

FAQs: National Museum of the American People

1. What is the National Museum of the American People?

The museum will tell the story about the making of the American People from the first humans in the Western Hemisphere through today. It will be the embodiment of our original national motto: *E Pluribus Unum* – From Many, One! It is about the people from every corner of Earth who came and made the United States the world's economic, military, scientific and cultural leader.

2. What is the Museum's mission?

The Museum's mission is to advance and disseminate knowledge about the story of the making of the American People, how they created and changed this country. The Museum will enable visitors to take pride in that story and will challenge them to reflect upon moral questions that are raised by it.

3. Whose stories will it tell?

It will tell the immigration and migration histories of *every* ethnic, nationality and minority group in the nation. The museum will tell:

- Who these groups were
- Where they came from
- Why they left their homeland
- How they got here
- When they arrived
- Where they first settled
- Who was already here
- What they encountered
- Where they moved after they arrived
- How they became Americans
- What they contributed
- How they transformed our nation

4. Who will determine how to tell each group's history?

Eminent scholars will provide the intellectual bedrock upon which the Museum will be built. The story will be developed by teams of historians, anthropologists, archeologists, ethnologists, human geographers, sociologists, demographers, geneticists, linguists and others and will be vetted by a wide range of interested individuals and

organizations.

The story will follow a consensus of their views, and include significant mainstream historic and scientific dissenting views. The Museum will ensure the highest standards of scholarship. With force and clarity, it will examine our great accomplishments, avoid mythology and not shy away from unpleasant truths.

5. How will the Museum tell its story?

The story in the Museum's permanent exhibition will be told in chronological fashion in a dramatic, interactive documentary format. A variety of media will be used, including ancient and modern artifacts, film, visuals, dioramas, graphics, text, the latest computer technology and models in a framework that will encourage reflection as visitors absorb the story. The goal is to make this the best story-telling museum in the world telling one of the most amazing stories in human history.

6. How will the story break down chronologically?

We envision the story being told in four chapters:

Chapter I — *The First Peoples Come*: Prehistoric period – 1607

Chapter II — *The Nation Takes Form*: 1607 – 1820

Chapter III — *The Great In-Gathering*: 1820 – 1924

Chapter IV — *And Still They Come*: 1924 – present.

A few groups, such as Native Americans and Latinos, will be represented in all four chapters of the Museum's story. Some groups may only appear in the last chapter and others will witness their stories across multiple chapters.

7. What ethnic and nationality groups back the Museum?

More than 170 organizations representing more than 60 ethnic, nationality and minority groups have formed the Coalition for the National Museum of the American People. They represent people from every significant ethnic group in the nation. American ethnic groups with organizations supporting the NMAP include: African, Arab, Armenian, Asian Pacific, Baltic, Caribbean, Chinese, Czech, Danish, Dominican, Dutch, English, Filipino, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hispanic, Hungarian, Indian, Irish, Italian, Japanese, Jewish, Korean, Latino, Mexican, Native Hawaiian, Norwegian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Salvadoran, Scottish, Slovak, Swedish, Taiwanese, Thai,

Turkish, Ukrainian, Vietnamese and Welsh. In addition, American Indian organizations and the Daughters of the American Revolution back this project.

8. Why should the United States establish this museum?

- Because our Constitution begins "We the People of the United States..." we need this Museum to tell who "We the People" are;
- Because it will be America's first national institution devoted exclusively to telling the full story of the making of the American People;
- Because it will celebrate all of the peoples who came to this land, from the very first to the most recent;
- Because it will foster a sense of belonging to the nation by telling about the mosaic of people that have come here and thus contribute to our national identity;
- Because a museum telling the story of the making of the American People belongs in our nation's capital (Canada and Mexico, have major national museums in their capitals telling the story of their peoples and they're the most visited museums in those nations.);
- Because the full story about the making of the American people is not well known or understood by Americans or foreigners, both will flock to the Museum to see their own group's story and will have a better sense of the American People;
- Because the Museum will be a destination for nearly every school group visiting Washington and will foster learning nationwide through its education and curriculum programs;
- Because the Museum has the potential to become a national pilgrimage destination and could be among the most visited museums in the world;
- Because the Museum will be a resource for state, local and ethnic museums throughout the nation;
- Because the Museum will include a Center for the Advanced Study of the American People fostering further exploration about who we are.

