



Writing a New History

*When historians pick up their pens to write the story of the 21st century, let them say that it was your generation who laid down the heavy burdens of hate at last and that peace finally triumphed over violence, aggression, and war. So I say to you, walk with the wind, brothers and sisters, and **let the spirit of peace and the power of everlasting love be your guide.***

John R. Lewis (1940–2020)

U.S. Representative (Georgia—5th District)

Excerpt from Lewis' essay published July 30, 2020



Our Mission

The 400 Years of African American History Commission (400 YAAHC) is a Federally appointed committee, operating independently as established by the Secretary of the Interior and administered by the National Park Service. The Commission was established in the 400 Years of African American History Commission Act (Public Law 115-102) to coordinate the 400th anniversary of the first documented arrival of enslaved Africans in the English colonies. The Commission's purpose is to plan, develop, and carry out programs and activities throughout the United States as listed to the right.

Commissioners appointed to serve are left to right: Secretary Lonnie Bunch, Mr. Glenn Freeman, Dr. Joseph Green, Dr. Cheryl T. Grills, Ms. Kay Coulson, Dr. Gwendolyn Wilson Diggs, Dr. Kirsten Buick, and Dr. H. Patrick Swygert.



- Recognize and highlight the resilience and cultural contributions of Africans and African Americans over 400 years;
- Acknowledge the impact that slavery and laws that enforced racial discrimination had on the United States;
- Encourage civic, patriotic, historical, educational, artistic, religious, and economic organizations to organize and take part in anniversary activities;
- Assist states, localities, and nonprofit organizations to further the commemoration; and coordinate public scholarly research about the arrival of Africans and their contributions to the United States

The National Alliance of Faith and Justice (NAFJ) serves as the official nonprofit partner of the Commission.

COMMISSIONERS AND EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

Standing, left to right: Mrs. Kenya Cox, Mr. Hannibal B. Johnson, Supt. Terry Brown, and Supt. Lewis Rogers.
Seated, left to right: Mr. Ron Carson, Mr. Ted Ellis, Dr. Rex Ellis, Ms. Addie Richburg, Prophet Anyanwu Cox.



Highlighting Resilience And Cultural Contributions

The 400 YAAHC initiated the 400 Distinguished Award as the highest recognizable honor bestowed to potential recipients to acknowledge their sacrifices, contributions and achievements of African Americans fighting for justice and equality over 400 plus years. This award will be given to a minimum of 400 outstanding individuals who have dedicated their lives in pursuit of excellence for the welfare of all African Americans and other citizens who seek equal treatment governed by the laws of the United States. Those of merit, living and dead, will be honored.

Since introduced during the 400th anniversary commemoration through September 2022, 275 persons have been recognized.

Fostering Public Education and Cooperation

In carrying out priorities of Public Law 115-102, the 400 YAAHC has offered a broad range of virtual and in-person initiatives, open to all. Commission signature activities and partnerships celebrate and emphasize the progress, resilience, hopes, and dreams necessary to unite, build, and sustain the greatness of this country while acknowledging the pain and suffering of forced migration and enslavement, the evolution of Jim Crow, and the continued pursuit of equality. To follow are a few annual examples:



Advancing Youth Leadership

Many things matter in addressing disparities. By supporting an evidenced based intervention effort like afterschool and mentoring programs offered through PEN OR PENCIL (POP), culture, racial socialization and positive youth development for African American and other youth is addressed.

POP, founded in 2005 by the National Alliance of Faith and Justice and endorsed by the National Council for the Social Studies, is adopted by the 400 Years of African American History Commission as a history-based mentoring approach and formal member of the National Park Service (NPS) National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program and the NPS African American Civil Rights Network.

Students are encouraged to embark upon a personal journey, particularly those traditionally underrepresented in various areas. They are encouraged to pursue the freedom to excel and thrive as well as to discover a sense of identity, appreciation of heritage, and the determination to contribute to their families and communities.



Mr. Anthony Tybre Faw and Miss Saniya Gay serve as the first National Student Ambassadors for the 400 YAAHC.

The Commission has produced an extensive collection of interviews, educational, and feature films. Features include but are not limited to:

- Take a Stand to Keep a Seat
- African American Fallen Heroes (from Civil War to Iraq)
- Black Coal Miners of Appalachia
- Revitalizing America's Historic All Black Towns
- Nurses: A Day of Healing
- Elevating the Black Wall Street Mindset
- Nonviolence to No Violence
- National History Day Docuseries

Films and thematic productions may be viewed by visiting www.400yaahc.gov or viewed at the Commission's streaming partner, <https://smogotv.lightcast.com/>



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Just a Few Highlights and Milestones

The 400 YAAHC was selected by the National Black Caucus of State Legislators and has received the 2022 David P. Richardson Jr. National Nation Builder Award for its work in using history in education and outreach, advancing youth leadership, and promoting the contributions African Americans have made to this country.

Over \$1 million dollars in grant awards have been made to over 150 civic, patriotic, historical, educational, artistic, religious, and economic organizations in 30 states.

The Commission has forged collaborative relationships with over 350 local, regional, and national organizations, municipalities, cultural, and

other entities and institutions in the United States, to including connections made in Alaska, Hawaii, and the Virgin Islands.

As America looks forward to its 250th anniversary, the 400 YAAHC is recognized as a national partner of America 250, the U.S. Congressional commemorative commission formed to facilitate the planning, development, promotion and coordination of observances and activities that will commemorate the historic events that preceded, and are associated with, the United States Semiquincentennial. The 400 YAAHC will collaborate by offering strategic programming designed to inspire Americans to renew and strengthen our commitment to one nation with liberties and justice for all.



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Bluejaisvision*

400 Years of African-American History Commission

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Dr. Rex M. Ellis
National Museum of African American History
and Culture (Retired)
Williamsburg, Virginia
Chairman

Mr. Ted T. Ellis
Director
Florida State University Civil Rights Institute
Tallahassee, Florida
Acting Chair

Mr. Ron Carson
Co-Founder
Appalachian African American Cultural Center
Pennington Gap, Virginia
2nd Vice Chair

Ms. Addie L Richburg
Washington, DC
Executive Director

Past Officers

Dr. Joseph L. Green, Jr.
Founder, The 2019 Movement
Senior Pastor, St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Mr. Glenn M. Freeman
National Council of Censors
Omaha, Nebraska

National Park Service Representatives

Superintendent Lewis H. Rogers Jr.
Fredericksburg and Spotsylvania
Military National Park
Fredericksburg, Virginia

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Bluejaisvision

COMMISSIONERS

Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III
Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution
Washington, DC

Ms. Kenya Cox
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Kansas State Chapters President
NAACP
Topeka, Kansas

Prophet N. Anyanwu Cox, M.Ed
Founder
Reconciliation Min. w/o Walls
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