



## Background

# Proposal for a Bipartisan Presidential Commission To Study National Museum of the American People

## VISION

The **National Museum of the American People** will present the dramatic story about the making of the American People. Our compelling history, about peoples crossing oceans and continents to come to this land and nation, begins with the first humans in the Western Hemisphere and continues through today. It will celebrate all who became Americans, whether from Europe, Africa, Asia and Pacific Islands or the Americas.

It is the greatest epic saga in human history and the museum will endeavor to be one of the most powerful story-telling museums anywhere. It will take visitors along an absorbing, dynamic pathway that becomes rooted in our Constitution. Scholarly based, the museum will help unify the American People and foster civics education.

For all American groups, the NMAP will tell the story about their ancestors becoming Americans. It doing so, it will encompass those they know, their tribe; and their city, state and region. It will incorporate their ethnic, nationality, and minority histories.

## PLAN

Our plan calls first for a Presidential Commission to study the feasibility of the museum. We are approaching the White House and Congress to support the study. Following the feasibility study report, we will seek legislation to create an entity to plan and build the museum and to raise the funds necessary to plan and build it. If the feasibility study is established in 2022 and the museum entity is created soon thereafter, ground could be broken in 2023 and the museum could open in 2028.

Following is a review of the **what, why, where, when, who, how, competing concerns, precedents** and **consequences** for both the **National Museum of the American People** (green heads) and the proposed **NMAP Presidential Commission** (blue heads).

## **WHAT: NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE**

The Permanent Exhibition of the NMAP will tell its story in the manner of our two greatest storytelling institutions: the **National Museum of African American History and Culture** and the **US Holocaust Memorial Museum**. At the heart of the NMAP and titled *The Making of the American People*, the gripping narrative will unfold along a dramatic chronological path through four chapters:

### **CHAPTER I — THE FIRST PEOPLES COME**

20,000 years before present (est.)-1607: migration of humans to and throughout the Western Hemisphere; creation of tribal groups and civilizations throughout the hemisphere; earliest European explorers and settlements, predominantly Spanish. Extinction of natives begins after European contact. *Chapter mid-point is 1492.*

### **CHAPTER II — THE NATION TAKES FORM**

1607-1820: the geography of the story contracts from the Western Hemisphere to what is now the United States and its territories; extinction of natives continues; English, Dutch, French, Spanish and other Western European settlement and colonization; the African slave trade flourishes; the United States is established as the Constitution provides the nation's basis, including slave and free states; immigrants come to the new nation; the nation begins its expansion Westward with the Louisiana Purchase from France taking in new peoples. *Chapter mid-point is 1776.*

### **CHAPTER III — THE GREAT IN-GATHERING**

1820-1924: the major century of immigration; ancestors of most of today's Americans arrive from throughout Europe, at first predominantly from Western Europe and then from Southern and Eastern Europe. The Africa slave trade winds down and ends, but legal racial apartheid continues after the Civil War rents the nation. As the Industrial Revolution gains strength, immigration from Asia begins; US expands through wars and purchases taking in people and land to the Pacific Ocean, Caribbean islands, Pacific islands, and Alaska, places that had been controlled primarily by Spain, Mexico, England and Russia. Westward migration takes place throughout this period and former slaves from the South begin moving north. Native tribal groups are forced on to reservations. Most immigrants in the chapter's second half move to cities throughout the nation, especially in the upper Midwest and Northeast. *Chapter mid-point is 1865.*

### **CHAPTER IV — AND STILL THEY COME**

1924-2024: the captivating story of American immigration and migration continues. Immigration slows through the first part of this chapter and many leave the US to go back to their home countries during the Great Depression of the 1930s. After World War II and during the Cold War, refugees and asylum seekers begin arriving here and migrant workers are brought in to harvest the nation's rich farmlands. Starting in the 1970s, immigrants begin coming from Asia, Africa, the Middle East and the Americas in large numbers through 2016. During this chapter, migration westward, southward, and then to suburban areas takes place as well as African American migration northward. The nation's story of opening and closing doors to immigrants continues. *Chapter mid-point is 1965.*

## **How the Story Will Be Told**

Encompassing a timeline of some 20 millennia, the story of the American People will be presented as if the visitor were immersed in an engaging and dramatic documentary film. With force and clarity, the museum will celebrate the American experience at the same time as it examines unpleasant truths and avoids mythology.

In telling its story of the making of the American People, the museum will tell who these people were, where they came from, why they left their homeland, how they got here, when they arrived, where they first settled, who was already here, what they encountered, where they moved after they arrived, how they became Americans, what they contributed and how they transformed our nation.

Like the National Museum of African American History and Culture and the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, the NMAP will present its story using a variety of media including ancient and modern artifacts, video, photographs, art, dioramas, graphics, text, computer technology and models. Unlike most museums, the artifacts aren't presented for their own sake, but rather to help tell the overall narrative of the museum. This interactive framework will engage visitors and leave an indelible impression as they take in their own story and come to know the full story about the making of all the American People.

