



INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM



TO HONOR
THE UNTOLD
STORIES OF
THE AFRICAN
AMERICAN
JOURNEY AT
ONE OF OUR
COUNTRY'S
MOST SACRED
SITES.



A JOURNEY OF CENTURIES



The journey
will challenge,
illuminate, inspire
and, ultimately,
will move people
to action.

THIS MUSEUM IS ABOUT A JOURNEY that began centuries ago in Africa, and still continues. It is about the journey of millions of Africans, captured and forced across the Atlantic in the grueling and inhumane Middle Passage, who arrived at Gadsden's Wharf in Charleston, South Carolina and other ports in the Atlantic World. With resilience, resistance, ingenuity, and intelligence, they and their descendants shaped every aspect of our world.

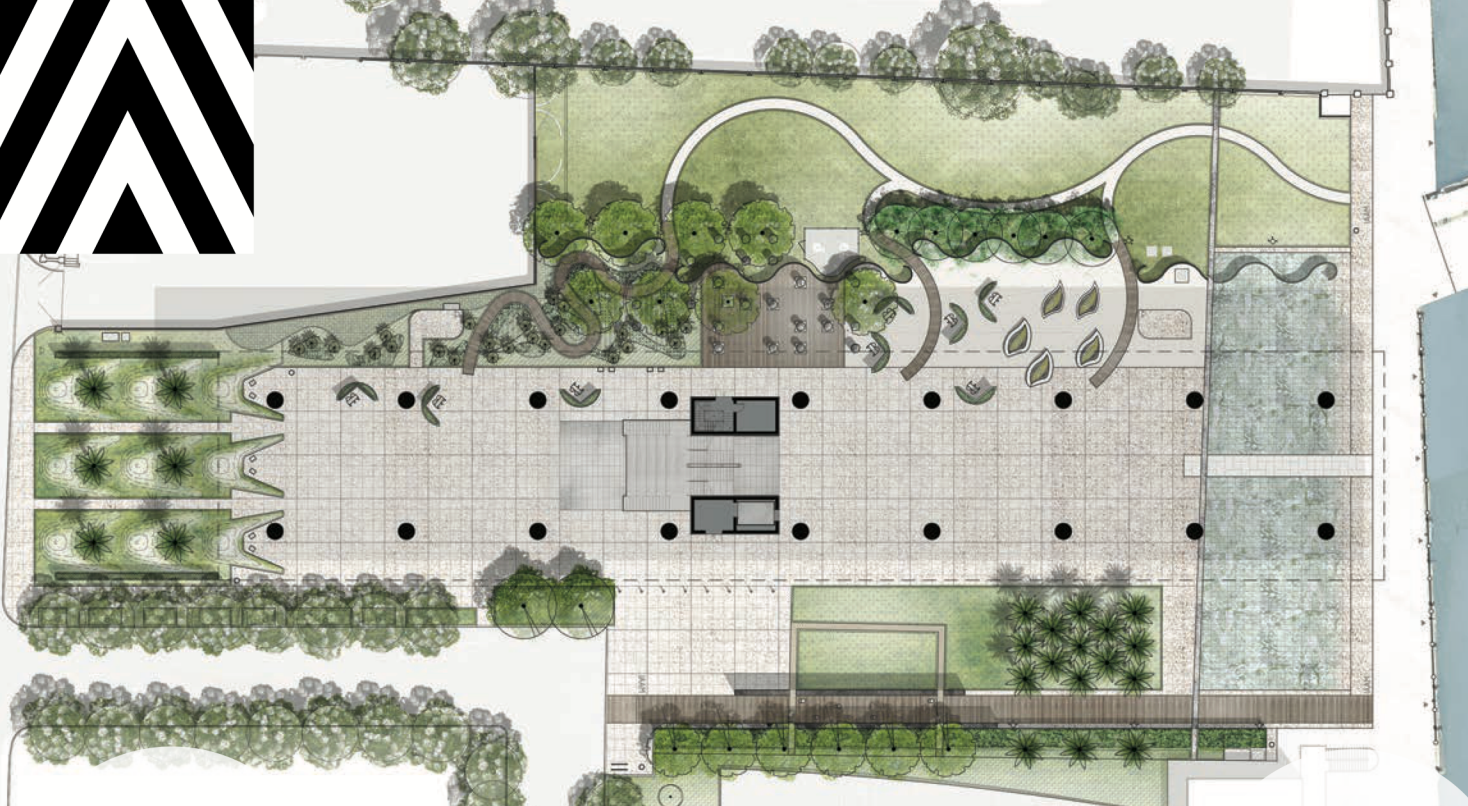
The museum will sit on the shoulders of 18 strong columns. On the ground level,

the African Ancestors Memorial Garden will highlight the original shoreline—the exact spot where so many captive Africans first set foot in America. There will be gardens for quiet contemplation, as well as space for performances and programs.

