Writing a New History

When historians pick up their pens to write the story of the 21st century, let them say that it was your generation who laid down the heavy burdens of hate at last and that peace finally triumphed over violence, aggression, and war. So I say to you, walk with the wind, brothers and sisters, and let the spirit of peace and the power of everlasting love be your guide.

John R. Lewis (1940–2020)
U.S. Representative (Georgia—5th District)
Excerpt from Lewis’ essay published July 30, 2020
Our Mission

The 400 Years of African American History Commission (400 YAAHC) is a Federally appointed committee, operating independently as established by the Secretary of the Interior and administered by the National Park Service. The Commission was established in the 400 Years of African American History Commission Act (Public Law 115-102) to coordinate the 400th anniversary of the first documented arrival of enslaved Africans in the English colonies. The Commission’s purpose is to plan, develop, and carry out programs and activities throughout the United States as listed to the right.

Commissioners appointed to serve are left to right: Secretary Lonnie Bunch, Mr. Glenn Freeman, Dr. Joseph Green, Dr. Cheryl T. Grills, Ms. Kay Coulson, Dr. Gwendolyn Wilson Diggs, Dr. Kirsten Buick, and Dr. H. Patrick Swygert.

- Recognize and highlight the resilience and cultural contributions of Africans and African Americans over 400 years;
- Acknowledge the impact that slavery and laws that enforced racial discrimination had on the United States;
- Encourage civic, patriotic, historical, educational, artistic, religious, and economic organizations to organize and take part in anniversary activities;
- Assist states, localities, and nonprofit organizations to further the commemoration; and coordinate public scholarly research about the arrival of Africans and their contributions to the United States

The National Alliance of Faith and Justice (NAFJ) serves as the official nonprofit partner of the Commission.
Many things matter in addressing disparities. By supporting an evidenced based intervention effort like afterschool and mentoring programs offered through PEN OR PENCIL (POP), culture, racial socialization and positive youth development for African American and other youth is addressed.

POP, founded in 2005 by the National Alliance of Faith and Justice and endorsed by the National Council for the Social Studies, is adopted by the 400 Years of African American History Commission as a history-based mentoring approach and formal member of the National Park Service (NPS) National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program and the NPS African American Civil Rights Network.

Students are encouraged to embark upon a personal journey, particularly those traditionally underrepresented in various areas. They are encouraged to pursue the freedom to excel and thrive as well as to discover a sense of identity, appreciation of heritage, and the determination to contribute to their families and communities.
The 400 YAAHC was selected by the National Black Caucus of State Legislators and has received the 2022 David P. Richardson Jr. National Nation Builder Award for its work in using history in education and outreach, advancing youth leadership, and promoting the contributions African Americans have made to this country.

Over $1 million dollars in grant awards have been made to over 150 civic, patriotic, historical, educational, artistic, religious, and economic organizations in 30 states.

The Commission has forged collaborative relationships with over 350 local, regional, and national organizations, municipalities, cultural, and other entities and institutions in the United States, to including connections made in Alaska, Hawaii, and the Virgin Islands.

As America looks forward to its 250th anniversary, the 400 YAAHC is recognized as a national partner of America 250, the U.S. Congressional commemorative commission formed to facilitate the planning, development, promotion and coordination of observances and activities that will commemorate the historic events that preceded, and are associated with, the United States Semiquincentennial. The 400 YAAHC will collaborate by offering strategic programming designed to inspire Americans to renew and strengthen our commitment to one nation with liberties and justice for all.
400 Years of African-American History Commission

LEADERSHIP TEAM

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Williamsburg, Virginia  
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Director  
Florida State University Civil Rights Institute  
Tallahassee, Florida  
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Mr. Ron Carson  
Co-Founder  
Appalachian African American Cultural Center  
Pennington Gap, Virginia  
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Ms. Addie L Richburg  
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Past Officers

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Founder, The 2019 Movement  
Senior Pastor, St. Paul Missionary Baptist Church  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Mr. Glenn M. Freeman  
National Council of Censors  
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