## **The NMAP Will Tell Every Group's Story**

While focusing on all of the large groups that are here, the NMAP will tell the story of every ethnic, nationality and minority group. The nine largest groups in the nation according to the 2010 Census are:

- German Americans                      49.2 million
- Black/African Americans            41.3 million
- Irish Americans                        35.5 million
- Mexican Americans                  31.8 million
- English Americans                    26.9 million
- Americans\*                            19.9 million
- Italian Americans                    17.6 million
- Polish Americans                     9.7 million
- French Americans                    9.1 million

\*People who mark "American" are generally those whose ancestors came in the second chapter whose ancestors were English, Scottish, Irish, German and some others and who intermingled over the centuries and now identify only as American. Geographically, this group is predominant in the South and through Appalachia.

Groups numbering 2-6 million starting with the most numerous include:

- Scottish Americans
- First Peoples (American Indians, Alaskan Natives and Native Hawaiians)
- Scots-Irish Americans
- Dutch Americans
- Puerto Ricans
- Norwegian Americans
- Swedish Americans
- Chinese Americans
- Jewish Americans
- Russian Americans
- Asian Indian Americans
- West Indian Americans (non-Hispanic)
- Filipino Americans
- French Canadian Americans

Other large groups in the 2010 Census from 1.3 to 2 million include:

- Welsh Americans
- Salvadoran Americans
- Arab Americans
- Vietnamese Americans
- Czech Americans
- Hungarian Americans
- Portuguese Americans
- Korean Americans
- Danish Americans
- Dominican Americans (Dominican Republic)
- Greek Americans

Together, these groups constituted close to 99 percent of the population in 2010; there are dozens of other nationalities whose story will be told.

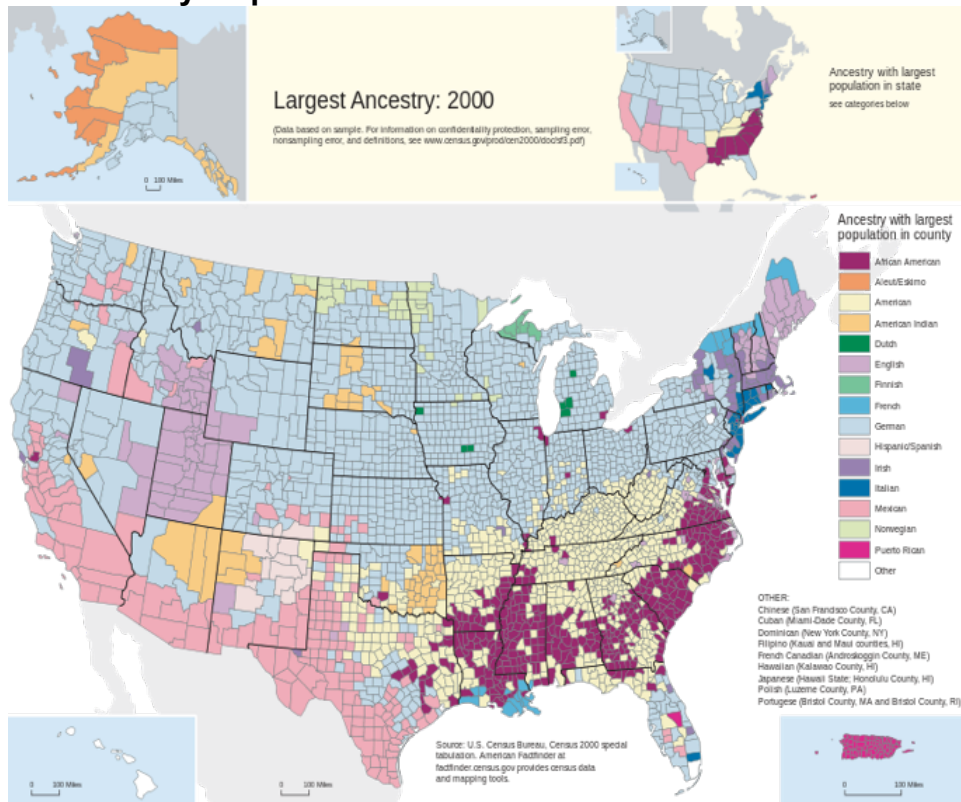
## **Museum Components**

In addition to its Permanent Exhibition, the NMAP will be a major institution devoted to the study and better understanding of the American People. Some of its components could include:

- Center for the Advanced Study of the American People -- a major institution with in-house scholars and scholarly connections around the US and the world.
- National Ancestry Center -- providing genealogy and genome ancestry research and data.
- Museum Collections -- obtaining objects for permanent, special and traveling exhibitions and scholarly study.
- Archive and Library of American Immigration and Migration
- Education Resource Center -- serving students at the museum and teachers and students throughout the nation with curriculum materials from the museum, providing an encyclopedic range of American People information for students and the public, preparing students for museum visits.
- Public Programs -- lectures, films, ethnic cultural events and celebrations.

