarm or a call to arms stirring up emotions for battle and war. They can also inspire passion and excitement and even cause trances, a momentary loss of consciousness to either the drummer or the listener. They symbolize and protect royalty and are often housed in sacred dwellings. They are protected during battle.

On the other side, drums are about communication and making music, two essential characteristics of community life. For centuries the 'talking drums' were a primary source of communication between tribes used to transmit messages sometimes across great distances.



Looking Back Moving Forward



On August 22 – 25, 2019, the 400 YAAHC conducted one of its official meetings and participated in the development of programs and activities in Hampton and Ft. Monroe, Virginia which commemorated the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Africans in the English colonies, at Point Comfort, Virginia in 1619.

Commissioner Terry E. Brown, National Park Service Superintendent at Ft. Monroe, played a leading role in coordinating an array of activities in which key officials, international guests, and thousands from around the country participated.

With a robust strategic plan anticipated, the Commission will move forward from the commemoration.

Honoring History



On August 23, 2019, the Commission joined members of the Tucker family and hundreds of guests in paying tribute to their ancestor, the first baby to be born to two of the original 20 Africans who arrived at Point Comfort in 1619.



On Sunday morning, August 25, 2019, designated the National Day of Healing as spearheaded by Supt. Brown and the National Park Service, the Commission joined in fellowship with First Baptist Church Hampton, Virginia, the oldest African American church in the city.

On Sunday afternoon, the Commission honored men and women from across the country through the first round of **Distinguished 400 Awards**.



DISTINGUISHED 400

Mr. Clarence Avant
 Ms. Eurica Huggins Axum
 Mr. Raymond H. Boone**
 Mr. Reuben J. Boyd, Jr.
 Ms. London Breed
 Mr. Jerome Bridges
 Pastor Amos Brown
 Mr. Willie Brown
 Ms. Sheyann W Christburg
 Citizens for Fort Monroe
 Dr. Christy Coleman
 Rev. Johnnie Coleman
 Ph.D.**
 Ms. Doris D. Crenshaw
 Mr. Frank Davie
 Mark Dean, Ph.D
 Mr. Vincent deforest
 Mr. Robert DeForrest**
 Mrs. Dorothy DeWitty**
 Mr. Leon L. Dixon
 Dr. Colita N. Fairfax
 Benjamin Foster, Jr., Ph.D.
 Norman Francis, Ph.D.
 Dr. Henry Louis "Skip"
 Gates
 Mr. David Givens
 Mr. Ulysses Lee "Rip"
 Gooch
 Dr. William B. Grace
 "Samori Toure"
 Ms. Lois Gregory
 Ms. Hugh Harrell III**
 Bishop Henry Hearn
 Ms. Gerri Hollins**

**Deceased



Distinguished 400

Mr. Carlyle Holder	Rev. Wheeler Parker, Jr.
Senator Maxine Cissel Horner	Mr. Calvin Pearson
Ms. Jawana Jackson	Ms. Renee Raspanti
Mr. Bob Johnson	Mr. Marvin S. Robinson, II
Mr. Fred Jordan	Representative Don Ross
Ms. Sadie Roberts-Joseph	Dr. Wanda Sabir
Mr. Tom Joyner	Ms. Katherine Carper Sawyer
Ms. Gaylene Kaynoton	Ms. Kathy J. Spangler
Reverend William Lawson	Mr. Daniel Stevens
Ms. Angel Lee	Mr. Chris J. Suggs
Ms. Opal Lee	Ms. Erika Taylor
Dr. Samella Lewis	First Lady Emelda Tolbert
Senator Mamie Locke	Bishop Mark C. Tolbert
Senator Kevin L. Matthews	Mr. Vincent A. Tucker
Mr. Alden McDonald	Rev. Jesse C. Turner
Ms. Debarah McFarland	Mr. Claude Vann, III
Colonel Charles McGee	District Elder William Vann Th.D.
Mr. Leland Melvin	Galyn A. Vesey, Ph.D.
Ms. Sybil Haydel Morial	Wally's Jazz Café
Rev. Ronald V. Myers, Sr. M.D.**	Ms. Molly Joseph Ward
Dr. Cassandra Newby-Alexander	Gladys Mae West, Ph.D.
Wade Nobles, Ph.D.	Mr. Al Williams
Mr. Glenn Oder	Mr. William Wiggins

**Deceased



400 Distinguished Award Co-Chair, Mr. Ted Ellis (left) shares moment with most senior award recipient, Colonel Charles McGee (99), along with Commissioner Joseph Green. Ms. Kenya Cox (below), serves as Award Co-Chair.

