

NATIONAL HISTORY DAY AT NMAAHC

THE GREAT NMAAHC TOPIC HUNT



Explore the online collection of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) to find potential project topics on individuals, groups, and events that connect to the 2022 contest theme: *Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences.*

NATIONAL
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AMERICAN
HISTORY &
CULTURE

✶ Smithsonian

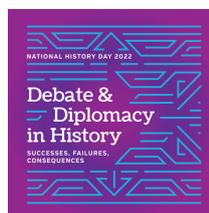
Looking for a Topic for 2022?

This year's National History Day theme is ***Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences.***

"**Debates** are often formal or informal meetings where people argue opposing sides. **Diplomacy** usually means negotiating, compromising, and communicating with people or nations to find a nonviolent solution. Debate and diplomacy can occur independently or be intertwined. Can diplomacy lead to new debates? Can debates lack diplomacy? You have the chance to explore how debates and diplomacy have happened and how they have impacted the past and present." (NHD 2022 Theme book)

You can choose any topic from local, state, national, or international history, as long as it fits within the theme. We suggest your topic be at least 15 to 20 years in the past (so no earlier than 2006) to be considered historical enough to create a project. The 15-to-20-year time frame will allow you to explore the short-term and long-term impact(s) of your topic, and there will likely be more primary and secondary resources available.

We at the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) have created this activity to help you identify possible topic ideas from our galleries. You will conduct basic internet research and use "The Collection," our online database at NMAAHC, to answer the questions.



How to Use this Topic Hunt

1. The questions are multi-layered. Conduct basic internet research to identify the answer to the main question.
2. Use the [NMAAHC Collection database](https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/collection) to find the object associated with the subject, group, place, or event from the main question.
3. You may choose to answer the supporting questions that will help you consider how the main question's answer might be a potential topic and how it connects to the 2022 theme. You may need to conduct basic internet research to answer some supporting questions.
4. If something interests you, then go back to complete the object and supporting questions for a deeper dive into that topic. You do not have to answer all of the questions. We do encourage you to answer all the main questions so that you experience a range of potential ideas for a project topic.
5. You can answer the questions by downloading and printing this booklet, or writing in a personal journal.

Click here to access the [NMAAHC Collection database](https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/collection)
(<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/collection>)

Main Question 

1. Who am I? In 1759, I was born a free man in Massachusetts. I gained wealth as the owner of an international shipping company.

1. In 1780, I demanded Massachusetts legislature give me the right to vote with this object. What was it?

2. Who else signed this object with me?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of communication in history?

Object and Supporting Questions 

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History Galleries

Slavery and Freedom

This exhibition explores the complex story of slavery and freedom which rests at the core of our nation's shared history. The exhibition begins in 15th century Africa and Europe, extends up through the founding of the United States, and concludes with the nation's transformation during the Civil War and Reconstruction.



1. Who am I? I was born enslaved in Maryland around 1818. During the American Civil War (1861 – 1865), I advocated for the enlistment of African American as combat soldiers into the Union Army.

2. Who am I? I was born free in Maryland in 1731. I educated myself in various subjects, including mathematics, and built my own clock with such knowledge.

3. Who are we? We established our society in 1817 to send free African Americans back to Africa rather than have them remain free in the United States.

1. In 1863, I recruited African American men for military enlistment with this object.

2. How many others signed this object with me? Name two or three others.

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. In 1793, I authored this document that includes astronomical data and tide tables.

2. Which president did I correspond with and debate about slavery and the place of African Americans in society?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. This object shows someone's relationship with the group. What is it?