- NMAP Special Exhibitions -- developing ideas expanding on topics in the permanent exhibition, contemporary issues and other subject areas.
- Traveling Exhibitions -- developing traveling exhibitions on museum themes.
- NMAP Film Center - a collection of documentary and feature films relating to the subject matter of the museum for showing onsite and also available online.
- Peopling of America Center -- in conjunction with the National Park Service identifying, designating and marking U.S. sites where historic immigration and migration events occurred; explore working with the Institute of Museum and Library Services to provide grants for American ethnic, nationality and minority museums and cultural centers.
- Museum Bookstore and Gift Shop -- selling books and gift items related to the museum's subject matter.
- Museum Food Venues -- exploring an international food court and a higher end restaurant.

## An Ancestry Map of the U.S.



## **WHAT: NMAP BIPARTISAN PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION**

The 32-member NMAP Bipartisan Presidential Commission we're calling for would include 16 members appointed by the President and 4 members each appointed by the Speaker and Minority Leader of the House and the majority and minority leaders of the Senate. It would produce a report modeled after the one which led to creation of the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The Commission's Final Report would explore six elements to help guide creation of the NMAP:

### **1. Mission and Governance**

This includes the governance (e.g., part of the Smithsonian Institution or independent of it), creating an entity charged with planning, building and raising funds for the NMAP, developing a mission statement for the NMAP, determining the scope of the institution, its impact on and support of other US ethnic museums, developing a plan to create the museum, and examining issues the museum could encounter.

### **2. The Museum's Permanent Exhibition: *Making of the American People***

This includes an outline of the history for each chapter of the museum's story, exploring how to tell the story, an evaluation of the museum's audiences, topics for special exhibitions, a review of the best museum exhibition designers, and an analysis of other major ethnic and story-telling museums.

### **3. The Museum's Location, Physical Facility and Grounds**

This includes reviewing and evaluating Washington, DC sites, transportation issues at each site, building and grounds space requirements, a plan to transfer federal land to the museum, obtaining permanent art, a sculpture garden associated with the museum, and a plan to obtain a world-class architect to design the museum building.

### **4. The Cost and Funding for the Museum**

This includes the cost of designing and constructing the NMAP, the annual operating and maintenance costs, annual budgets, a plan to raise funds to plan, build and operate the NMAP, issues related to funding operations, and museum staffing.

### **5. Museum Components**

This includes exploring each possible museum component listed above.

### **6. Public Relations and Legislation**

This includes drafting legislation to create the NMAP and a plan to pass it, drafting a public relations plan for the museum, and developing ways to communicate regularly with prime constituents including ethnic, nationality, and minority organizations.

# **WHY: NMAP and NMAP PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION**

## **Our Nation Needs the NMAP Now**

The National Museum of the American People can be the embodiment of the effort to bring all Americans together and unify our nation. The museum should become the next great jewel in the federal family of museums. It will be a memorial for all of our American predecessors and a guidepost for all of our descendants in this century and those to follow. We believe it will be one of the greatest and most compelling story-telling museums in the world as it breathes new life into the first words of our Constitution: “*We the People.*”

Now more than ever we need this museum near the heart of our nation’s capital to tell our story. The museum will show how people from everywhere on our globe built and defended this nation and contributed to making it the economic, military, scientific and cultural leader of the world.

It will be the only museum in our nation’s capital to tell the story of every ethnic and minority group, celebrating their immigration and migration stories, their patriotism, their contributions and achievements. In doing so it will help foster a sense of belonging to our nation, contribute to our national identity and help unify our country as it brings to life with a new meaning our original national motto: *E Pluribus Unum!*

The NMAP will become an eternal legacy for our nation. All Americans will be able to come and learn about their own group’s stories and have the opportunity to learn about the stories of all the others. It will stimulate learning nationwide. Foreign leaders and visitors will come away from it with a better understanding of our diverse pluralistic nation.

It will help fulfill President Biden’s inaugural pledge “not to divide but unify.”

## **The NMAP Will Spur Civics Education Nationwide**

The museum will spur civics education for student visitors and others nationwide through its education programs. As the museum tells every student’s story about becoming an American it will enhance their interest and their knowledge of just what it means to be an American.

The National Museum of the American People will demonstrate how our founding documents played a central role in shaping the American character in all of its diversity and will help future generations understand and achieve our national ideals.

It will include a national education resource center and a center for the advanced study of the American People. The museum will promote scholarly study nationwide and worldwide about the making of the American People.

## **The NMAP Will Amplify What It Means to Be an American**

Every American, except Native Americans, has someone in their ancestry who came here from somewhere else in the last 500 years. The story about the making of the American People, of different peoples coming from every corner of Earth, crossing oceans and continents and starting new lives, is one of the greatest epic sagas in human history. We need a museum where we can experience, learn and share this unique human story. The American story.

The American people are a special mosaic where more than 90 percent of us still recognize and use a hyphen to delineate the distinct ethnicities of our heritage, whether from Europe, Africa, Asia and Pacific Islands or the Americas, including Native Americans. Being an American is not based on being part of any racial, ethnic, nationality or religious group.

The Museum will underscore how Americans are the embodiment of the ideals expressed in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, especially freedoms spelled out in the Bill of Rights and Constitutional Amendments expanding the definition of American citizenship and the right to vote. It will show how those documents shaped the American character and our nation and how we are still working to perfect those ideals of democracy, freedom, voting rights, liberty, majority rule, checks on and balances of power, justice and equality.



