



# News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Contact:** Molly Kurzius  
212-671-5163  
[mkurzius@resnicowschroeder.com](mailto:mkurzius@resnicowschroeder.com)

Chelsea Beroza  
212-671-5160  
[cberoza@resnicowschroeder.com](mailto:cberoza@resnicowschroeder.com)

## **Former Presidents, First Ladies Join Host Committee to Promote National Archives' 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation**

### ***Honorary Host Committee Chaired by Civil Rights Leader John Lewis***

**Washington, DC** – December 20, 2012 – The Foundation for the National Archives is pleased to announce the formation of a Host Committee to assist the National Archives in promoting a celebration of the 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation.

The Host Committee, chaired by Congressman and Civil Rights leader John Lewis, is a distinguished group of former Presidents of the United States and First Ladies, civic and community leaders, historians, authors, journalists, and celebrities drawn together by their love of history and their dedication to assisting the National Archives and its Foundation in increasing awareness of the important work of our nation's official record keeper.

"We are honored to have the support of Congressman Lewis, our former Presidents, and other distinguished members of our host committee as we mark this important anniversary," said David S. Ferriero, Archivist of the United States. "We invite the public to come to the National Archives for this rare opportunity to see the original Emancipation Proclamation and to learn more about our shared history."

The Archives plans a special three-day viewing of the official Emancipation Proclamation Dec. 30—Jan. 1, 2013, as well as related events beginning in December and continuing throughout the 2013 anniversary year. On January 1, the U.S. Postal Service also will unveil its new Emancipation Proclamation stamp at the National Archives.

In addition to Lewis, the committee includes:

- **Speaker John Boehner**
- **Tom Brokaw**, Special Correspondent, NBC News
- **Lonnie Bunch**, Director, National Museum of African American History and Culture
- **Ken Burns**, Director and Producer, Florentine Films
- **President George H. W. Bush and former First Lady Barbara Bush**
- **President George W. Bush and former First Lady Laura Bush**
- **President Jimmy Carter and former First Lady Rosalynn Carter**
- **President Bill Clinton**
- **The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton**, U.S. Secretary of State
- **Drew Gilpin Faust**, President, Harvard University
- **Eric Foner**, Author and Professor of History, Columbia University
- **Morgan Freeman**, Actor
- **Henry Louis Gates**, Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard University and Director of the W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for African and African American Research
- **Annette Gordon-Reed**, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and Professor of Law and History at Harvard University
- **The Honorable Daniel Inouye**, U.S. Senator for Hawaii (1924-2012)
- **Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.**
- **Sharon D. Malone**, Fellow of American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, Foxhall OB/GYN Associates
- **Thurgood Marshall, Jr.**, Partner, Bingham McCutchen, LLP
- **James McPherson**, American Civil War historian and George Henry David '86 Professor Emeritus of United States History, Princeton University
- **Khalil Gibran Muhammad**, Director, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library
- **The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton**, U.S. Representative for the District of Columbia
- **Libby O'Connell**, Chief Historian, Senior Vice President, Corporate Outreach, History Channel
- **Charles Ogletree**, Director, Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice, Harvard Law School
- **The Honorable Nancy Pelosi**, House Democratic Leader
- **Former First Lady Nancy Reagan**
- **Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon**, Musician, song talker, and scholar
- **Alfre Woodard**, Actress; President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities

In addition to chairing the Host Committee, Congressman Lewis has contributed the foreword to a special National Archives commemorative edition of *The Emancipation Proclamation* book, published by Applewood Books in association with the Foundation for the National Archives.

“The Emancipation Proclamation is one of the most important documents in our nation’s evolution toward guaranteeing freedom and liberty for all of its citizens. Even a century and a half after it was signed, it still has the power to inspire,” said A’Lelia Bundles, President of the Foundation for the National Archives. “I am delighted the Foundation will be working with our partners at the Archives and this wonderful Host Committee to showcase this landmark document and other records celebrating the quest for civil rights. I truly am looking forward to being in the Rotunda on New Year’s Day and imagining our ancestors who began to believe they would be ‘forever free.’”

The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, during the American Civil War, formally proclaiming the freedom of all slaves held in areas still in revolt. The Proclamation clarified and strengthened the position of the Union government, decreased the likelihood of European support of the Confederacy and, as the Union armies extended their occupation of the southern states, brought freedom to the slaves in those states. The Proclamation also invited black men to join the Union Army and Navy, resulting in the enlistment of approximately 200,000 African Americans before the war’s end.

Although the Emancipation Proclamation did not end slavery throughout the nation, it placed the issue squarely on top of the wartime agenda. It added moral force to the Union cause and was a significant milestone leading to the ratification of the 13th Amendment to the Constitution in 1865, formally outlawing slavery nationwide.

To limit the fragile document’s exposure to light, the original Emancipation Proclamation is displayed for only a few days each year. A high-resolution facsimile of the document is on display year round in the National Archives Experience’s “Public Vaults’ exhibition.

To mark the anniversary, the National Archives will present a free special display of the original Emancipation Proclamation from December 30, 2012 through January 1, 2013, in the Archives’ East Rotunda Gallery. The Gallery will remain open to the public late on New Year’s Eve, with an 11:30 p.m. Watch Night performance by Washington Revels Heritage Voices and a midnight bell ringing by Harriet Tubman, portrayed by a historical re-enactor.

On New Year’s Day, Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, musician, song talker, and scholar, will perform a dramatic reading of the Emancipation Proclamation. Family activities will follow.

Beginning in December and continuing throughout 2013, the Archives plans related films, author lectures, and panel discussions, including one on January 24, about the destruction of slavery in the United States. The panel discussion will be moderated by Annette Gordon-Reed, Pulitzer Prize-winning author and

Professor of Law and History at Harvard University. Panelists include historians James McPherson, Eric Foner, Edward Ayers, and James Oakes.

All events will be held at the National Archives Building in Washington, DC, on Constitution Avenue at 9th Street, NW. The building is Metro accessible on the Yellow and Green lines, Archives/Navy Memorial/Penn Quarter station. To verify program dates and times, call the National Archives Public Programs Line at: 202 357-5000, or view the [Calendar of Events](#) online.

Additional information about the Emancipation Proclamation and its preservation at the National Archives can be found online at [EP150.com](#).

***The 150th anniversary celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation is presented in part by the Verizon Foundation.***

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### **About The National Archives**

The National Archives and Records Administration is an independent Federal agency that serves American democracy by safeguarding and preserving the records of our Government, ensuring that the people can discover, use, and learn from this documentary heritage. The National Archives ensures continuing access to the essential documentation of the rights of American citizens and the actions of their government. From the Declaration of Independence to accounts of ordinary Americans, the holdings of the National Archives directly touch the lives of millions of people. The agency supports democracy, promote civic education, and facilitate historical understanding of our national experience. The National Archives carries out its mission through a nationwide network of archives, records centers, and Presidential Libraries, and on the Internet at [www.archives.gov](http://www.archives.gov).

### **About the Foundation for the National Archives**

The Foundation for the National Archives is an independent nonprofit that serves as the National Archives' private-sector partner in the creation of and ongoing support of the National Archives Experience, which includes permanent exhibits, educational programs, traveling exhibits, special events and film screenings, educational literature, and historical/records-related products and media. The Foundation helps the public understand the importance of the holdings of the National Archives by presenting the depth and diversity of the records through award-winning, interactive educational exhibits and programs. It generates financial and creative support for the National Archives Experience from

individuals, foundations, and corporations who share a belief in the importance of innovative civics education.