

# 2019 Commemoration, AMERICAN EVOLUTION™ Applauds New Federal Commission Commemorating 400 Years Of African-American History



Federal Commission Will Advance National Awareness of The 1619 African Arrival and The African-American Experience

NEWS PROVIDED BY  
**AMERICAN EVOLUTION™** →  
Feb 01, 2018, 13:53 ET

JAMESTOWN, Va., Feb. 1, 2018 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- Last month, President Donald Trump signed into law the *400 Years of African-American History Commission Act* establishing a special Federal Commission that will commemorate and educate the American public about the 1619 arrival of the first Africans to the English colonies at Point Comfort, Virginia. The legislation, which was introduced by Virginia Representative Bobby Scott (D-VA), and sponsored in the U.S. Senate by Senators Tim Kaine (D-VA) and Mark Warner (D-VA), acknowledges the impact of the 1619 African arrival as a formative moment in our nation's history; recognizes and highlights the resilience and contributions of African Americans since 1619; and acknowledges the impact that slavery, and laws that enforced racial discrimination, had on the United States.

The legislation was enacted days before Black History Month when communities across the country come together to recognize the contributions of African American trailblazers and influencers. The *400 Years of African-American History Commission* will raise national awareness about the moment when African culture first became an integral part of the American narrative and it will highlight the significant contributions of African Americans over the last 400 years of American history. The Commission is tasked with encouraging civic, historical, educational, religious, and other organizations throughout the United States to organize and participate in 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary activities and engage with legacy programs that expand the public's understanding and appreciation of the significance of the arrival of Africans in the United States and the contributions of African Americans to the United States.

The Commission has the authority to provide grants to non-profit, historical, and civic organizations to encourage their participation in the commemoration, as well as fund scholarly research and study of the arrival of the first Africans to the English colonies. These organizations will be tapped to play a strategic role in galvanizing national interest and ensuring that an authentic and inclusive narrative of the African arrival is taught to current and future generations of Americans.

"The 1619 African arrival story is a key historical point in the foundation of America, as well as a core focus of Virginia's 2019 Commemoration," said Kathy Spangler, Executive Director of AMERICAN EVOLUTION, 2019 Commemoration. "We are committed to our mission of uncovering untold stories, dispelling perpetuated historical inaccuracies, and expanding our collective knowledge of the African American experience over the last four centuries."

President Trump also signed two related pieces of legislation including the *African American Civil Rights Network Act of 2017* and the *Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historical Park Act of 2017* to recognize the Atlanta birthplace of the Civil Rights leader as a national historical park. These pieces of legislation work together to ensure that the African American experience is recognized and elevated as an integral element of our nation's diverse history.

Various sites across Virginia honor the experiences of African Americans and provide further context around America's founding including:

- **Fort Monroe:** Also known as "Freedom's Fortress," this national historic park is the site of the 1619 African arrival and served as a Civil War-era shelter for refugee slaves.
- **Historic Jamestowne:** The archeological site where active archeology is uncovering the home of Angela, one of the first Africans to arrive in Virginia.
- **Jamestown Settlement:** Visitors can view the "Africa to Virginia," exhibit and a statue of Queen Njinga of Angola.
- **Hampton History Museum:** This museum houses the "Give Me Liberty: Fugitive Slaves and the Long Revolution Against Slavery," an exhibition that explores the lives of more than 30 fugitive slaves from Hampton who made journeys to freedom, or took up arms against their owners, during periods of war.
- **The Hampton University Emancipation Oak:** This historic location is where enslaved African Americans in the South heard the Emancipation Proclamation.
- **Monticello and Montpelier:** The historic homes of U.S. Presidents Thomas Jefferson and James Madison include exhibits on the experiences of slaves who lived and worked on the properties.
- **Freedom Park:** Located in James City County, Virginia, visitors can learn about, and explore replicas of, the first free black settlement.

The mission of AMERICAN EVOLUTION™ is to commemorate the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of several pivotal events that took place in 1619 Virginia, which have had an enduring impact on Virginia and America's history. These important events set the state and the nation on a course towards the ideals of democracy, diversity and opportunity. In addition to the arrival of the first recorded Africans to English North America, these 1619 events include the First Representative Legislative Assembly in the New World, the recruitment of English women in significant numbers to the Virginia colony, the first official English Thanksgiving in North America and the entrepreneurial and innovative spirit of the Virginia colony.

#### **About the 2019 Commemoration**

The 2019 Commemoration, AMERICAN EVOLUTION™, highlights events that occurred in Virginia in 1619 that continue to influence America today. Featured programs, events and legacy projects will position Virginia as a leader in education, tourism and economic development. AMERICAN EVOLUTION™ commemorates the ongoing journey toward the key ideals of democracy, diversity and opportunity. Dominion Resources is an AMERICAN EVOLUTION™ Founding Partner and Altria Group is a Virginia Colony Partner.

SOURCE AMERICAN EVOLUTION™