## WHERE: NMAP

### Favored Site

The favored site for the National Museum of the American People is the Banneker Overlook site. It is an eight-acre green slope at the end of L'Enfant Plaza, an extension of 10th Street, S.W. The site is on a direct axis with the iconic Smithsonian Castle Building and reaches down to Maine Avenue and the Washington, D.C. waterfront along Washington Channel, an inlet of the Potomac River. It is adjacent to I-395.



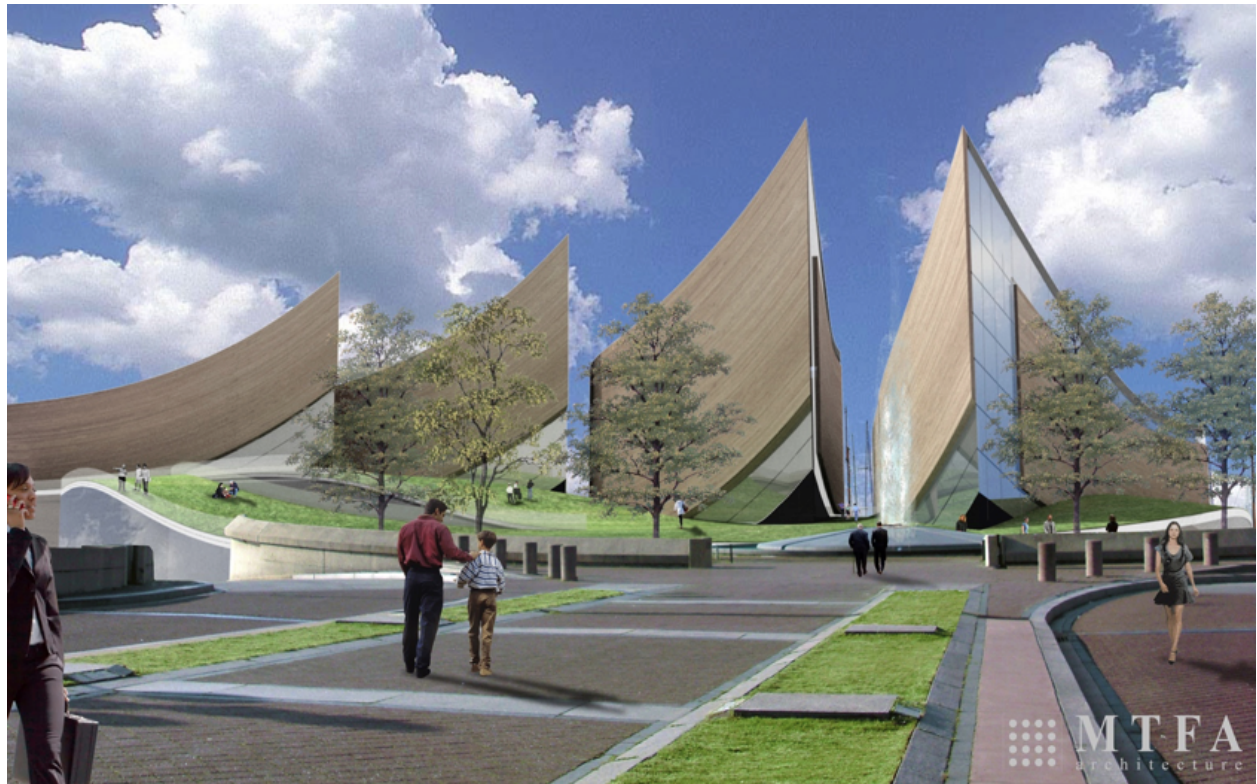
The site is a short walk from the L'Enfant Metro stop, the only Metro stop that serves 5 of the system's 6 lines. Washington's Spy Museum has already relocated to L'Enfant Promenade. There would be auto and bus access and parking nearby.

The large site affords an opportunity for the design of an architecturally significant building along with an inviting landscape. It is already one of the major sites in Washington designated as a location for a future national museum by three federal agencies that oversee the capital's central federal area and the look it presents to the world: The National Park Service, National Capital Planning Commission and U.S. Commission on Fine Arts. The Overlook site is now under NPS jurisdiction.

The site also sits at the nexus of a major municipal project, The Wharf, that has invigorated the Southwest DC waterfront adjacent to the city's bustling fish market. It opened in 2017 and includes condos, shops, restaurants, a concert venue, a river walk and other amenities to draw visitors from the National Mall to the waterfront.

### **The Museum's Design Could Be Striking**

We would expect a world class architect to be commissioned to design the National Museum of the American People.



One example of the museum's design at the Banneker Overlook site at the end of L'Enfant Plaza features four soaring structures arising from the grass covered roof of the central building. It evokes aspects of the NMMP's story: flags of nations; books opened to reveal the four chapters of the story of the American People; and sails over a landscape of waves recalling the vessels that brought so many to this land.

The maritime aesthetic also relates to the nearby marina where an extension of the museum could berth boats like those used by local natives and ships used to bring early European settlers, slaves and others here. This design was conceived by MTFA Architecture of Arlington, VA on a pro bono basis. It entails a green building that would serve as a model for the Southwest Washington, DC Ecodistrict. Being off of the National Mall opens the door for innovative architecture design.