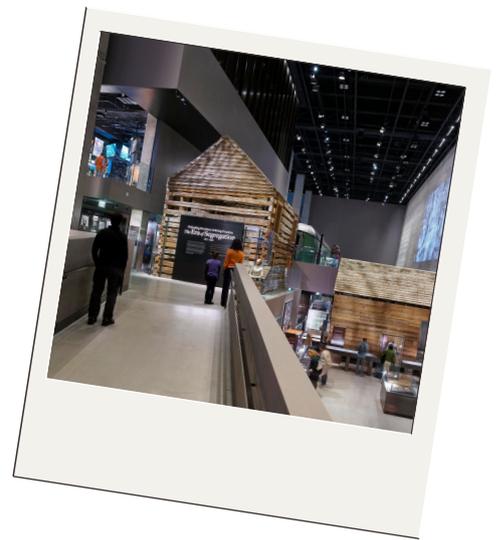
2. Which president signed this document?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

History Galleries

The Era of Segregation

This exhibition explores the years following the end of Reconstruction to show how the nation struggled to define the status of African Americans. This period represents a critical era for the United States and for African Americans. It puts to the test whether African Americans would have full citizenship rights after more than 250 years of enslavement.



1. Who am I? I came to the United States in 1916. I established the Universal Negro Improvement Association and believed in Pan-Africanism.

2. Who are we? We were established in 1935 in Washington D.C. with the mission to advance opportunities and the quality of life for African American women, their families, and communities.

3. Who am I? I was born enslaved in 1856 in Virginia (now West Virginia). By 1890, I was a leader within the African American community who preached education and self-improvement would help African Americans achieve civil rights and equality.

1. In 1919, I advertised my new shipping company with this document. What is it?

2. What was the purpose of this company?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. Who were the founders of this organization?

2. This object documents the history of the organization through pictures, clippings, and other memorabilia. What am I? Who is the author?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. In 1900 I founded the National Negro Business League, and in 1907 I pushed this document about it.

2. What do I discuss in this document?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

History Galleries

1968 and Beyond

A *Changing America: 1968 and Beyond* explores contemporary black life through stories about the social, economic, political, and cultural experiences of African Americans. From the death of Martin Luther King, Jr. to the second election of Barack Obama, the coverage is broad. Large scale graphics and original artifacts lead visitors from the Black Arts Movement to Hip Hop, the Black Panthers to "Yes We Can," and Black is Beautiful to #BlackLivesMatter.



1. What am I? I was the physical location in Washington D.C. for this campaign advocated by Martin Luther King, Jr. that addressed poverty in the United States.

2. Who am I? I 1968, I became the first African American woman elected to the United States Congress. In 1972, I became the first woman and African American to run for president.

3. What am I? In the 1960s and 70s, this movement saw students demanding Black studies included in higher education curriculum to increase understanding of the African American experience.

1. This object was created on a stretch of plywood.

What is it?

2. What are some of the topics, objects, or people that you can see on this object? What do you think they mean?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. This object was used to promote my campaign, and it was printed with my image and slogan. What do you think the slogan means?

2. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. The document details the first meeting of this group founded in 1975 to advocate for Black studies. What is the document? What is the group?

2. Where did this event take place?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

COMMUNITY GALLERIES



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Community Galleries

Making a Way

In this exhibition, themed stories show how African Americans crafted possibilities in a world that denied them opportunities. Taking its inspiration from a popular African American expression, *Making a Way Out of No Way* explores themes of agency, creativity, and resilience through personal stories of African Americans who challenged racial oppression and discrimination and created ways out of "no way."



1. Who am I? I operated a famous hotel named after myself and opened in Washington D.C. in 1869. In 1876, an infamous compromise that essentially ended Reconstruction was debated here.

2. Who are we? This group was established in 1833 by William Lloyd Garrison and others.

3. What am I? This company with an integrated workforce was founded in 1942 by Howard "Skippy" Smith, a stunt pilot and entrepreneur.

1. What are we? These objects were standard to a dining room service in a hotel. What are we made of?

2. What was the compromise debated here in 1876?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. In 1842, the group published this annual document to raise awareness about slavery and included calendars, astronomical data, literature, art, and advertisements. What is it?

2. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. This object is one of the standard items produced by this company. What does it do? What was it made of?

2. Where was this company located? What war did this company operate through?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

Community Galleries

The Power of Place

A sense of place has deeply shaped African American history and culture. A multifaceted range of African American communities and identities have formed and changed in all corners of the country and in turn influenced the regions around them.



