

Weekly Address: Celebrating the National Museum of African American History and Culture

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Hi everybody. This weekend, we'll dedicate the newest American icon on our National Mall – the National Museum of African American History and Culture. It's a beautiful building, five stories high and some 70 feet below the ground, situated just across the street from the Washington Monument.

And this museum tells a story of America that hasn't always taken a front seat in our national narrative. As a people, we've rightfully passed on the tales of the giants who built this country. But too often, willful or not, we've chosen to gloss over or ignore entirely the experience of millions upon millions of others.

But this museum chooses to tell a fuller story. It doesn't gauze up some bygone era or avoid uncomfortable truths. Rather, it embraces the patriotic recognition that America is a constant work in progress; that each successive generation can look upon our imperfections and decide that it is within our collective power to align this nation with the high ideals of our founding.

That's what you'll see inside. You'll see it in the shackles of an enslaved child and in the hope of Harriet Tubman's gospel hymnal. You'll see it in the tragedy of Emmett Till's coffin and in the resilience of a lunch counter stool and in the triumph of a Tuskegee Airplane. You'll see it in the shadow of a prison guard tower and in the defiance of Jesse Owens' cleats and in the American pride of Colin Powell's uniform.

All of that isn't simply the African-American story; it's part of the American story. And so it is entirely fitting that we tell this story on our National Mall, the same place we tell the stories of Washington and Jefferson and our independence; the story of Lincoln who saved our union and the GIs who defended it; the story of King who summoned us all toward the mountaintop.

That's what we'll celebrate not just this weekend, but in the years and generations ahead – a fuller account of our glorious American story. It's a chance to reflect on our past and set a course for the future. Because here in this country, all of us, no matter what our station in life, have the chance to pick up the pen, and write our own chapter for our time.

Thanks everybody, and have a great weekend.