## **WHEN: NMAP**

### **An NMAP Timeline to Opening Day**

#### **2022**

Bipartisan NMAP Presidential Commission announced and chair named. Commission begins its work with a 6-month deadline. Commission completes its report and submits it to President and Congress; Museum legislation drafted and introduced. Congress passes an act establishing the National Museum of the American People and transferring a federal site to the museum.

#### **2023**

Governing board for museum named; fundraising begins; museum's staff formation begins; initial museum plan is announced; groundbreaking ceremony takes place.

#### **2024-28**

Scholars develop detailed story line; museum building designed; museum construction begins; museum exhibition designed; artifacts obtained; exhibitions fabricated and installed; museum components and programs are designed and implemented; permanent art works are commissioned, executed and installed; construction completed.

#### **2026-28**

Museum opening plan developed.

#### **2028**

Museum opens with national and world leaders in attendance. Associated ceremonies, concerts and celebrations are held in Washington at the Kennedy Center, Arlington Cemetery, the National Cathedral, Smithsonian museums, the White House, US Capitol, and on the National Mall. Other commemoration events marking the NMAP opening take place at schools, sports venues, religious institutions and public spaces in cities and communities throughout the nation.



## **WHEN: NMAP BIPARTISAN PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION**

### **A Proposed Timeline for the Presidential Commission**

#### **Fall 2021**

Bipartisan legislation introduced in Congress; Congressional support builds. Leaders of immigration, refugee, ethnic, nationality and minority organizations begin declaring their support for the NMAP legislation. White House staff briefed on NMAP proposal.

#### **Winter 2022**

President announces Presidential Commission and names its chair and vice chair along with lead Congressional supporters and immigration, refugee, ethnic, nationality and minority leaders at a White House media event.

#### **Spring 2022**

President and Congressional leaders name members of commission; chair names executive director and begins appointing staff; preparations begin for first commission meeting. Commission's first meeting.

#### **Fall 2022**

Final Report along with legislation to create the NMAP are submitted to the President, Vice President and Congress; legislation to create the NMAP is introduced in Congress. White House media event.

## **WHO (stakeholders): NMAP**

### **Ethnic, Nationality and Minority Support**

As the museum gains traction, we will work to gain broad bipartisan public support for this effort from every segment of the nation: political, business, cultural, religious, educational, diplomatic, and from every American.

The NMAP already has broad support from more than 250 ethnic, nationality and minority organizations representing more than 70 groups of hyphenated Americans, including the following:

African American	Filipino American	Native Hawaiian
Albanian American	Finnish American	Norwegian American
American Indian	French American	Polish American
Arab American	Georgian American	Portuguese American
Armenian American	German American	Puerto Rican
Asian Pacific American	Greek American	Russian American
Azerbaijani American	Hispanic American	Salvadoran American
Baltic American	Hmong American	Scandinavian American
Basque American	Hungarian American	Scots Irish American
Belarusian American	Indian American	Scottish American
Bolivian American	Iranian American	Sikh American
Bosnian American	Irish American	Slovak American
Bulgarian American	Italian American	South Asian American
Caribbean American	Japanese American	Swedish American
Carpatho Rusyn American	Jewish American	Swiss American
Chinese American	Korean American	Taiwanese American
Creole American	Laotian American	Thai American
Cuban American	Latino American	Tunisian American
Czech American	Latvian American	Turkish American
Danish American	Liberian American	Ugandan American
Dominican American	Lithuanian American	Ukrainian American
Dutch American	Macedonian American	Vietnamese American
Early European American	Mexican American	Welsh American
English American	Moroccan American	

Every group of Americans would like to have its story told in a national museum near the heart of our nation's capital.

### **Scholarly Support for the NMAP**

The museum's story will be scholarly driven as it focuses on the mosaic of people that contribute to our national identity. Eminent scholars will provide the intellectual bedrock upon which this institution would be built.

More than 140 scholars from around the globe specializing in the migration and immigration of various peoples already support the NMAP. These scholars represent a range of disciplines, including historians, anthropologists and sociologists. The museum will ensure the highest standards of scholarship. Historians, anthropologists,

archeologists, ethnologists, human geographers, demographers, geneticists, linguists and others will be called on to help develop and flesh out the story.

The museum's story will be built around a consensus of their views, and significant evidence-based historic and scientific alternative views could also be included. As scientific and historic consensus changes, appropriate changes could be made in the museum.

### **Refugees, Migration and Immigration Support for the NMAP**

There are 19 organizations that focus on immigration, migration and refugee policies supporting the NMAP. They include:

- United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Committee on Cultural Diversity in the Church
- Church World Service
- National Association of Evangelicals
- HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society)
- Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service
- Friends Committee on National Legislation
- National Council of Churches
- Council for Christian Colleges and Universities
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc.
- National Immigration Forum
- American Immigration Lawyers Association
- American Immigration Council
- International Rescue Committee
- U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants
- New York Immigration Coalition
- Welcome.US
- America's Voice
- Ethiopian Community Development Council, Inc.
- Center for the Integration & Advancement of New Americans

NOTE: A complete list of organizations and scholars supporting the NMAP is available at [buildNMAP.com](http://buildNMAP.com).