1. Who am I? From the late 1940s to the 1970s, I photographed the African American community of Greenville, Mississippi.

2. What am I? I am a newspaper named after a major city in Illinois. Robert S. Abbott founded me in 1905. I became the largest black-owned newspaper in the United States.

3. What town am I? I am a community established on Martha's Vineyard that was a resort town for African Americans during Jim Crow and segregation.

1. This object helped to document the lives of African American community photographically. What is it?

2. How did this object help to combat the racist notions of Jim Crow?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. This item of Venice Spraggs was used to put her images into the newspaper. What is it? Who was Venice Spraggs?

2. How was the Great Migration connected to this newspaper?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. When was the town founded? Why was it founded?

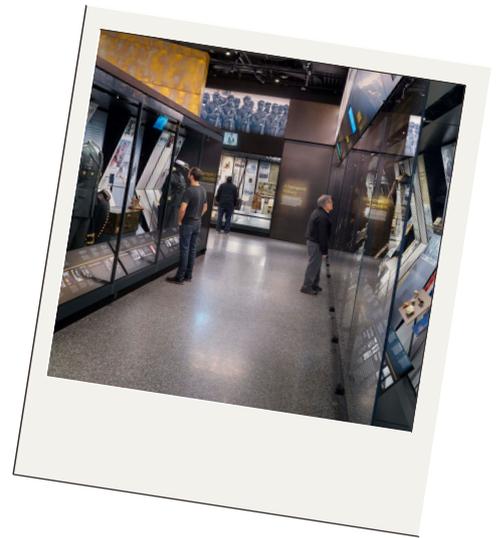
2. Search the Collection for a sign labeled "Shearer Cottage"? What is the cottage? When was it founded?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

Community Galleries

Double Victory

Double Victory: The African American Military Experience conveys a sense of appreciation and respect for the military service of African Americans from the American Revolution to the current War on Terror. It establishes an understanding that the African American military experience shapes opportunities for the greater community and has profoundly shaped the nation.



1. What am I? In 1942, the *Pittsburg Courier* began to run this slogan, "Democracy at Home-Abroad," on its front pages as part of this campaign.

2. Who am I? On April 4, 1967, I gave a speech called "Beyond Vietnam" at Riverside Church in New York City.

3. Who are we? This organization was formed by veterans of wars that included: the Spanish American War (1898), the Philippine-American War (1899 - 1902), and the China Relief Expedition (1900).

1. This personal object was created to support this campaign. What is it made of? How does the design reflect the campaign's ideals?

2. What does this object tell you about the African American experience during the Second World War (1939-1945)?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. This object is a recording of the speech that I have in person. What is it? Why do you believe this object was created?

2. What were views in the African American community toward the draft?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. This object was awarded to members of this organization. What is made of?

2. How did African Americans impact the military during this period?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

Community Galleries

Sports

Sports: Leveling the Playing Field explores the contributions of athletes, both on and off the field. Some athletes have been symbolic figures of black ability, while others have taken their activism beyond the court to the courtroom, boardroom, and the newsroom.



1. Who am I? I participated in the Rome Olympics of 1960 in track and field. I became the first American woman to win three gold medals in one Olympics.

2. Who are we? We participated in the Barcelona Olympics of 1992 in basketball. This is the first time that these sorts of players were featured on an Olympic basketball team.

3. Who am I? I was the first African American tennis player to participate in international tennis competitions and was the winner of five Wimbledon titles.

1. This document details the events held in my hometown upon my return from the Olympics. What am I? Where is my hometown?

2. What condition did I make my hometown agree to hold this event?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. Members of this group sign this object. What two names are shown? What are their positions in the group?

2. What sort of players were featured for the first time on an United States Olympic basketball team?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. In 1956, I was given this object by the Service Sports Control Board of Pakistan. What is inscribed on the object?

2. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

CULTURE GALLERIES AND TEMPORARY AND DIGITAL EXHIBITS



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Culture Galleries

Cultural Expressions

The exhibition introduces visitors to the broad concept of African American and African diaspora culture and five ways through which that culture is expressed. The five forms of expression presented in *Cultural Expressions* are Style: Image and Identity; Foodways: Culture and Cuisine; Artistry: Craftsmanship and Creativity; Language: The Power of the Word; and Movement: Gesture and Social Dance.



1. Who are we? We were founded by Thomas F. Freeman at this institution in Texas and have become renowned internationally for our skills in the Forensic Arts.

2. Who are we? We were led by Professor Melvin B. Tolson of Wiley College and were undefeated in the Forensic Arts from 1929 to 1939.

3. Who am I? I was a famous chef from New Orleans, Louisiana. I was known as The Queen of Creole cuisine. I cooked for civil rights leaders and presidents.

1. This object was awarded to this group in the women of this group in 1967.

2. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. This object belongs to the first female member of this group. It records her time at Wiley College and as part of this group.

2. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. What am I? I wore this signature piece of clothing of persons in my profession. What color is it?

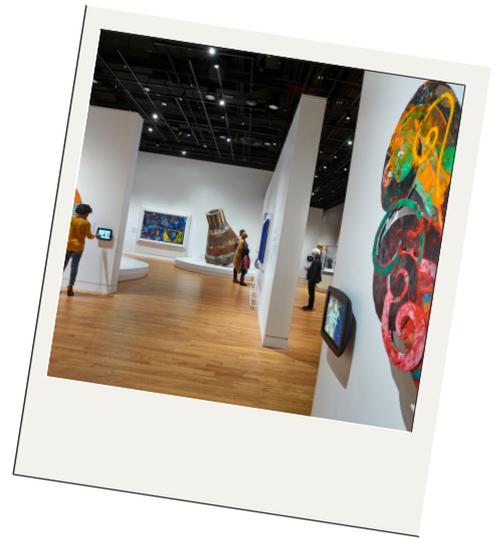
2. What was the name of my restaurant in New Orleans?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

Culture Galleries

Visual Arts

Visual Art and the American Experience is the only permanent art exhibition on the Smithsonian Mall dedicated to illustrating the critical role American artists of African descent played in shaping the history of American art. The exhibition contains various modes of fine art production, including painting, sculpture, work(s) on paper, art installations, mixed media, photography, and digital media.



1. Who am I? I am a fine arts photographer and abstract expressionist painter. I received my BFA in photography from Ohio University. I worked with Gordon Parks and Henri Clarke.

2. Who am I? I was born in 1929 in Albany, Georgia. I am a painter and photographer who was one of the founding members of AfriCOBRA in Chicago in 1968.

3. Who am I? I was an American and Mexican artist known for my sculptures and prints featuring African American women. In 1946, I moved to Mexico. In the 1950s, the U.S. government investigated me for my bold artwork and political affiliations.

1. In 1983, I created this object to support the resistance to apartheid in the Johannesburg neighborhood in this town in South Africa?

2. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. In 1972, I created this object that depicts Angela Davis and her participation in the fight for civil rights. How does this object combine art and speech?

2. What was the impact of this artwork on the Black Power Movement?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. In 1946, I created this object that depicts an African American woman. What was it made of?

2. What groups and agencies investigated me while I lived in Mexico? Why?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

Culture Galleries

Musical Crossroads

Musical Crossroads tells the story of African American music from the arrival of the first Africans to the present day. In exploring how the intermingling of musical and cultural traditions, styles and beliefs, brought forth new modes of American musical expression, the exhibition expands the definition of African American music to include African American music-makers in all genres and styles.



Who are we? During the First World War, we were a part of the famous "Harlem Hellfighters" and are credited with bringing jazz to Europe.

1. This object displays this group in action on the European Front lines. Where object the image take place? Who is the audience for this group?

2. Search the NMAAHC Collection for examples of more of this group's music.

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

Who am I? I moved to Paris in 1925 to perform in La Revue Nègre. During World War Two, I was a spy for the French Resistance. I also was involved in the Civil Rights Movement during the 1950s and 60s.

