

August 20, 2013

Changing America: The Emancipation Proclamation, 1863, and the March on Washington, 1963

Draft Traveling Exhibition Script

CORRIDOR PANEL ONE

Changing America
1863: Emancipation Proclamation

Graphic EP side:

Smith Plantation

Graphic Label:

J. J. Smith's Plantation, Beaufort, South Carolina, 1862
Library of Congress

CORRIDOR PANEL TWO

Along Corridor

- In 1860
 - United States population 31,443,321
 - African American population 4,441,830
 - Enslaved population 3,953,760
 - All states restricted the rights of African Americans and slavery was legal in 15 states

Graphics for corridor:

Graphic:

St. Helena

Graphic Label:

Marion Chaplin Plantation, St. Helena, South Carolina, 1861
Penn Center Archives, St. Helena Island, S.C.

CORRIDOR PANEL THREE

Quote:

"Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will."

Frederick Douglass, Abolitionist, August 3, 1857

Graphic:

Arms Crossed

Graphic Label:

Magnolia Plantation, Hilton Head, South Carolina, 1862

Getty Images

CORRIDOR PANEL FOUR

Graphic:

Hands on Hips

Graphic Label:

Cumberland Landing, Virginia, 1862

Library of Congress

CORRIDOR PANEL FIVE

Changing America

1963: March on Washington

Graphic MOW side:

Graphic Label:

Participants at the March on Washington

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

CORRIDOR PANEL SIX

- In 1960
 - United States population 179,323,175
 - African American population 18,871,831
 - Racial segregation was legal and widely practiced in all 50 states

Graphic:

MOW

Graphic Label:

Leaders Marching Down Constitution Avenue

CORRIDOR PANEL SEVEN

Quote:

“Five score years ago, a great American, in whose symbolic shadow we stand, signed the Emancipation Proclamation. . . . In a sense we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check.”

Martin Luther King Jr., August 28, 1963

Graphic:

MOW

Graphic Label:

Participants at the March on Washington

Library of Congress

CORRIDOR PANEL SEVEN

Graphic:

MOW

Graphic Label:

Participants at the March on Washington

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

PANEL INTRO

Quote:

“Freedom is never given; it is won.”

A. Philip Randolph October 15, 1937

Main Label:

Changing America: The Emancipation Proclamation, 1863, and the March on Washington, 1963

There are moments in our nation’s history when individuals unite and take courageous steps to fulfill the promise of democracy. One hundred years separate the Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington. Yet, these two events are profoundly linked together in a larger story of liberty and the American experience. Both were the result of people demanding justice. Both grew out of decades of bold actions, resistance, organization, and vision. In both, we take inspiration from those who marched toward freedom.

Credit Line:

Changing America: The Emancipation Proclamation, 1863 and the March on Washington, 1963 is presented by the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture and the National Museum of American History in collaboration with the American Library Association Public Programs Office. The tour of the traveling exhibition is made possible by the National Endowment for the Humanities: Exploring the human endeavor.

PANEL ONE

Quote:

“In a thousand years that action of yours will make the Angels sing I know it.”
Hannah Johnson, mother of a black soldier, to President Lincoln, July 13, 1863

Intro text

Slavery in America

America’s promise of freedom is filled with contradiction. Perhaps no people understood this more keenly than the roughly four million enslaved African Americans living in the United States before 1863. Enslaved people’s labor produced half of all U.S. exports and provided much of the financial capital and raw materials that sparked industrialization. Bought and sold as property, enslaved people were valued at an estimated \$2.7 billion in 1860.

Despite daily denials of their humanity, enslaved African Americans wove resistance into their everyday lives and sustained a vision of freedom.

Graphic:

Harriet Tubman with people she brought to freedom

Graphic Label:

A reunion of Harriet Tubman, left, and people she helped free.
© Bettmann/CORBIS

Mural Graphic:

Smith Plantation

Graphic Label:

J. J. Smith’s Plantation, Beaufort, South Carolina, 1862
Library of Congress

Graphic Label:

United States Slave Trade, 1830

An estimated 600,000 enslaved African Americans were bought and sold in the United States in the decades before the Civil War. More than half of those sales separated parents and children.

Object:

Child’s Shackles

Object Label:

Shackles Used to Chain Children

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Subsection Text:

Let Your Motto Be Resistance

Emancipation was not the product of one act, but many. Enslaved black southerners struggled against their bondage in battles large and small—from open rebellion to subtle acts of resistance. Some ran away; others poisoned food, or preached freedom at religious services held in secret.