### **Past Congressional Support for the NMAP**

In the 113th Congress, 48 bipartisan House members signed on to H. Con. Res. 27 supporting the NMAP. They included 16 members of the Congressional Black Caucus. Together, these members were chairs or co-chairs of 35 ethnic, nationality and minority caucuses as well as the Humanities, Refugee and History caucuses:

Jim Moran, D-VA – Lead  
John Duncan, R-TN

Tom Cole, R-OK  
Jim Gerlach, R-PA

Tom Petri, R-WI  
Frank Wolf, R-VA  
Pat Tiberi, R-OH  
Don Young, R-AK  
Mike McIntyre, D-NC  
Ron Kind, D-WI  
Carolyn Maloney, D-NY  
Gerald Connolly, D-VA  
Daniel Lipinski, D-IL  
Eni Faleomavaega, D-AS  
Allyson Schwartz, D-PA  
Steve Cohen, D-TN  
Charles Rangel, D-NY  
Eleanor Holmes Norton, D-DC  
Robert Scott, D-VA  
David Cicilline, D-RI  
Tim Walz, D-MN  
Tim Bishop, D-NY  
Keith Ellison, D-MN  
Nita Lowey, D-NY  
Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan, D-MP  
Rush Holt, D-NJ  
Marcy Kaptur, D-OH

Alcee Hastings, D-FL  
Carolyn McCarthy, D-NY  
Bill Pascrell, D-NJ  
David Price, D-NC  
Betty McCollum, D-MN  
Sheila Jackson Lee, D-TX  
Yvette Clarke, D-NY  
Pedro Pierluisi, D-PR  
Eliot Engel, D-NY  
Barbara Lee, D-CA  
Donna Christensen, D-VI  
Earl Blumenauer, D-OR  
Donald M. Payne, Jr., D-NJ  
Marc Veasey, D-TX  
Sanford Bishop, D-GA  
Bobby Rush, D-IL  
John Conyers, D-MI  
John Lewis, D-GA  
Bennie Thompson, D-MS  
Ken Calvert, R-CA  
Chellie Pingree, D-ME  
Emanuel Cleaver, D-MO

Sen. Brian Schatz, D-HI, has been championing the NMAP in recent years in the Senate.

## **WHO: NMAP BIPARTISAN PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION**

### **Commission Chair, Vice Chair and Members**

We propose consideration of the following to chair the commission, each of whom commands significant public support:

First Lady Dr. Jill Biden  
Former First Lady Michelle Obama  
Second Gentleman Doug Emhoff

Historian Jon Meachum would be an excellent choice as vice chair of the commission.

The President, in addition to appointing the chair and vice chair, would appoint 14 other diverse individuals with a variety of backgrounds who would provide the broad expertise required to create this important new institution for our nation.

The Speaker and Minority Leader of the House and the Majority and Minority Leaders of the Senate could each be asked to name four members to the commission.



## **HOW: NMAP**

### **Plan to Establish the Museum**

The plan to establish the National Museum of the American People first calls for a Presidential Commission to study the feasibility of the museum. Following the final feasibility study report, we would seek legislation to create an entity to plan and build the museum and to raise the necessary funds to plan and build the museum.

The commission's Final Report will serve as a guidebook to build broad public support for the museum, obtain substantial bipartisan support in Congress, open the door to major funders, including corporations, foundations and selected individuals, and to stimulate a variety of museum constituency organizations to sustain the museum over time.

### **Funding**

It could cost \$750 million to plan and build the proposed NMAP telling the story of every group.

The NMAP plans to follow the model of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum and not use federal tax dollars to create the museum. All of the money to plan and build the USHMM came from private donations. The National Museum of African American History and Culture had a 50-50 split with half of it funded through federal appropriations and the other half raised by the Smithsonian from private sources. The federal government did provide the land for both museums. The NMAP will also seek to have a plot of federal land in Washington transferred to it.

We envision raising the necessary funds the following ways:

- Obtain gifts from foreign governments, but with a cap of \$20 million so that no one nation is giving an inordinate amount. Donating nations would be honored on a wall in the museum. Accepting gifts from foreign governments will require a provision in the museum's authorizing legislation to permit this. The Kennedy Center was allowed to accept gifts from foreign governments.
- Obtain large gifts of \$1 million and up from corporations, foundations and wealthy individuals.
- Open fundraising to the general public for gifts of any size.

The museum will also raise a large endowment to help defray operating expenses. Additional income would come from museum components and programs such as its bookstore and gift shop, restaurants, special events and other programs. It could rent space for special occasions, have an energetic membership and subscription program, obtain grants from foundations and agencies and maintain a vigorous ongoing fundraising effort.

## **HOW: NMAP PRESIDENTIAL COMMISSION**

### **Presidential Decision**

With encouragement from bipartisan members of Congress along with a broad spectrum of American ethnic, nationality and minority groups and having answered all questions from the White House about the proposed NMAP and the Presidential Commission, our goal is to have the President establish the Commission by a Presidential Executive Order. The order would outline the scope, membership and mission of the Commission and the subsequent appointment of members to the Commission.