1. This object advertises for a performance at the Strand Theater in 1951. Why do you believe they were "now the rage of America"?

2. How did I participate in the French Resistance during the Second World War?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

3. In 1956, amid the Cold War, the United States Department created the Jazz Ambassador program to use jazz as a cultural influence to promote democracy and the interests of the United States around the world. I was the first jazz musician hired to become a jazz ambassador.

1. This object displays me performing in which middle eastern country in 1956. What is the country?

2. Why do you think the State Department wanted to use jazz to promote democracy? How does this connect to the Civil Rights Movement?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

Culture Galleries

Taking the Stage

Taking the Stage explores the history of African Americans in theater, film, and television to celebrate their creative achievements, demonstrate their cultural impact, and illuminate their struggles for artistic freedom and equal representation.



1. What am I? This group was founded in 1969 by Arthur Mitchell and Karel Shook. What does this group practice?

2. Who am I? In 1954 I founded this group with a vision that would transform African American involvement in dance. My group gained the name "Cultural Ambassador to the World" from our various international tours.

3. Who am I? I was one of the most celebrated Shakespearean actors of the 19th century. I got my start with William Brown's African Theater in New York in the early 1820s.

1. Ingrid Silva dyed this object while she was a part of this group. Why do you think she did this?

2. Where did this group go on tour internationally?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

1. This object visually documents the group with names and notes from 1993. Who are some of the members?

2. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

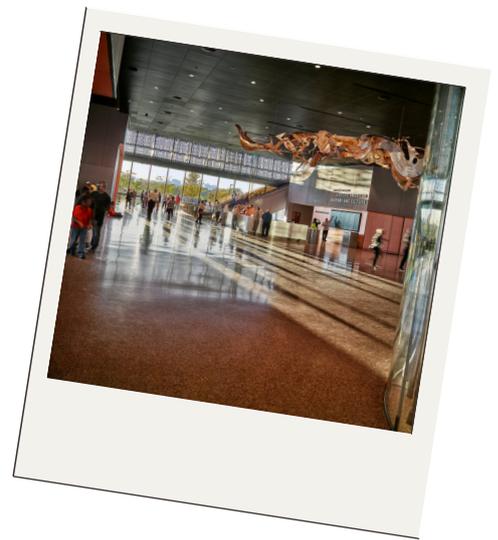
1. This object advertises for a performance of what tragedy? Where is the performance held, and in what year?

2. From what countries did I receive awards from?

3. How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?

NMAAHC Temporary and Digital Exhibits

1. Make Good the Promises*
2. Chez Baldwin
3. Now Showing



1. *Who am I? I was born free in North Carolina in 1827. I became the first African American to serve in the United States Congress.*

1. **This object depicts me in the early 1870s. What is it?**
2. **What state did I serve? In what chamber of Congress did I serve? What is the story of my election?**
3. **How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?**

2. *Where am I? Beginning in 1961, James Baldwin lived in this nation that sits on two continents on and off for nearly ten years. He often made its capital city his home.*

1. **This object shows James Baldwin with members of the United States military. Which branch of the military is he with? What else is shown in the object?**
2. **What are some of the works that James Baldwin produced from 1961 – 1971, and how might they have been connected to this place that he lived for a decade?**
3. **How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?**

3. *What movie am I? In 1937 I premiered and was billed as the first "all-colored" western musical. My story highlighted the African American cowboy experience and countered the image of an all-white American west.*

1. **This object helped to promote the film in a colorful fashion. What is it? What scenes are depicted on this object? Why do you think they were chosen?**
2. **Find a synopsis of this film. What is this film about?**
3. **How do you believe this object explores the theme of debate and diplomacy in history?**

