

**NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE
STATEMENT OF SENATOR SAM BROWNBACK**

OVER 200 YEARS AGO, THERE WAS A DREAM THAT WAS AMERICA FOR A GROUP OF INDIVIDUALS WHO WERE BROUGHT TO OUR SHORES IN SHACKLES. A DREAM SO POWERFUL THAT COMPELLED A RACE OF PEOPLE TO FIGHT FOR THE LIBERTY OF OTHERS WHEN THEY WERE IN BONDAGE THEMSELVES. A DREAM THAT NOT ONLY SERVED AS A CATALYST FOR PHYSICAL LIBERATION IN THE AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY BUT REMOVED SOCIETAL SHACKLES FROM OUR CULTURE AND ENABLED US TO REALIZE THE IDEALS SET BEFORE US IN THE CONSTITUTION--THAT ALL MEN ARE CREATED EQUAL UNDER GOD.

TODAY, I AM PROUD TO STAND HERE WITH MY FELLOW KANSANS AND CELEBRATE THE PASSAGE OF THIS BILL. I JOIN ED THE PRESIDENT YESTERDAY AS HE SIGNED THIS LONG-OVERDUE AND MUCH NEEDED BILL. THIS WAS TRULY AN HISTORIC DAY FOR AMERICA.

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK EVERYONE WHO SUPPORTED THE EFFORT TO CREATE THIS MUSEUM. IN FACT, WE HAD TWO KANSANS, BEVERLY CARUTHERS [KA-RUTHERS] THOMPSON OF TOPEKA-- WHO WAS A GRADUATE OF SUMNER HIGH SCHOOL-- AND ERIK SEXTON OF WICHITA SERVED ON THE MUSEUM COMMISSION THAT RECOMMENDED A LEGISLATIVE PLAN OF ACTION TO CREATE

THIS MUSEUM.

THE WORK OF THE COMMISSION AND PARTICULARLY BEVERLY AND ERIC WAS EXEMPLARY AND I COMMEND THEM FOR THEIR TIRELESS EFFORTS AND UNWAVERING SUPPORT FOR THE CREATION OF THIS MUSEUM.

IN FACT, IT WAS AT BEVERLY'S SUGGESTION THAT WE HOLD THE PRESS CONFERENCE HERE AT THIS HISTORIC SCHOOL, FORMERLY SUMNER HIGH SCHOOL, NOW SUMNER ACADEMY OF ARTS AND SCIENCE.

THANK YOU BEVERLY AND ERIK FOR YOUR DEDICATED AND UNWAVERING SERVICE TO THIS EFFORT. TRULY YOUR SERVICE HAS NOT BEEN IN VAIN. AFTER OVER 70 YEARS, WE HAVE FINALLY CREATED A MUSEUM TO HONOR—NATIONALLY— THE CONTRIBUTIONS AND SACRIFICE OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THIS COUNTY.

THIS MUSEUM WILL BE A CATALYST FOR RACIAL RECONCILIATION AND HEALING IN AMERICA. THERE WILL BE MANY TEARS SHED AT THIS MUSEUM. TEARS OF SORROW AND TRIUMPH, TEARS THAT CLEANSE THE SOUL AND HEAL THE WOUNDS, TEARS THAT TRANSCEND RACE, CREED, AND COLOR. WITH THE CREATION OF THIS MUSEUM, WE WILL CELEBRATE A DIFFICULT, RICH AND MAGNIFICENT HISTORY. A HISTORY OF A PEOPLE'S QUEST FOR FREEDOM THAT SHAPED THIS NATION.

I REMEMBER WHEN I MET WITH THE DEAN OF THE AFRO-AMERICAN STUDIES AT HOWARD UNIVERSITY. HE TOLD ME OF A STORY ABOUT HIS GRANDFATHER WHO FINISHED A BOWL THE DAY THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION WAS AUTHORIZED.

HIS GRANDFATHER DECIDED TO KEEP THE BOWL BECAUSE IT NO LONGER WAS THE PROPERTY OF A SLAVE MASTER BUT THE MAN WHO MADE IT—HIS GRANDFATHER. THE DEAN HAS THIS BOWL IN HIS HOME—AN INCREDIBLE PIECE OF HISTORY AND I AM SURE THERE ARE MANY MORE PIECES OUT THERE WAITING FOR A HOME—A NATIONAL HOME AND TODAY WE HAVE ENSURED THAT THERE WILL INDEED BE A HOME FOR SUCH ARTIFACTS.

SPECIFICALLY, THIS BILL CREATES THIS MUSEUM WITHIN THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION—AMERICA’S PREMIER MUSEUM COMPLEX. WE HAVE WORKED VERY HARD WITH THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION TO CRAFT A BILL THAT WILL COMPLIMENT THEIR PROGRAMS—AND INDEED WE HAVE DONE JUST THAT.

THE LEGISLATION OUTLINES A MUSEUM THAT IS VERY SIMILAR TO THE AMERICAN INDIAN MUSEUM, SLATED TO OPEN NEXT YEAR. AND I KNOW THAT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION WILL CREATE ANOTHER NATIONAL TREASURE ONE THAT TELLS THE STORY OF AFRICAN AMERICANS IN THIS COUNTRY—A PROUD HISTORY, A RICH HISTORY.

THIS BILL CHARGES THE BOARD OF REGENTS OF THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION ALONG WITH THE COUNCIL OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM TO PLAN, BUILD AND CONSTRUCT A MUSEUM DEDICATED TO CELEBRATING NATIONALLY AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY– WHICH IS AMERICAN HISTORY.

IN ADDITION, THIS BILL CHARGES THE BOARD OF REGENTS WITH CHOOSING A SITE ON OR ADJACENT TO THE NATIONAL MALL FOR THE LOCATION OF THE MUSEUM.

ADDITIONALLY, THE BILL INSTRUCTS THE DIRECTOR OF THE MUSEUM TO CREATE AND OVERSEE AN EDUCATION AND PROGRAM LIAISON SECTION DESIGNED TO WORK WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS AND MUSEUMS ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN ORDER TO PROMOTE AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY. FINALLY, THE BILL SETS FOURTH A FEDERAL-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FOR FUNDING THE MUSEUM AND CREATES A COUNCIL FOR THE MUSEUM , WHICH WILL BE COMPRISED FROM A MIXTURE OF LEADING AFRICAN AMERICANS FROM THE MUSEUM, HISTORICAL, AND BUSINESS COMMUNITIES.

I DO NOT PRETEND THAT THIS MUSEUM IS A PANACEA FOR RACIAL RECONCILIATION. IT IS HOWEVER, A PRODUCTIVE STEP IN RECOGNIZING THE IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTIONS AFRICAN AMERICANS HAVE MADE TO THIS COUNTRY.

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. ONCE EXPRESSED HIS DESIRE FOR THIS NATION, “THAT THE DARK CLOUDS OF [MISCONCEPTIONS] WILL SOON PASS AWAY AND THE DEEP FOG OF MISUNDERSTANDING WILL BE LIFTED FROM OUR FEAR-DRENCHED COMMUNITIES AND IN SOME NOT TOO DISTANT TOMORROW THE RADIANT STARS OF LOVE AND BROTHERHOOD WILL SHINE OVER OUR GREAT NATION WITH ALL THEIR SCINTILLATING BEAUTY.” WE ARE ONE STEP CLOSER TODAY—GOD BLESS.