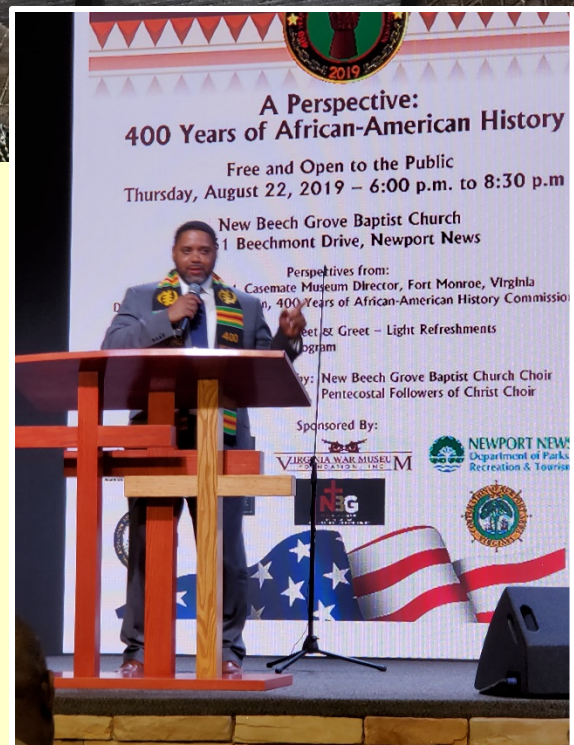


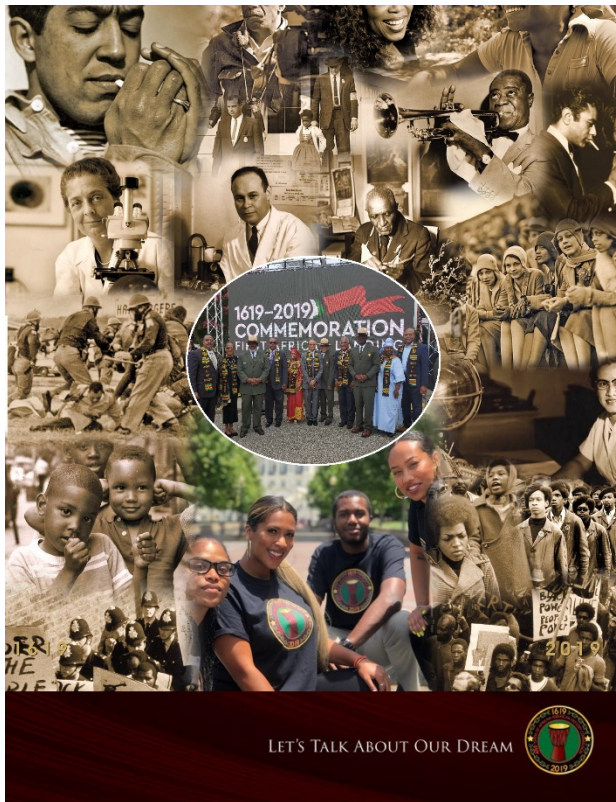


Engaging the Public

The week of August 22, 2019, the Commission began by accompanying Immediate Past Chair, Dr. Joseph Greene, to New Beech Grove Baptist Church to offer keynote remarks in Newport, News, Virginia. (right). The event was sponsored by municipal and civic organizations, to include the Parks and Recreation and local NAACP Branch.

The Commission continued through the commemorative week and hosted its generously attended 2nd Public Meeting on Friday, August 23, in Ft. Monroe. (above)





Let's Talk About Our Dream 400 Schools Designation

On September 25, 2019, the **400 YAAHC** in collaboration with the **Nick Cannon Foundation** and the **National Alliance of Faith and Justice** began the opportunity to become one of 400 schools across the country over the 2019-20 academic year to be designated by the Commission who will participate in the 400 year commemoration as ambassadors of African American history by using our template to conduct local conversations as a sustained extension of its June legislative launch themed ***"Let's Talk About Our Dream."***

Old Dominion University became the first of 400 educational institutions to be designated as a Commission national education ambassador for Let's Talk A Dream. **University President, John F. Broderick**, was on hand to bring opening remarks and summarize the university's engagement. **Dr. Melvina Sumter**, Director - Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity African American and African Studies Major and Minor and Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice, served as coordinator for the launch.



Addie Richburg, Executive Director of the 400 YAAHC, joined students, faculty, and guests of Old Dominion for the September 25th launch.

Interested schools can download details and sign-up by visiting the website of the Commission, www.400yaahc.com, then accessing the registration portal within the *Writing A New History* link.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Effective November 1, 2019

Dr. Rex M. Ellis

National Museum of African American
History and Culture (Retired)
Williamsburg, Virginia
Chairman

Mr. Ted T. Ellis

Artist and Cultural Historian Friendswood,
Texas
Vice Chairman

Mr. Ron Carson

Carson Black Lung Centers
Pennington Gap, Virginia
2nd Vice Chair

Myron L. Pope, Ed.D Oklahoma Dept. of
Human Services
Edmond, Oklahoma
Treasurer

Ms. Addie L Richburg

Executive Director

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The 2019 Movement Harrisburg,
Pennsylvania

Mr. Glenn M. Freeman

National Council of Censors
Omaha, Nebraska

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE REPRESENTATIVE

Superintendent Terry E. Brown

Ft. Monroe National Park Service
Ft. Monroe, Virginia

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Secretary
Smithsonian Institutions
Washington, DC

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Kansas African American Affairs
Commission Topeka, Kansas

Prophet N. Anyanwu Cox M.Ed

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Oklahoma

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Richmond, Virginia

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McGuireWoods LLC Richmond,
Virginia

Dr.H. Patrick Swygert

President Emeritus
Howard University
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Mr. Bob Kendrick

Negro Leagues Baseball Museum
Kansas City, Missouri

ALTERNATE

Superintendent Lewis H. Rogers Jr.

Petersburg National Battlefield
National Park Service
Petersburg, Virginia



400 Years African American History Commission

c/o

National Alliance of Faith and Justice/400 YAAHC

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Writing A New History