In the North, abolitionists called for emancipation in political debate, the press, speeches, and sermons. A few risked their lives for the cause: Harriet Tubman led enslaved people to freedom, and John Brown attacked slavery with guns, swords, and pikes. Black or white, radical or conservative, abolitionists formed a small but potent force and helped end slavery in the United States.

Object Image:

Slave Sale Broadside

Object Label

Slave Broadside

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Graphic:

Turner print

Graphic Label:

Woodcut, "Horrid Massacre in Virginia," about 1831

Library of Congress

Graphic Label:

Nat Turner's Rebellion

On August 21, 1831, Nat Turner led rebels who moved from plantation to plantation, killing roughly 55 whites and rallying enslaved people to their cause. By August 23, the rebels had been defeated. Nat Turner's Rebellion alarmed Americans and inflamed the debate over the future of slavery.

Woodcut, "Horrid massacre in Virginia," about 1831
Library of Congress

Object image:

John Brown's Pike

Object Label

John Brown Pike Head

John Brown and a small band of men raided the Federal Arsenal at Harper's Ferry in October 1859 to ignite a slave insurrection in Virginia. He brought 1,000 pikes with him to help arm the people he freed. Brown was captured and executed, but his raid stoked the fears of white southerners.

National Museum of American History

PANEL TWO

Quote:

Imagine, if you will . . . an army of slaves and fugitives, pushing its way irresistibly toward an army of fighting men. . . . Their arrival among us . . . was like the oncoming of cities.

Union General John Eaton

Subsection Text:

War and Self-Emancipation

By the time Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office on March 4, 1861, seven southern states had formed the Confederate States of America. Four others soon joined, and the Civil War began.

For most white Americans, the conflict was a war for the Union. But for black Americans, it was a battle for freedom. As the Union Army drove into the Confederacy, tens of thousands of enslaved African Americans stole away and entered Union lines. They made their freedom a fact. Within two years, President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation and made ending slavery government policy.

Mural Graphic:

Photograph of Contraband Camp, Landscape View

Graphic Label:

Tent Cities

From the first months of war, freed men and women built tent cities, sometimes with assistance from the U.S. Army. The photograph below, taken in 1865 in Richmond, Virginia, shows the widespread use of the Sibley tent to house freed people.

U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

Graphic:

Map of Camps

African Americans established makeshift communities as thousands sought freedom. The locations of these camps followed the path of the Union Army's advance into the Confederacy. A few were established outside of the South to help house black Americans migrating north out of slavery.

National Park Service

Graphic:

Fugitive slaves crossing the Rappahannock

Graphic Label

"Fugitive Slaves Crossing the Rappahannock River, Virginia, in August, 1862"

Recognizing an important piece of history, Timothy O'Sullivan photographed African Americans freeing themselves in 1862. This image of people leaving slavery by the wagonful was picked up by many newspapers and became a common way to portray the mass migration.

Stereograph by Timothy O'Sullivan

Library of Congress

Graphic:

Freedpeople at "freedmen's Village"

Graphic Label

Freedmen's Village

The Union confiscated Robert E. Lee's estate and established Freedman's Village on the grounds overlooking the District of Columbia in Arlington County, Virginia. This camp became an established African American neighborhood until the 1930s when it was razed to build Arlington Memorial Bridge and the George Washington Memorial Parkway.

© CORBIS

PANEL THREE

Section Text:

The Emancipation Proclamation

Abraham Lincoln realized that to restore the Union, slavery must end. Politically, he faced pressure on all sides: from African Americans fleeing slavery, from Radical Republicans calling for immediate abolition, and from pro-slavery Unionists who refused to fight to end slavery.

Lincoln also felt constrained by Constitutional limits on the federal government, which protected private property, including people held in slavery. Striking a balance, he believed the president only had the authority and political support to free enslaved persons residing within the eleven rebel states. In the summer of 1862, he drafted the Emancipation Proclamation. It declared that as of January 1, 1863, all enslaved individuals in all areas still in rebellion against the United States “henceforward shall be free.” Though limited in scope, it was revolutionary in impact. The war to preserve the Union also became a war to end slavery.