The museum's exhibitions will share untold stories using classic techniques as well as new approaches driven by innovation, technology, and digital interactivity. Themes will include connections across the African diaspora, the spread of African American culture

and influence, and the movements for justice and equality. The Center for Family History will enable visitors to trace their genealogy, while changing exhibitions and special events will keep the museum energized. Educational programs will provide lifelong learning opportunities for visitors both young and old.

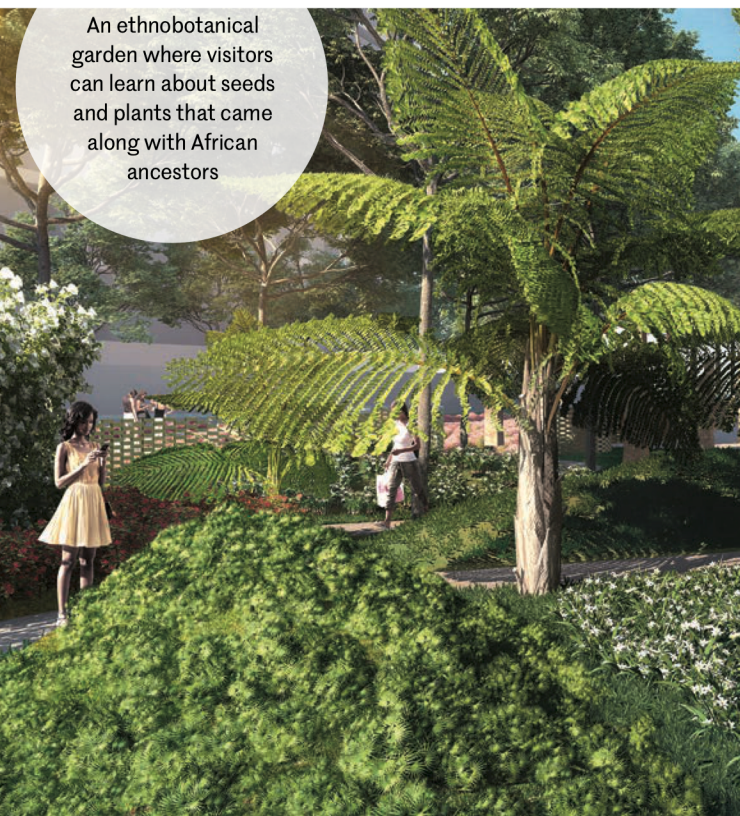
The museum strives to foster empathy and understanding, empowering visitors with the knowledge of the past. The journey will challenge, illuminate, inspire and, ultimately, will move people to action.



THE AFRICAN ANCESTORS MEMORIAL GARDEN

The African Ancestors Memorial Garden will commemorate one of our country's most sacred sites. It will be a place to reflect on the historic significance of the site, experience botanic gardens, artistic installations, a huge infinity fountain on the edge of the original wharf, a soundscape that explores diverse African languages, performances, programs, and more. It will be free and open to the public.

An ethnobotanical garden where visitors can learn about seeds and plants that came along with African ancestors



The Tide Tribute. Here, visitors will reflect on the courage and the fate of those men, women and children who endured and died during the Middle Passage



"The idea is to draw your eyes out to the Atlantic and have that moment where you feel the hallowed ground and that connection back across."

-Acclaimed Landscape Architect,
Walter Hood, Hood Design Studio




Granite mirrors offer an opportunity for reflection. They sit atop the site of a former storehouse where enslaved Africans awaited the slave market. In 1806–1807, while waiting for the market price to increase, upwards of 700 enslaved Africans died here as a result of harsh weather, close confinement, and insufficient food.

The five kneeling statues represent “rice negroes,” enslaved people, often times children, who were forced to work in the rice fields.



THE LEGACY OF PEI COBB FREED AND HARRY COBB

Pei Cobb Freed & Partners is the design architect for the museum. Some of the firm's best-known work includes the crystalline extension to the Louvre in Paris, the JFK Presidential Library in Boston, and the Bank of China Tower in Hong Kong. Harry Cobb, one of the founding partners, describes the museum as "a purposefully unrhetorical work of architecture quietly affirming the power of place, as it shelters and frames a richly articulated work of landscape art."



Legendary Harry Cobb was the lead designer of the museum. He passed away March 4, 2020 at the age of 93.



Rendering of the Atlantic Worlds exhibit

ATLANTIC WORLDS

Atlantic Worlds provides a view of the historic and contemporary connections between Atlantic world regions in Africa, Europe, the Caribbean, and the Americas.

