How the Civil War Changed Washington

Exhibition Dates: February 2, 2015 - November 15, 2015

Sponsorship Opportunity
With its world-renowned reputation for advancing community museology, The Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum (ACM) invites you to partner with us in presenting *How the Civil War Changed Washington* (working title), on view February 2, 2015 - November 15, 2015. This exhibition offers a fresh, unique telling of how the American Civil War shaped modern Washington, D.C.

**ABOUT THE EXHIBITION**

*How the Civil War Changed Washington* is a research-based initiative that examines how the American Civil War forever changed the city of Washington, D.C. The resulting exhibition and accompanying public programs at Anacostia Community Museum will focus on the social and spatial impacts of the war, such as changes in social mores, the built environment, the population and its ethnic breakdown, and new collective uses of wartime elements, including the many Civil War forts constructed around the city were later turned into parks. This project falls under the aspect of the ACM research mission that focuses on urban communities and the built environment, and comprises ACM’s participation in the Smithsonian Institution’s broader commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War. A major theme of the exhibition relates the outcomes of the Civil War to lasting changes to the city of Washington that are still evident today. This connection will give viewers not only the historical context of events, but also a personal connection to the content. Also central to the exhibition are histories of select local individuals and families whose personal stories relate to the larger historical context. The project will demonstrate the ways in which this turning point in US history was significant to the evolution of its capital city.

**THE STORIES**

**A-NOT-SO-MONUMENTAL CITY**

At the start of the Civil War, Washington was far from the city it is today. The streets were unpaved. The National Mall was covered in part by a fetid canal. The Washington Monument and the Capitol building were unfinished. Photographs will compare the Washington of then and now.
IN SLAVERY AND IN FREEDOM

On the eve of the war, slavery and freedom cohabitated in DC. George Washington Young owned the largest plantation in the vicinity, located just east of the Anacostia River. About a mile from there, the African-American Henson family had thrived in freedom for decades.

With the enactment of the DC Emancipation Act in April 1862, African-Americans flocked to Washington. The influx prompted the government to establish so-called “Contraband Camps”—housing communities for fugitive slaves. The first was located at Capitol Hill where a Library of Congress building stands today. Later, camps were erected near Logan Circle, Brightwood, and Roosevelt Island.

The stories of “contrabands” Maria Toliver, Keith Sutherland, and John Washington will be featured, as will the Henson family, which continued to thrive and to inhabit the parcel of land known as “The Ridge” until the last house owned by a Henson descendent was sold in 1980.
THE STORIES, continued

A STEP INTO FREEDOM IN THE CREATION OF BARRY FARM

In 1867, General Oliver O. Howard, Commissioner of the Freedmen’s Bureau, negotiated the purchase of 375 acres of land adjacent to St. Elizabeth’s Hospital. The land was divided into lots and sold to freedmen. Within two years, about 500 families were settled. The exhibit will emphasize the history of Elvans Road, a main street in the original tract. Today, this street is notorious for criminal activity. Yet, in 1867, it was a hopeful place for newly freed people. Stories of the road’s first settlers will be highlighted, including Solomon G. Brown, the first African-American employee of the Smithsonian Institution.

WOMEN’S LIB IN THE CIVIL WAR

The shortage of men caused by the war led the federal government to employ women, at a fraction of the men’s pay. Women clipped dollar notes in the US Treasury and were hired at the Washington Arsenal because their smaller hands made them efficient at producing cartridges. On July 17, 1864 an explosion at the Arsenal killed 21 workers, the youngest a 12 year old girl. Despite wage discrimination and poor working conditions, women became firmly entrenched in DC’s government workforce. 150 years later, the issue of unequal pay for women persists.

FROM FORTS TO PARKS

During the war, the perimeter of Washington, D.C. was protected by a ring of forts. Today, many are public parks. Most of the forts were transformed during the 1930s through labor from Depression Era labor programs. This section will discuss the rise and fall of Fort Reno, which became a planned community with blacks and whites living together in relative harmony.
PUBLIC OUTREACH

ACM values its outreach to the Washington-area community, including:

Family programs such as monthly “Community Leaders are Readers” programs, hands-on art workshops, and annual Family Festival celebrations;

Adult programs such as community forums, scholarly lectures, artist-led workshops, tours, and demonstrations;

School programs such as the Museum Academy Program, which offers year-round, out-of-school time instruction to youth in Washington’s Ward 7 and Ward 8 neighborhoods, and school tours offered throughout the year; and

Free transportation to the Museum for east of the river schools and community groups using the Anacostia Community Museum shuttle. The Museum also provides round trip shuttle service to the National Mall from Memorial Day through Labor Day through “Shuttle Anacostia.”

EXHIBITION PROGRAMMING

In addition to ongoing programs, ACM will offer special exhibition-related programs for audiences of all ages. These include:

A Distinguished Lecturer Series that will welcome six nationally known historians who will provide informative, Civil-War-related content in three areas of discourse: 1) culture, 2) politics, and 3) sociology;

A Civil War in Washington Symposium, in collaboration with George Washington University, Georgetown University, and Gallaudet University that will focus on the theme “The Civil War in Washington: Processes of Change;” and

An Exhibition Family Guide and Educator’s Toolkit that will guide children and their families purposefully through the exhibition and will equip local educators with a “Civil War in Washington” curriculum based on DC common core standards. The Educator’s Toolkit will include an accompanying companion CD for interactive and multi-media engagement of students with exhibition content.
Why Partner with ACM?

Anacostia Community Museum is a trailblazer in the museum field, actively engaging the community in developing dynamic exhibitions, and telling stories that are pertinent to urban communities across the globe.

As a partner, you will help the Museum to reach diverse audiences—from the national capital area, across the nation, and around the globe—with this impressive exhibition, engaging educational programs, and high-quality outreach events.

In turn, the Museum would be pleased to acknowledge your generosity within the Museum galleries, on its website, and on related promotional materials.

If you would like to support How the Civil War Changed Washington, or to receive detailed sponsorship information, please contact:

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