Graphic:

Carpenter painting

Graphic Label:

First Reading of the Emancipation Proclamation of President Lincoln

On September 22, 1862, five days after the Union victory at the Battle of Antietam, Abraham Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. He presented the proclamation as a wartime necessity, under his authority as Commander-in-Chief. African Americans willing to enlist would be received into the armed forces.
United States Senate

Object:

Print of Proclamation

Object Label

Commemorative Print

Publishers throughout the North responded to a demand for copies of Lincoln’s proclamation and produced numerous decorative versions including this engraving by R. A. Dimmick in 1864.

National Museum of American History

Graphic:

Political Cartoon, Abe's last card

Graphic Label:

Abe's Last Card

Not everyone shared Lincoln's views of the proclamation. Some people considered it a dangerous act of a desperate president willing to foment slave revolts to save his government.

This political cartoon, *Abe Lincoln's Last Card* or *Rouge-et-Noir*, by John Tenniel appeared in *Punch* magazine October 18, 1862, following Lincoln's announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation.

Chicago History Museum

Object:

Emancipation Proclamation in booklet

Object Label:

Reading Copy of the Emancipation Proclamation

This booklet was produced in December 1862 specifically for Union soldiers to read and distribute among African Americans.

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Graphic:

African American soldier and family

Graphic Label

Family Portrait

An unidentified soldier in Union uniform poses with his wife and two daughters. Many African Americans celebrated emancipation by formalizing their marriages—an act denied under slavery. U.S. Army chaplains reported performing hundreds of marriages for soldiers and other member of black communities.

Library of Congress

Graphic:

Reading the Proclamation

Graphic Label

"Reading the Emancipation Proclamation," J. W. Watts, 1864

PANEL FOUR

Quote:

“May God forget my people when they forget this day.”
Silas X. Floyd, Augusta, Georgia, January 1, 1909

Section text

Freedom’s Promise

The Emancipation Proclamation committed the nation to ending slavery. Yet what would freedom mean? Economic independence? Freedom from fear? The right to vote? The U.S. Congress responded with a series of Constitutional amendments ending slavery, granting citizenship, and giving black men voting rights. These rights changed the political landscape. By 1872, 1,510 African Americans held office in the southern states. Eight black men served together in the U.S. Congress in 1875—a number that would not be matched until 1969.

Label:

Never Forget

During the darkest days of segregation, black Americans continued to press for full citizenship. Each Emancipation Day, African Americans organized parades reminding the black community and the entire nation of a commitment that remained unfulfilled. These local celebrations set the stage for the national push for freedom in the 20th century.

Mural graphic:

Emancipation Day, Richmond, 1905

Graphic Label:

Emancipation Day, Richmond, Virginia, 1905
Library of Congress

Graphic:

Emancipation Day, Texas 1904

Graphic Label:

Emancipation Day, Texas, 1904

Austin History Center, Austin Public Library

Graphic:

Emancipation Day

Graphic Label:

Emancipation Day

Houston Public Library

Graphic:

“Radical members of the South Carolina legislature”

Graphic Label

Republican Members of the South Carolina Legislature

Shortly after the Civil War, African American men were elected to office in every southern state. Those with the largest numbers of black representatives were South Carolina, Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, North Carolina, and Texas.

Library of Congress

Graphic:

Early Klan image

Graphic Label:

KKK

As soon as the war ended, many whites organized to oppose black freedom. Using terrorism and the courts, they forced African Americans away from voting booths and other public places. The Ku Klux Klan was founded in Pulaski, Tennessee, in 1866 to subvert reforms and intimidate African Americans. Through fear, brutality, and murder, the KKK and other terrorist groups helped to overthrow local governments and restore white supremacy and segregation for decades to come.

National Museum of American History

PANEL FIVE

Quote:

“With malice toward none, with charity for all we dedicate ourselves and our posterity, with you and yours, to finish the work which he so nobly began, to make America an example for all the world of equal justice and equal opportunity for all.”

Robert Russa Moton, address at the Lincoln Memorial dedication, May 30, 1922

Section Text:

A National Stage for Civil Rights

The Lincoln Memorial was built in 1922 to heal national divisions caused by the Civil War. Yet for many, Lincoln’s promise of freedom remained incomplete. Over the next half century, the looming figure of Abraham Lincoln witnessed several dramatic events and demonstrations that reinforced the memorial’s importance as a symbolic space for civil rights movements. By 1963 an unprecedented number of demonstrations swept the country. Civil rights organizations looked to Washington, D.C. to press for their demands for the right to vote, full access to jobs and education, and an end to segregated public accommodations.

