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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VIRGINIA'S 2019 COMMEMORATION, AMERICAN EVOLUTION, FORT MONROE AUTHORITY, FORT MONROE NATIONAL MONUMENT AND THE CITY OF HAMPTON TO HOST OFFICIAL COMMEMORATION OF THE 1619 FIRST AFRICAN LANDING IN ENGLISH NORTH AMERICA IN AUGUST

The multi-day event centered around the 400th anniversary of the first African landing at Point Comfort, will include the preview of the Fort Monroe Visitor and Education Center gallery exhibits, performances, cultural demonstrations, historical tours, a healing ceremony and more

Hampton, Va (June 27, 2019) – [Virginia's 2019 Commemoration, American Evolution](#), in partnership with [Fort Monroe Authority](#), [Fort Monroe National Monument](#), and the [City of Hampton](#), will host the **2019 Commemoration of the First African Landing** on August 23-25, 2019 in Hampton, Va. The multi-day event serves to recognize the 400th anniversary of the landing of the first enslaved Africans in English-occupied North America at Point Comfort in 1619. It will feature a commemorative ceremony, a preview of the new Fort Monroe Visitor and Education Center, Black Cultural tours, living history demonstrations, storytelling, and youth and musical performances. The event will also feature cultural group displays from Project 1619, the Contraband Historical Society, and the U.S. Colored Troops, and exhibitions from Virginia institutions and museums, including the National Park Service, American Evolution, Hampton History Museum, Maggie L. Walker National Historic Site, Jamestown-Yorktown Foundation, Casemate Museum, and more.

“The First African Landing Commemorative Weekend will be a pilgrimage for African Americans and all Americans who are interested in learning about the heritage, struggles and triumphs of the first Africans who were brought to the shores of Point Comfort,” said Terry Brown, first African American superintendent at Fort Monroe National Monument. “African American history is complicated, but it’s important for us as Americans to examine the events of the past and understand the stories of slavery, resistance and emancipation and the impact on our nation.”

As recorded by English colonist John Rolfe, the arrival of “20 and odd” African men and women at Point Comfort in late August 1619, was a pivotal moment in the nation’s history. Stolen by English privateers from a Spanish slave ship and brought to Point Comfort on a ship called the *White Lion*, these natives of west central Africa are believed to have been traded for food and supplies. They were the first Africans to be brought to English North America. The site of the ship’s arrival is the present site of Fort Monroe National Monument in Hampton, Virginia.

“The landing of the first recorded Africans at Point Comfort in 1619 marked the moment African culture became an integral part of American culture and an indelible influence on the development of our nation,” said Dr. Cassandra L. Newby-Alexander, Professor of History, Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Norfolk State University and co-chair of the 2019 Commemoration First Africans Committee. “The early relationship between the unfree Africans and English in the Virginia colony is complicated, yet their forced arrival set into motion an important African imprint on every aspect of American society and culture. Moreover, Africans’ fight for freedom, equality, and inclusion was transformative because it began our nation on its journey toward racial equality – something we are still working toward today.”

Hampton visitor experiences and opportunities to learn about Virginia multicultural history, interpreted through museums, attractions and historic sites, frame the commemoration.

“Fort Monroe was the arrival site of the first recorded Africans. On the same site, the first move toward emancipation occurred when Frank Baker, James Townsend and Shepard Mallory sought sanctuary during the Civil War. At Hampton University, the education of newly emancipated individuals began in 1868 and 150 years later is going strong. It is the legacy of the human computers like Katherine Johnson, Mary Jackson, and Dorothy Vaughn who helped to set the national course to the stars through their work at NASA Langley, and that of so many more individuals who helped to shape our nation,” said Hampton Mayor Donnie Tuck. “While we do not celebrate the reason the first Africans arrived on our shores, we marvel at how far we have come during this 400-year journey, and maintain hope for a future of unity and equality.”

For more information about the 2019 Commemoration of the First African Landing at Fort Monroe in Hampton, Va., please visit: firstafricanlanding.com

For media interested in attending the commemorative weekend, please contact AfricanLanding2019@finnpartners.com.

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 Energy is an American Evolution Founding Partner and Altria Group and TowneBank are Virginia Colony Partners.

About Fort Monroe Authority

The Fort Monroe Authority, a political subdivision of the Commonwealth of Virginia, is primarily responsible for the care and conservation of hundreds of historic buildings and structures. The FMA is also responsible for the transition of this former Army post to civilian uses through historic preservation, residential and commercial leasing, and public programs. The Fort Monroe Visitor and Education Center, a legacy project of the 2019 Commemoration, is scheduled to open later this year. The exhibit galleries will tell the profound stories of Captain John Smith and the early colonists and their encounter with Native Americans, the arrival of the first enslaved Africans, and the culmination of 242 years of slavery

as the first contrabands came to Fort Monroe seeking refuge and freedom. The Visitor and Education Center will be operated in partnership with the National Park Service and complements the existing Casemate Museum, which is located just a short walk from the Center.

About Fort Monroe National Monument

Identified by Captain John Smith as "Pointe Comfort" in 1607, later dubbed "The Gibraltar of the Chesapeake" and then "Freedom's Fortress," Fort Monroe was the third oldest US Army post in continuous active service until its closure as a military installation in September 2011. As the landing point for the first enslaved Africans in the English colonies in 1619 and the site of the first emancipation policy decision during the Civil War, Fort Monroe marks both the beginning and the end of slavery in the United States. The majority of the Fort Monroe peninsula was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1960 and is also listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Created by Presidential Proclamation on November 1, 2011, Fort Monroe National Monument includes historic fortifications and the North Beach area. Visit www.nps.gov/fomr and www.facebook.com/FortMonroeNPS for more information.



About the City of Hampton

Hampton, Virginia is the oldest, continuous English-speaking city in our nation, and many pivotal moments in American history occurred here. The Hampton 2019 Commemorative Commission designated by Hampton City Council seeks to commemorate the 1619 landing of Africans at Point Comfort in English-occupied North America and to educate people about its role as a critical national turning point through programs, events, exhibits, and other opportunities for reflection.

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