9. What is the immediate goal of the Museum's backers?

The mission of the Coalition for the NMAP is to have a Presidential Study Commission created to explore establishment of the Museum. This commission would study and consider the museum's exhibition, story line, collections, location, governance, components, cost, fund raising and develop a plan of action to build the museum. The commission would also prepare legislation to create an entity responsible for building the museum and raising all of the money to build it. The commission might take as much as nine months to do its job.

10. How will you achieve that goal?

Ethnic organizations, scholars, Senators and Representatives, national opinion leaders and the public will be asked to urge the White House to create the commission.

11. Besides the permanent exhibition, what else will the Museum offer?

Major components of the Museum that could be explored by the proposed commission could include:

- CENTER FOR ADVANCED STUDIES OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE
- NATIONAL GENEALOGICAL CENTER
- COLLECTIONS
- AMERICAN MIGRATION AND IMMIGRATION ARCHIVE AND LIBRARY EDUCATION AND RESOURCE CENTER
- SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS
- TRAVELING AND ONLINE EXHIBITIONS
- FILM CENTER
- PEOPLING OF AMERICA CENTER
- RESTAURANTS
- BOOK STORE AND GIFT SHOP

12. Where will the Museum be located?

The NMAP Coalition hopes the Museum will be in Washington, DC near the National Mall. A favored location is the Banneker Overlook site, an eight-acre slope at the end of L'Enfant Promenade, an extension of 10th Street, S.W. The site is on a direct axis with the Smithsonian's Castle Building and reaches down to Maine Avenue and the Washington, D.C. waterfront across the street from the District's fish

market. It is near the L'Enfant Plaza Metro stop, the only station in the system that serves five lines. The National Park Service, U.S. Commission on Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission favor this location as a future museum site.

13. When will the Museum open?

Once the Presidential Commission is created, the museum could be open within seven years.

14. How much will the Museum cost and where will the money come from?

It could cost upwards of \$500 million. Backers would like to have a provision in the legislation creating the entity to build and raise the money for the museum to allow it to accept gifts from foreign governments. The entity would also seek large gifts from corporations, foundations and wealthy individuals and then seek gifts from the American public. While the federal government would be asked to provide a plot of land for the museum, the museum does not plan to seek federal appropriations to plan, build or operate the museum.

15. What about other great Washington museums such as the National Museum of American History, the National Museum of the American Indian and the National Museum of African American History and Culture? Don't they tell this story?

The National Museum of American History is not a story-telling museum in the literal sense. It is an artifact-based museum. When people refer to the Smithsonian Museum as the nation's attic, they are generally referring to the collections in this museum: American transportation objects, first ladies' gowns, pop culture items and a range of industry-based and American history objects. From time to time the museum has special exhibitions with objects that focus on a particular historic event such as Japanese internment. The NMAH would have to use most of its space to tell the full story of the making of the American People.

The National Museum of the American Indian focuses on Native belief systems of a dozen different tribes and depicts contemporary life at a dozen Indian reservations across the United States and displays a rich collection of American Indian art and presents a varied program of American Indian culture, but there is virtually no history in the NMAI prior to 1492 and it tells very little of their history after first contact with Europeans.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture will be, when it opens in 2016, the first museum on the National Mall to tell any group's story. The story of slavery, segregation and race relations has been a traumatic segment of our nation's history for 400 years. But it is just part of the story of the American People.

16. How did the National Museum of the American People get its start?

The coalition's founding director, Sam Eskenazi, came up with the idea for the museum in the late 1990s and he began developing a detailed proposal and plan of action in 2007. He received immediate, enthusiastic support from historians and ethnographers. He formed the coalition to support the museum during 2009-10. In the 112th and 113th Congresses, Rep. Jim Moran, D-VA, agreed to become lead sponsor of a resolution calling for a commission to study establishment of the museum. The resolution had 48 cosponsors from both political parties.

More information about the NMAP is at www.nmap2015.com.