Mural Graphic:

Photograph of the crowds at the dedication

Graphic label:

Crowd Attending the Dedication of the Lincoln Memorial

Library of Congress

Graphics:

Anderson at memorial

Graphic label:

1939 Marian Anderson Concert

In a direct challenge to segregation, internationally renowned vocalist Marian Anderson performed to an audience of more than 75,000 people at the Lincoln Memorial on Easter Sunday in 1939. The Daughters of the American Revolution had barred her from singing in Washington’s Constitution Hall.

Photograph by Robert Scurlock

National Museum of American History

Graphic:

Photograph of Moton delivering address

Graphic label:

1922 Dedication of the Lincoln Memorial

Before a segregated crowd, Dr. Robert Russa Moton, President of Tuskegee Institute, delivered the keynote address, the first of what would be many civil rights speeches at the memorial.

Library of Congress

Graphic:

Image of Randolph

Graphic label:

1941 A. Philip Randolph Promoting the March

As the nation prepared for World War II, A. Philip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, called for a mass protest to end discrimination in government defense industries. He estimated that as many as 100,000 participants would march down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Lincoln Memorial. Days before the demonstration, President Franklin Roosevelt established the Fair Employment Practices Committee prohibiting discrimination in defense industries. Randolph canceled the march.

New York Public Library

Graphic:

Rally leaders seated on the speaker's platform

Graphic Label:

1957 Prayer Pilgrimage

Roy Wilkins, A. Philip Randolph, Rev. Thomas Kilgore Jr., and Martin Luther King Jr. sit on the speakers' platform at the 1957 Prayer Pilgrimage. Civil rights leaders called for the demonstration at the Lincoln Memorial that year to protest the lack of progress in desegregating schools, draw attention to the deteriorating economic conditions of blacks in the South, and push for new civil rights legislation.

Library of Congress

PANEL SIX

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

One hundred years after the Emancipation Proclamation, civil rights leaders A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin began to plan a mass demonstration in Washington. They hoped to unite established civil rights organizations with new community and student activists in a broad coalition.

As demonstrations and violence spread across the country in the spring and summer of 1963, interest in a march grew. On July 2, leaders representing six national civil rights organizations met at the Roosevelt Hotel in New York to announce a march demanding jobs and freedom. In just eight weeks, they proposed to hold the largest demonstration in American history. (112 words)

Object:

Official March poster **A143**

Object Label

Official March Poster, Designed by Lou LoMonaco

National Museum of American History

Subsection text

Planning and Organizing

On July 2, 1963, six national civil rights leaders announced their coalition to organize a national march for jobs and freedom. A. Philip Randolph was named the march director. Bayard Rustin took on the task of organizing the march. The job involved thousands of details: arranging transportation, fundraising, contracting a sound system, printing leaflets and brochures, ordering toilets, and soothing egos. Organizers fanned out across the country to enlist the aid of community groups. As many as 1,500 churches, unions, and local organizations recruited marchers, raised money, and sent delegations to Washington.

Mural Graphic:

Large image of the six march leaders

Graphic Label:

Six for Civil Rights

Left to right:

- John Lewis, Director, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
- Whitney Young, Executive Director, National Urban League

- A. Philip Randolph, President, Negro American Labor Council
- Martin Luther King Jr., President, Southern Christian Leadership Conference
- James L. Farmer Jr., National Director, Congress of Racial Equality
- Roy Wilkins, Executive Secretary, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

Corbis Images

Object:

March Flyer

Object label:

March Flyer

Organizers distributed thousands of flyers calling protesters to Washington.
National Museum of American History

Object:

Bus flyer

Object label:

Bus Flyer

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Graphic:

Harlem office

Graphic label:

At Headquarters

Cleveland Robinson, chairman of the administrative committee, stands on a balcony at the march's Harlem headquarters.

Library of Congress

Graphic:

Image of Rustin

G403

Graphic label:

Bayard Rustin at the Harlem March Headquarters, August 1, 1963

Bayard Rustin was given the task of organizing the march. A committed pacifist, he helped introduce nonviolent techniques into the movement. As a former member of the Communist Party, a conscientious objector during World War II, and openly gay, he seemed too controversial to some of his fellow activists. Many, however, recognized him as one of the most gifted and experienced organizers.