The Atlantic Worlds regions are explored through broad historical themes and major events, such as Freedom Struggles, Nation-Building, Creolization, and the Haitian Revolution. This gallery also examines the horror of the Middle Passage and the arduous journeys Africans endured across the Atlantic Ocean and offers a look at the history of Gadsden's Wharf.

Additionally, a 30-foot media installation on the South wall of the gallery, will examine the historical interconnections between Charleston, Barbados, and Sierra Leone, West Africa.



*Decorative comb
from the collection
of the International
African American
Museum*

AFRICAN ROOTS & AFRICAN ROUTES

African Roots explores the cultural, intellectual, and political diversity of West and West Central Africa—the primary areas of origin connected to Africans forced to the Americas. This exhibition provides an historic view of these regions prior to and during the Transatlantic Slave Trade and includes information about African political structures, family and kinship lines, and diverse religious practices. It will include a film that looks at Africa's rich history and heritage before sustained contact with Europeans.

African Routes examines the significance of the African Diaspora and the intellectual, spiritual, and cultural traditions and innovations of people of African descent throughout the Atlantic World. Drawing parallels to African heritage and traditions, this section showcases stories about scientific innovations, significant literary and cultural movements, and the diversity of religious and spiritual practice throughout the African diaspora.



CAROLINA GOLD

Carolina Gold looks at the African origins and transformative impact of enslaved people who labored on plantations in South Carolina and helped build the rice industry. It does this by examining the roots of the plantation system, the skill and knowledge of Africans from rice-growing regions who labored in South Carolina, and the ways in which enslaved Africans and their descendants created community and cultivated resistance.

Memories of the Enslaved uses quotes and insights of formerly enslaved people to examine the brutality of chattel slavery, and the inconceivable resilience of enslaved peoples. These men and women use their lived experiences to reflect on labor, the importance of memory, violence, family, and aspects of culture.

13751—Hoeing Rice, South Carolina, U. S. A.

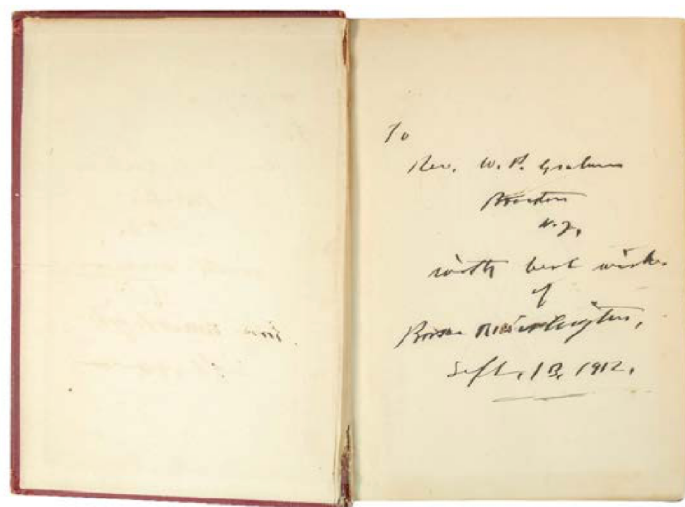
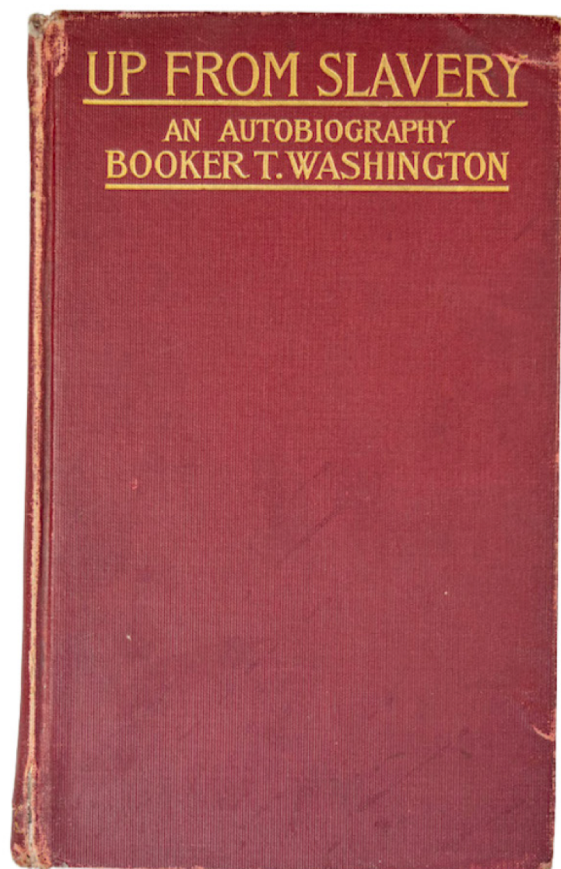


GULLAH GEECHEE

This exhibition introduces Gullah Geechee history and culture. It gives an overview and regional context of the Gullah Geechee with a focus on the Lowcountry of South Carolina and Georgia. It does this by examining the history of the community as well as contemporary issues facing Gullah Geechee people.

