



News Release

U.S. General Services Administration

Feb. 28, 2006
GS 20216

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GSA APPLAUDS AFRICAN BURIAL GROUND ELEVATION TO NATIONAL MONUMENT

NEW YORK CITY--Construction on an Exterior Memorial at the 200-year-old African Burial Ground began yesterday, in time for President Bush's designation of the National Historic Landmark as a National Monument, the U.S. General Services Administration announced today.

GSA Acting Administrator David Bibb and Northeast and Caribbean Region Administrator Eileen Long-Chelales today celebrated with National Park Service officials and U.S. Secretary of Interior Gale Norton, who announced the new designation at the Ted Weiss Federal Building at 290 Broadway, adjacent to the historic burial site in lower Manhattan.

"This designation ensures that all who visit the African Burial Ground, now and in the future, will understand the many contributions that enslaved African men, woman and children made to the economy, development and culture of Colonial America." Bibb said during today's ceremony.

In 2003, GSA, working with its federal and private sector partners, drew international attention when it succeeded in reburying the 419 human remains and artifacts it exhumed from the burial ground, discovered during GSA's pre-construction excavation for the Weiss Building in 1991. Discovery of the burial ground had a profound impact on African-American descendants, along with the broader cultural and historic preservation communities.

"Today's announcement marks the achievement of a significant milestone in the fulfillment of the federal government's commitment to memorialize the African Burial Ground, " said Eileen Long-Chelales, Regional Administrator, GSA Northeast & Caribbean Region, which is headquartered in New York City. "Many of our GSA associates who have worked on the African Burial Ground project share in this pride."

In addition, with its recent relocation to space adjacent to the burial ground at the Weiss Building, the Office Public Education and Interpretation on the African Burial Ground, now managed by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a New York Public Library component, can now better serve the public.

Since 1991, GSA's significant African Burial Ground Project accomplishments include:

- Completion by Howard University, of Washington, DC, of major **scientific studies**, most recently an archaeological study of the site, all of which are posted at www.africanburialground.gov.
- Partnered with the National Park Service, Army Corps of Engineers, and Howard University to identify **artifacts to reproduce** and display later this year, thanks to the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.
- Engaged the National Park Service to help solicit public opinion, which played a major role in planning and developing the project's final elements, the **Exterior Memorial** and the **Interpretive Center**.
- Selected architect Rodney Leon to design the permanent Exterior Memorial
- Installed seven **art works**, by artists inspired by the burial ground at the Weiss Building.
- Created The **African Burial Ground Web site**, containing information on all aspects of the project.

- Posted links to GSA's **award-winning documentary**, "African Burial Ground," at www.africanburialground.gov.
- Asked the National Park Service to share its expertise on interpretive centers with GSA, as the design and construction move ahead for the future African Burial Ground Interpretive Center.
- Asked the Army Corps of Engineers to collect all **project documentation** and create a plan to preserve it permanently at The Schomburg Center.
- Asked Howard University to hold **dental and DNA samples** from the remains, until they can be preserved permanently in New York.

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GSA is a centralized federal procurement, property management, and policy agency, created by Congress to improve government efficiency and help federal agencies better serve the public. It acquires, on behalf of federal agencies, office space, equipment, telecommunications, information technology, supplies and services. It also plays a key role in developing and implementing government-wide policies. GSA's 12,500 associates provide services and solutions for the office operations