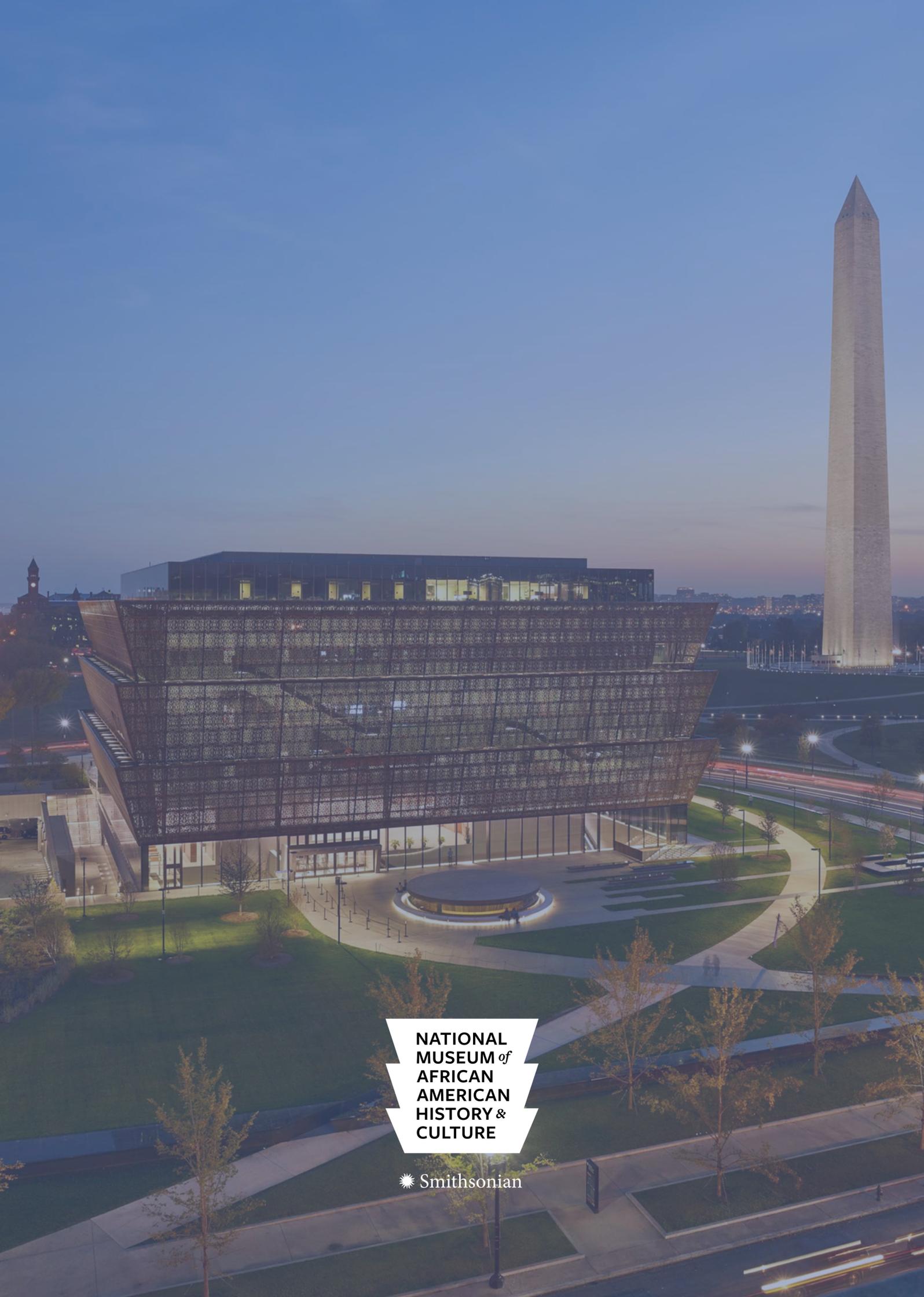
*Our newest temporary exhibition, *Make Good the Promises: Reclaiming Reconstruction and Its Legacies*, will open in Fall 2021.

YOUR FINAL THOUGHTS

List two or three objects you found interesting and why.

What is something that you learned?

Write two or three possible project topics to explore.



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