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Smithsonian Announces \$12 Million Gift from Oprah Winfrey to the National Museum of African American History and Culture

The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture today announced that Oprah Winfrey will donate \$12 million to support the capital campaign of the new museum. Combined with her \$1 million gift in 2007, this brings Winfrey's total contribution to \$13 million, the museum's largest donation to date. Winfrey, chairman and CEO of OWN, the Oprah Winfrey Network, has been a member of the museum's advisory council since 2004.

In recognition of her generous gift, the museum's theater will be named the Oprah Winfrey Theater. One of the largest spaces in the museum, the 350-seat theater will be a forum in the nation's capital for performers, artists, educators, scholars, authors, musicians, filmmakers and opinion leaders. The theater's programs will enable audiences to gain a broader understanding of how African American history and culture shape and enrich the country and the world.

Winfrey's gift marks a significant milestone in the museum's fundraising campaign. Design, construction and exhibitions are expected to cost \$500 million, half provided by congressional funding and the remainder raised by the museum. Currently under construction on a five-acre site adjacent to the Washington Monument, the 19th Smithsonian museum is expected to open in late 2015.

"We are inspired and profoundly grateful for Ms. Winfrey's generosity at this important time," said Lonnie G. Bunch III, founding director of the museum. "Her gifts will forever be associated with harnessing the power of art and creative expression to build bridges between cultures and enrich people's lives. Programming at the Oprah Winfrey Theater will mirror the museum's commitment to use African American history and culture as a lens to see what it means to be an American and to help all Americans remember."

“I am so proud of African American history and its contributions to our nation as a whole,” said Winfrey. “I am deeply appreciative of those who paved the path for me and all who follow in their footsteps. By investing in this museum, I want to help ensure that we both honor and preserve our culture and history, so that the stories of who we are will live on for generations to come.”

Winfrey is chairman and CEO of OWN, which develops original programming for TV and digital platforms. She is the founder of *O, The Oprah Magazine* and a channel on SiriusXM satellite radio. In addition, Winfrey is a leading philanthropist who has awarded hundreds of grants through her private philanthropy, [The Oprah Winfrey Foundation](#).

“At its heart, the National Museum of African American History and Culture is a showcase for a richer, fuller picture of the American experience,” said Smithsonian Secretary Wayne Clough. “The Oprah Winfrey Theater will bring untold stories alive through films, live performances, artistic expression and public dialogue. The new theater’s designation could not be more fitting, as Ms. Winfrey’s name is synonymous with generosity, education, excellence and the arts.”

About the Museum

The National Museum of African American History and Culture was established as a Smithsonian museum by an Act of Congress in 2003. It will be the nation’s largest and most comprehensive cultural destination devoted exclusively to showcasing African American life, art, history and culture and the national place for visitors to fully appreciate the broader American story.

The legislation also established a Council to advise the museum on a range of issues, including the planning, design and construction of the building; its administration; and the acquisition of objects for the museum’s collections. The council co-chairs are Linda Johnson Rice, president and CEO of Johnson Publishing Company Inc., and Richard D. Parsons, former chairman of Citigroup. Other members of the Council are:

- Rep. Xavier Becerra (D-Calif.), U.S. House of Representatives
- Willie Brown, Jr., former mayor of San Francisco
- Laura W. Bush, former First Lady of the United States of America
- James Ireland Cash, Jr., retired professor and senior associate dean of Harvard Business School Publishing
- Kenneth I. Chenault, chairman and CEO of American Express Co.
- G. Wayne Clough, secretary, Smithsonian Institution
- Ann M. Fudge, retired chairman and CEO of Young & Rubicam Inc.
- Allan C. Golston, president, U.S. Programs, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
- James A. Johnson, vice chairman of Perseus LLC
- Robert L. Johnson, founder and chairman of RLJ Companies and founder of Black Entertainment Television Inc.

- Quincy D. Jones, CEO of Quincy Jones Productions Inc.
- Ann Dibble Jordan, executive committee member, National Symphony Orchestra
- Michael L. Lomax, president and CEO of the United Negro College Fund
- Brian T. Moynihan, CEO of Bank of America
- Homer Alfred Neal, director of the University of Michigan Atlas Project and professor of physics
- E. Stanley O’Neal, former chairman and CEO of Merrill Lynch & Co. Inc.
- Samuel J. Palmisano, chairman and CEO of IBM Corp.
- Gen. Colin L. Powell, former U.S. Secretary of State
- Franklin D. Raines, former chairman and CEO of Fannie Mae
- Ruth J. Simmons, president of Brown University
- Gregg W. Steinhafel, chair, CEO and president of Target
- Patricia Q. Stonesifer, vice chair, Smithsonian Institution Board of Regents
- H. Patrick Swygert, president emeritus of Howard University
- Anthony Walters, executive vice president of United Health Group

While its building is under construction, the museum is presenting exhibitions in its gallery at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History. Its current exhibition, “Changing America: The Emancipation Proclamation, 1863 and The March on Washington, 1963” explores the historical context of these two events, their accomplishments and limitations, and their impact on the generations that followed. It will remain open to the public through Sept. 15.

For more information about the exhibition and the museum, visit the museum’s [website](#).

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