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2019 Commemoration

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VIRGINIA'S 2019 COMMEMORATION, AMERICAN EVOLUTION RECOGNIZES THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST AFRICANS IN ENGLISH NORTH AMERICA DURING BLACK HISTORY MONTH

The 1619 arrival in Virginia marked the moment when African history became a powerful and indelible influence on the development of America

Jamestown, Va. (February 1, 2019) – This year marks the 400th anniversary of the arrival of the first Africans to English North America in Jamestown, Va. in 1619. During Black History Month, [Virginia's 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution](#) is generating awareness about this formative event and shedding light on untold, or under-told, stories of 400 years of African-American history that indelibly shaped today's America.

In August 1619, the first “20 odd” Africans in English North America arrived in Point Comfort, today's Hampton, Virginia, aboard the *White Lion*. They were forcibly landed and traded to the Virginia Colonists in exchange for food and supplies. These individuals, originally captured by Portuguese enslavers in West Central Africa (likely modern-day Angola), were the first recorded Africans to arrive in English North America. This was the moment when African culture first became American culture and the beginnings of a powerful influence on the development of our nation.

“In Virginia, you can learn about a wide range of American history and experiences, specifically the 400-year arc of African-American history,” said Kathy Spangler Executive Director of the 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution. “We encourage local, national and international audiences to visit the Commonwealth to learn about and understand the importance of accurate and authentic portrayals of the beginning of African-American history in our country.”

Diversity is a central theme in Virginia's 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution. In 2019, American Evolution is convening more than 20 events, programs, educational initiatives performances and exhibitions that examine and lift up the African-American experience. These events showcase several key events from 400 years ago in 1619 Virginia, which set our nation on the course towards the ideals of democracy, diversity and opportunity. In addition to the arrival of the first Africans to English North America, these important 1619 Virginia events include the first representative legislative assembly in the New World, the recruitment of English women in significant numbers, the first official English Thanksgiving in North America, and the development of the Virginia colony's entrepreneurial and

innovative spirit. A full schedule of American Evolution programming can be found [here](#). Upcoming 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution African-American focused events are listed below:

- [Faith Journeys in the Black Experience 1619-2019 Conference](#), **March 19 – 21, 2019, Richmond, VA**: The Virginia Council of Churches, and the Samuel DeWitt Proctor School of Theology at Virginia Union University will convene a conference focusing on “The Missiology of Jamestown 1619 and Its Implications” to explore long-standing assumptions related to Christian mission. It will focus on religion in 1619 Jamestown, its impact on Native Americans and Africans, and the origins of a religious and culturally diverse 21st-century America.
- [Historic Jamestowne: Democracy & Diversity](#), **April 1 – September 30, 2019, Williamsburg, VA**: Jamestown Rediscovery and the National Park Service will focus on the establishment of representative government and rule of law, protections for private property, and sustained encounters among different peoples – Native Americans, Europeans, and Africans – who first came together at Jamestown. This includes programs that exhibit the site where one of the first documented Africans in Virginia, “Angela,” lived in the mid-1620s.
- [Dance Theatre of Harlem World Premiere](#), **May 3 – 5, 2019, Norfolk, VA**: The 2019 Commemoration and the Virginia Arts Festival have commissioned an original interpretive ballet from Dance Theatre of Harlem, which explores the African arrival story and the ongoing impact of diversity in America today.
- [Cosmologies from the Tree of Life: Art from the African American South](#), **June 8 – November 17, 2019, Richmond, VA**: : Timed to coincide with the 400th anniversary of the 1619 arrival of the first Africans in Virginia, this special exhibition celebrates the extraordinary contributions that African American artists have made to art and culture since that time. The exhibition will include paintings, sculptures, installations, drawings and quilts from the VMFA’s permanent collection and will feature recent acquisitions from contemporary Southern African American artists. This exhibit will reflect the Commonwealth’s and nation’s historical diversity and complexity, which are cornerstones of the 2019 Commemoration.
- [Determined: The 400-year Struggle for Black Equality](#), **June 19, 2019 – January 5, 2020, Richmond, VA**: The Virginia Museum of History & Culture exhibition will explore the African American experience from the arrival of the first Africans in English North America in 1619 to the present day. This exhibition charts the advances and setbacks, the triumphs and trials of African Americans on their long and unfinished journey toward full equality by focusing on a series of key Virginians and key Virginia events – individuals and events that shaped the broader contours of American history.
- [African Arrival: Fort Monroe Visitor and Education Center Dedication Ceremony](#), **August 23 – 25, 2019, Hampton, VA**: To commemorate the 400th Anniversary of the arrival of the first

enslaved Africans in English North America, the 2019 Commemoration will showcase the dedication ceremony with hosts, Fort Monroe Authority and the National Park Service. This project involves the renovation of the former Coast Artillery School Library at Fort Monroe, where profound stories of Captain John Smith, the arrival of the first enslaved Africans, and the culmination of 242 years of slavery as the first contrabands came to Fort Monroe to receive their emancipation, will be told.

- [1619: Making of America Summit, September 25– 28, 2019, Norfolk, VA](#): This two-day cross-cultural event will begin with the exploration of the contributions and influences of the three founding cultures African, Native Peoples, and English. This expanding cultural tapestry of our nation will be explored by celebrated scholars, artists, film makers, musicians, and students from throughout the nation.

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 and TowneBank are Virginia Colony Partners.

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