Themes such as activism and organizing, and cultural practices and preservation, are explored in this exhibition.

*Image of historic Moving Star
Hall praise house built on
Johns Island, SC in 1917*



An autographed and inscribed copy of "Up From Slavery: An Autobiography" by Booker T. Washington from the collection of the International African American Museum

AMERICAN JOURNEYS

American Journeys is an exhibition that has twelve chronological sections that date from the 15th century to the present, and presents key moments, people, and social movements in African American and African diaspora history. Many of these moments, people, and movements are directly connected to South Carolina, and show the interconnected histories of the Atlantic World. Each section contains several stories that speak to its main theme.



Sketch by Lieutenant G. P. Kirby of Charleston residents deserting their homes after threat of bombardment of the city by federal forces in August 1863. From the collection of the International African American Museum.

SOUTH CAROLINA CONNECTIONS

This gallery features the stories and legacies of resistance and achievement of Black South Carolinians. Themes such as liberation, education, and leadership are highlighted by examining significant events and historical actors. Events such as the Stono Rebellion and the founding of Penn Center are featured, as are South Carolinians of local and national significance like Septima Clark and Edwin Harleston. To help visitors explore place, the gallery includes an interactive digital map that highlights where history happened throughout the state and the Lowcountry.



THE CENTER FOR FAMILY HISTORY

The Center for Family History is a one of a kind, unprecedented research center with a special focus on African American genealogy. Our goal is to help individuals and their families gain a greater understanding of their families' history and the role their ancestors played in helping to shape American history. Although the museum opens in 2022, you can enjoy our online offerings and digital archives now.

The Center for Family History will serve as a groundbreaking resource for the study and advancement of African American genealogy with connections to Africa and the African diaspora.



Studio Time,
the museum's
interactive
workshop



Secretary Lonnie
G. Bunch III,
14th Secretary of the
Smithsonian, shares
his insights during a
public event.



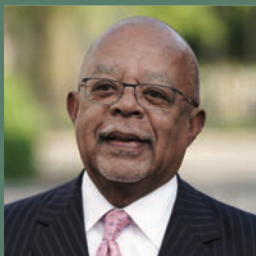
PROGRAMS

The museum offers innovative and engaging programming. Our programs have ranged from community conversations to presentations by lauded scholars like Henry Louis Gates, David Blight, and Lonnie Bunch. We've developed a range of faith-based programs highlighting the central role of faith, spirituality, and religion in the African American experience. Educational programs will provide lifelong learning opportunities for young and old. We're busy creating K-12 curriculum, field-trip experiences, digital content, professional development programs, and more.

Right: Awakening of the Ancestors, a program series presented by the museum



ACCOLADES



Henry Louis Gates Jr.
Harvard Professor
and Historian

“Forty-eight point one percent of all of the African slaves that came to the United States entered this country through Charleston. So blackness, black culture, the African experience, the African American experience, slavery—however you want to slice it—this is ground zero. I think it’s very important that a great city in the South be the home of a great museum celebrating the achievements, the history, and the culture of persons of African descent. And I can think of no place more ideal, no place more perfect, no place more appropriate than Charleston.”



Lonnie G. Bunch III
14th Secretary of the
Smithsonian and
Founding Director
of the National Museum
of African American
History and Culture

“Gadsden’s Wharf is a sacred space. And you have the opportunity to do something there that can help people understand not only the immediacy of the story you’re telling, but also its vital importance through a national lens. This is, after all, the story of America. A story of struggle, heartbreak, joy, and achievement. For me, it is crucial that you succeed, because the story you are telling shows us who we are and can make us even better.”



David W. Blight
Pulitzer Prize-winning
author and Sterling
Professor of History,
of African American
Studies, and of American
Studies and Director
of the Gilder Lehrman
Center for the Study
of Slavery, Resistance,
and Abolition at Yale
University

“The museum to be built at Gadsden’s Wharf in Charleston is one of the most important commemorative projects in American history.”



James E. Clyburn
United States House
of Representatives

“The museum will offer a look into some of the most compelling stories in our country’s history. This long overdue museum will raise public awareness and help contribute to the nation’s search for unity in our pursuit of a ‘more perfect union.’”



Ken Burns
Filmmaker

“It’s the Ellis Island without a welcoming Statue of Liberty, and I think what the museum does is say, ‘Let’s learn our history.’ We can both feel this stultifying prison that slavery obviously is and at the same time be uplifted knowing that we have appealed to the better angels of our nature.”



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