



COMMUNIQUE

NATIONAL MUSEUM OFFERS UNIQUE PEAK INTO AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY & CULTURE

By Hazel O. Worley Member-At-Large

One of the cornerstones of unionism has been the struggle for just and equal treatment on the job and in our society. CWA Local 1180's Civil Rights and Equity/Community Service Committee, under the leadership of our soon-to-be Local 1180 first African American female union president and former Committee Chair Gloria Middleton, has spent many years educating and equipping committee members with the expertise and skills needed to fight for fair and equitable representation on their jobs.

"She armed us with the importance of knowing our heritage," said current Committee Chair Hazel O. Worley. "African American history and culture have played a large part in shaping our country and formed the basis that allowed Barack Obama, the first African American, to become our country's president. That concept would have been unthinkable even 20 years ago."

On September 30, 2017, Committee members boarded a bus in New York City and ventured to Washington, D.C.'s National Museum of African American History & Culture. This is the 19th and newest museum of the Smithsonian Institution, and is the only national museum devoted exclusively to the documentation of African American life, history, and culture. It was established by an Act of Congress in 2003 following decades of efforts to promote and highlight the contributions of African Americans.

"Looking back on the planning stages of this trip, our desire was that Local 1180 members would be inspired to go on this historical trip and make a donation to the museum as a symbolic act of what the members of the Civil Rights and Equity/Community Services see as the importance in helping to preserve our history," Worley said. "We hope the Museum has an impact on generations to come and expands the discussion of contributions made by African Americans throughout history."

This one-of-a-kind museum sits near the Washington Monument (on the last buildable National Mall parcel), and has become the hottest ticket in the nation's capital. More than three million visitors have walked through its doors since former President Barack Obama inaugurated the building in 2016. Generations in the making, the museum's become a popular cultural, historical, educational and architectural monument for the African American experience.

The museum chronicles prominent citizens, events, accomplishments and contributions via a 40,000-artifact permanent collection, including bibles, documents and fashion, and insightful public programs that educate visitors about historic and contemporary issues from the African American narrative.

Early efforts to establish a federally owned museum featuring African-American history and culture can be traced to 1915, although the modern push for such an organization did not begin until the 1970s. After years of little success, a much more serious legislative push began in 1988 that led to authorization of the museum in 2003. A site was selected in 2006. The museum opened September 24, 2016, in a ceremony led by former U.S. President Barack Obama.

Local 1180 members who attended expressed their gratitude to the Committee for organizing the trip and for giving them an opportunity to experience the museum. "For some the day was a walk down memory lane, and for others, it gave them pride for their accomplishments and was truly a memoir of how far we have come as history makers," Worley said.

The Civil Rights and Equity/Community Services Committee thanks Committee Chair Gloria Middleton for her many years of dedication.