With the publicity generated by this effort, we anticipate broad support for the Presidential Commission from Americans regardless of when they, or their ancestors, migrated or immigrated to this land or nation; from museumgoers of all stripes; from immigration reform advocates; and from a broad swath of Congress.

## **COMPETING CONCERNS: NMAP**

### **Other Museums**

When presented with the idea of the NMAP, people sometimes ask about other museums as though they might already tell some of the story about the making of the American People. These museums include:

National Museum of African American History and Culture – This is the only national museum now that tells a part of the NMAP's story. It tells the 500-year history of slavery and its aftermath in America.

NOTE: That story is told in the context of African American history and the NMAP would tell that same story in the context of every group's history. No other group has its story about becoming Americans told in a national museum in Washington or about coming to this land and nation and becoming Americans, not any group from Europe, Asia or the Americas.

National Museum of the American Indian – It is a great museum exploring many facets of Native American history and culture through a range of special exhibitions.

NOTE: NMAI doesn't tell the grand sweep of history of first peoples coming to this land and how the great tribal cultures and civilizations were established throughout the Western Hemisphere prior to first significant European contact in 1492. This seldom told and little understood story about peoples that prevailed in the Western Hemisphere and throughout North America before 1492 is an integral part of the history of the American people.

Contemporary research indicates that there were probably more people living in the Americas than in Europe when Columbus landed. The people living here had transformed the land so completely that when Europeans arrived in the hemisphere, it had already been massively 'landscaped' by humans. Using the latest findings from the fields of archeology, genetics, history, linguistics, demography, geography, anthropology, and others, the NMAP would portray the long history of human settlement and accomplishment before 1607 through today.

National Museum of American History – This museum has the greatest collection of Americana anywhere. When people speak of the Smithsonian being America's attic, they are essentially talking about this museum. It is a collections-based institution with trucks and busses in its basement and collections that include first-ladies' gowns, pop culture, industrial and technological accomplishments, and it has special exhibitions that touch on a wide variety of American history and culture.

NOTE: Because of its name, many visitors to this museum believe they will get that broad story of American history, but it simply isn't there and visitors enjoy the array of fascinating artifacts it contains. The NMAH is not a story-telling museum like the

USHMM or the NMAAHC and doesn't present the history of the nation or of the American People in a chronological fashion.

Ellis Island Immigration Museum – Located on Ellis Island in New York Harbor, the primary focal point of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century immigration to the United States from Europe, the museum is, at its core, an historic place museum. It houses exhibitions on the subject of immigration from 1550 to 1890 called the Peopling of America Center, and another exhibition about post-1954 immigration.

NOTE: The exhibitions focus is more on the pedantic approach to immigration with themes such as leaving, transportation modes, arriving. It doesn't incorporate the dramatic story-telling techniques of the NMAAHC and the USHMM.

State and Local Ethnic, Nationality and Minority History Museums -- Part of the Museum's mission would be to encourage and assist communities throughout the nation to develop cultural institutions that tell the stories of all the people who founded and built their cities, counties, states and regions. The NMAP is expected to be a resource for museums throughout the nation focused on different elements of the NMAP's story about the making of the American People. That assistance could be in the form of expertise in a variety of fields, collections, travelling exhibitions, educational materials and curricula, public programs and, possibly, a grants program.

## **Funding**

The NMAP anticipates approaching many of the same corporations, foundations and wealthy individuals for gifts as do other museums. As the nation's economy continues to expand over the coming years, we believe that there will be sufficient funding available to fund worthy and excellent projects with which funders will want to be associated.

## **COMPETING CONCERNS: NMAP COMMISSION**

### **Other Museums**

Congress last year approved two new national museums in Washington to be built and operated by the Smithsonian Institution. They include:

National Women's History Museum – The legislation creating this museum calls for Congress to provide half the cost of building it and for the Smithsonian and NWHM supporters to raise the other half from private donations.

NOTE: As the NMAP story tells the history of the making of the American People it will fully incorporate women into the story. The Smithsonian, meanwhile, has been expanding its women's history emphasis at several of its museums.

National Museum of the American Latino – In the same legislation creating the NWHM, Congress also created the National Museum of the American Latino. This museum will depict the history, culture and accomplishments of Latinos. Like the Women's History Museum, the Latino Museum will have a 50-50 cost sharing with half of the cost to plan and build the museum coming from federal appropriations and half raised by the Smithsonian and NMAL supporters from private donors.

NOTE: The NMAP will tell the long history of Hispanics and Latinos in the United States. In fact, that is the only story that stretches through all four chapters of the NMAP's story in a significant way. The Smithsonian is currently constructing a permanent Latino exhibition in the NMAH scheduled to open next year. There are 25 Hispanic/Latino organizations supporting the NMAP and 23 eminent scholars who focus on the study of Latino and Hispanic history and culture who support the NMAP.