© Bettmann/CORBIS

Graphic:

Randolph, Wilkins, and Anna Arnold Hedgeman, **G030**

Graphic Label:

Calling for Women on the Podium

A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, and Anna Arnold Hedgeman look over a map of the Washington Mall. Hedgeman, a veteran civil rights activist, was the only woman on the administrative committee of the march. Along with Dorothy Height, president of the National Council of Negro Women, Hedgeman strongly urged that the march include a woman as speaker on the program. Their efforts were largely dismissed and the roles of women on the podium were principally ceremonial and as entertainers. Nonetheless, the contributions of thousands of women in all aspects of organizing helped make the march possible. (100 words)

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PANELS SEVEN

Section Text

To Bear Witness

An estimated 250,000 people participated in the march. They carried signs, sang along with civil rights anthems, waded in the Reflecting Pool, and listened to the speeches. Mostly, they came to bear witness, for themselves and their communities, that they would not stand by idly when the rights of so many Americans were being denied. Their presence on the Mall was as powerful a statement as any delivered on the podium.

Object image:

Sign, UAW Supports Freedom March

Object Label

United Auto Workers Sign, Carried at the March

National Museum of American History

Mural Graphic:

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom

© Bettman/CORBIS

Graphic:

March for Freedom

Graphic Label:

We March, We Demand

Library of Congress

Sub-Section Text:

On the Podium

Leaders representing major civil rights organizations, religious denominations, and American labor spoke from the podium. Martin Luther King Jr. had the honor of giving the concluding address. His speech echoed the words of the Bible, the Constitution, Lincoln, and the national anthem. He wove together long unfulfilled promises, the injustices of a segregated society, and a vision of a renewed nation. In repeating "I have a dream" again and again, he summed up the aspirations of the march and the demands of the Civil Rights Movement. (89 words)

Object:

map

Object Label

March Map

Map distributed to demonstrators on the day of the march
National Museum of American History

Objects:

Pennant, *NAACP/Equality Now*

Pennant, *March on Washington*

Object Label

March Pennants

National Museum of American History

Objects:

podium pass (white/Platform Guest)

podium pass (green/Washington Monument Platform)
March Committee Badge

Object Labels:

Podium Passes

National Museum of American History; Walter Naegle; Rachele Horowitz

PANEL EIGHT

Legacies

With the words and music still ringing in their ears, the demonstrators boarded buses and trains for their journeys home. Many would return to the same hardships, discrimination, and violence that had prompted them to join the March on Washington. But the legacy of that day endured and increased popular support for the Civil Rights Movement. In the months and years that followed, the march helped sustain and strengthen the work of those that continued to commit themselves to the ongoing struggle for social justice.

Mural Graphic:

Equal Rights Amendment Demonstration, New York City, August 26, 1980

© Bettmann/CORBIS

Equality for All

The success of the March on Washington and the achievements of the modern black freedom struggle reverberated throughout society and provided a model for social change. The power of mass nonviolent demonstrations inspired Americans fighting for equal rights and access to opportunities regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, or disabilities.

Object:

Equal Rights Amendment sash

Object label:

Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) Sash, 1980

National Museum of American History

Object:

poster- Demand your Right to Vote

Object label:

Lesbian and Gay Rights Protest Sign

Poster advertising the October 14, 1979, March on Washington for gay and lesbian rights

National Museum of American History

Object:

Asian banner

Object label:

Sweatshop Protest Banner

Worker's banner, with "Justice" written in Chinese, from a Los Angeles, California, anti-sweatshop campaign, 1993

National Museum of American History

Object:

Poster, The Longest Walk

Object label:

The Longest Walk Poster

Poster advertising the cross-country walk for Native American rights, February 11–July 15, 1978

National Museum of American History

Object:

UFW Broadside

Object label:

Farm Workers Broadside

National Farm Workers Association broadside from Delano, California, around 1966

National Museum of American History

Graphic:

Image of Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act

Graphic Label:

President Lyndon B. Johnson Signs the Civil Rights Act, July 2, 1964

In the months after the March on Washington, ongoing demonstrations and violence continued to pressure political leaders to act. The passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 were turning points in the

struggle for civil rights. Together the two bills outlawed segregated public facilities and prohibited discriminatory practices in employment and voting.

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum

Object:

signing pen

Object Label

Signing Pen

Pen used by President Johnson to sign the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library and Museum

Graphic:

Bombing of 16th St Baptist Church

Graphic Label:

Murder on 16th Street

The success of the March on Washington did not go unchallenged. Just two weeks after the march, on September 15, 1963, white supremacists planted a bomb under the steps of the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. The explosion killed four young girls attending Sunday school. In the face of such violence, the determination to continue organizing intensified.

Birmingham, Ala. Public Library Archives, File # 85.1.20