Smithsonian Institution – The Smithsonian has faced significant financial challenges, primarily with a \$1 billion unexpected cost replacing the entire façade of its Air and Space Museum. The overwhelming success of its NMAAHC has also led to unexpected expenses. Now, with two new museums to build, the perception may exist that the Smithsonian does not have the bandwidth to incorporate a third new museum.

NOTE: The NMAP Commission will work with the Smithsonian to review the role and relationship between the NMAP and the Smithsonian. While the NMAP will be built without federal appropriations for its planning and construction, the governance relationship between the two could be revisited after the NMAP opens some eight years down the line.

## **PRECEDENTS: NMAP**

### **Other Story-telling Museums Like the NMAP**

The NMAP's story, starting some 20,000 years ago, would be told in the manner of our nation's two greatest story-telling museums: The National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC), and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). Walking through the NMAP's permanent exhibition will be like walking through a dynamic documentary of U.S. history where every American will see their own story told at least once along the way.

By most accounts, the NMAAHC and the USHMM are two of the most impactful museums in the nation. The demand to see both requires timed tickets and schools place a high premium on taking their students to both. Visitors to both museums spend considerably more time on their visits than they do at other museums as they take in the story being told. We expect the same at the NMAP.

In other nations, story-telling museums about their people are among the most visited museums in those countries:

Mexico's Museum of Anthropology – In Mexico City, it is the largest and most visited museum in Mexico. It tells the story of the Mexican People from First Peoples and the pre-Columbian period through the colonial period in Mexican history.

Canadian Museum of History – In Quebec, one hall of this museum focuses on First Peoples through the last 500 years of Aboriginal history after European contact and another hall focuses on overall Canadian history. It is the most visited museum in Canada's capital city.

National Museum of Vietnam -- In Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), this museum presents the history of the Vietnamese People from the stone age through 1945.

National Museum of Finland – In Helsinki, this museum tells the story about the Finnish People from the stone age through today.

Museum of the Jewish People – In Tel Aviv, this museum tells the story of the Jewish People from ancient times to the present.

There's no story-telling museum in the United States that tells the full story about the making of the American People from first peoples through today.

## ***PRECEDENTS:* NMAP COMMISSION**

The US Holocaust Memorial Museum got its start with a Presidential Commission to study the feasibility of that museum. It was initiated by President Carter. Elie Wiesel was appointed to chair the commission. It met its deadline to produce its final report in six months.

The report led to creation of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council. It was charged with planning, building the museum and raising *all* of the funds required for that. April 23, 2021 marked the 28<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this innovative museum which, because of its popularity, still requires timed tickets for its permanent exhibition.

## **CONSEQUENCES: NMAP**

### **For the Nation**

The NMAP will become one of our nation's greatest cultural institutions upon opening and we anticipate that it will have an outsized impact on our nation's civics education and a renewed national understanding that we are *all* indeed Americans together. It will help crystalize the shared values embodied in our Constitution that we all share.

The NMAP will become a singular national cultural achievement as it attracts millions of visitors every year and spreads the story of the making of the American People to many millions more and for generations to come. It will be a monumental and ongoing active legacy for its early supporters in a place of prominence in our nation's capital for time immemorial.



## **CONSEQUENCES: NMAP COMMISSION**

### **Immediate Impacts**

By creating a bipartisan commission, it becomes an immediate bipartisan endeavor championed by broad cross sections of Americans.

The commission would be the embodiment, of a national goal to bring *all* Americans together, which the museum literally will do.

Creation of the commission will galvanize support from ethnic, nationality and minority groups throughout the nation, including many groups that might feel as though they've been forgotten.

As the commission focuses on creating a museum telling the dramatic story of the making of the American People and highlighting how most of our ancestors all came from distant lands, including most Americans who arrived only in the last several hundred years, it can help bring context to current and future immigrants and asylum seekers.

America is at its greatest when it is unified around the Constitution and upon our basic values and goals. The commission, working toward a monument to and memorial for all of us will help the nation head in that direction.

The publicity generated by the announcement of the commission and its chair, by the appointment of commission members, and by the release of its final report will build broad popular support. That will help propel the legislation to create the museum and maintain high anticipation for the NMAP telling every American's story.

## RECOMMENDATION

To honor our American ancestors, to bring all Americans together now and to help ensure our national values for our descendants, we recommend that President Biden agree to create a Presidential Commission to study establishment of the **National Museum of the American People**.

Some quotes from founders, presidents and poets:

The bosom of America is open to receive not only the Opulent and respectable stranger, but the oppressed and persecuted of all Nations and Religions ...

George Washington

The portals of the temple we have raised to freedom shall be thrown wide, as an asylum to mankind. America shall receive to her bosom and comfort and cheer the oppressed, the miserable and the poor of every nation and of every clime.

John Jay

Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore, Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me; I lift my lamp beside the golden door.

Emma Lazarus

Our nation is the enduring dream of every immigrant who ever set foot on these shores, and the millions still struggling to be free. This nation, this idea called America, was and always will be a new world – our new world.

George W. Bush

For we know that our patchwork heritage is a strength, not a weakness. We are shaped by every language and culture, drawn from every end of this Earth ...

There's not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America.

Barack Obama

Immigration is the sincerest form of flattery.

Jack Paar

