



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### LANDMARK EXHIBIT – **SLAVERY AT JEFFERSON'S MONTICELLO: PARADOX OF LIBERTY** – COMING TO AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM, DALLAS AT FAIR PARK SEPT 22-DEC. 31, 2018

*Dallas is first American city to host the updated touring exhibition, which brings to life the story of slavery at Monticello through 300-plus objects, works of art, documents and artifacts unearthed at the storied plantation*

**DALLAS (June 19, 2018)** – A groundbreaking and widely acclaimed exhibition with a powerful message, ***Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello: Paradox of Liberty*** is coming to the **African American Museum, Dallas** at Fair Park (3536 Grand Ave. in Dallas) from Sept. 22-Dec. 31, 2018.

Dallas will be the first city to host the updated touring exhibition, which brings to life the story of slavery at Monticello through more than 300 objects, works of art, documents and artifacts unearthed at the storied plantation. The exhibition features new items never seen outside of Monticello, including a special feature on Sally Hemings, one of the most famous African American women in American history. As an enslaved woman at the age of 16, Hemings negotiated with one of the most powerful men in the nation ensuring she would receive "extraordinary privileges" and achieve freedom for her children. Jefferson fathered at least six children with Hemings, four of whom survived to adulthood.

"I urge everyone to make time to see this exhibition to learn from America's often contradictory history. *Slavery at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello: A Paradox of Liberty* brings to life the personal stories of those slaves owned by the author of the Declaration of the Independence," said T.D. Jakes, senior pastor of The Potter's House and honorary chair of the Dallas exhibition. "The exhibition raises questions about how a new nation – founded on the principles of liberty and equality – could justify 20 percent of its population living in bondage. This is a very compelling presentation with untold stories that everyone needs to see, hear and experience first-hand."

*Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello: Paradox of Liberty* is organized by the **Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello** and the **African American Museum, Dallas** in partnership with the **National Endowment for the Humanities** and in cooperation with the **City of Dallas Office of Cultural Affairs** and **VisitDallas**.

Plans for the exhibition were unveiled earlier today on Juneteenth – an important day in Texas history – marking the emancipation of slaves in Texas on June 19, 1865. Sharing a remarkable perspective was **Gayle Jessup White**, Monticello's community engagement officer and a Hemings family and Jefferson descendant. Joining her and dozens of community and civic leaders were **Dr. Harry Robinson, Jr.**, president and CEO of the African American Museum, Dallas; **Dallas City Councilmember Kevin Felder**; and **Phillip Jones**, president and CEO of VisitDallas. Additionally, **Bishop T.D. Jakes**, visionary pastor of megachurch The Potter's House, author and TV personality, was announced as the exhibition's honorary chair.

"Our sweeping American story, wonderful and woeful as it is, leaves out too many people who have been denied and disregarded, folks who should be returned to our national narrative. This exhibition breathes life into those forgotten individuals, restoring to them their humanity and their place in history," said Jessup White.

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Today's announcement came on the heels of a major new exhibition unveiled June 16 at Monticello in Charlottesville, Virginia. In conjunction with national Juneteenth events, Monticello debuted exhibitions and newly restored spaces, including the opening of the South Wing and *The Life of Sally Hemings* exhibit. This landmark conclusion of a major restoration initiative at Monticello also commemorates 25 years of the ***Getting Word Oral History Project***. Monticello welcomed the largest reunion of descendants of Monticello's enslaved families in modern history and hosted a rare copy of the Emancipation Proclamation generously loaned by David M. Rubenstein.

"This exhibition delivers a powerful message, one that has the potential to educate, inspire and promote greater understanding, which is something we now need more than ever," said Councilmember Felder. "We're so very pleased to bring this to the people of Dallas, Texas and the Southwest."

***Exploring the complicated dynamics of America's founding, how legacies of slavery still shape nation***

*Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello: Paradox of Liberty* is an exhibition that uses Monticello, the home and plantation of Thomas Jefferson, to explore the dilemma of slavery and the lives of the enslaved families and their descendants. The exhibition presents Monticello as a microcosm of the American story – a lens through which to understand the complicated dynamics of America's founding, and the ways in which the legacies of slavery continue to shape the nation.

Thomas Jefferson's iconic words in the Declaration of Independence – "all men are created equal" – inaugurated a new nation defined by principles of freedom and self-government, while a fifth of the population remained enslaved. Jefferson called slavery "an abominable crime," yet he owned 607 people over the course of his lifetime. This exhibition uses the power of place and ideas at Monticello to grapple with the paradox of slavery in an age of liberty. Most notably, *Slavery at Jefferson's Monticello* brings individuals and families out of the shadows of chattel slavery, pulling from more than 50 years of archaeology, documentary research, and oral histories to fill in the critical human dimension missing from many resources on slavery in the United States. Through the exhibition, visitors "meet" members of six families who lived and labored at Monticello, as well as their descendants. Their family stories form a narrative arc from slavery to freedom that reflects the trajectory of the nation at large – an ongoing journey to realize the foundational promise that "all men are created equal."

*Paradox of Liberty* briefly examines Jefferson's views, actions and inaction on slavery, and then focuses on the enslaved individuals and families who lived and labored at Monticello. In addition to objects belonging to Jefferson, more than 300 archaeologically recovered artifacts elucidate the lives and work of six enslaved families, making for a visually rich, powerful presentation. Using material from the *Getting Word Oral History Project*, the exhibition follows the families through Emancipation into the present.

"The popular story, however, is usually told from Jefferson's perspective. The objective of this exhibition is a bit different – to convey her life through her eyes. We want visitors to understand Sally Hemings as a person through her family roles as a mother, daughter and sister," added Jessup White. "The goal is for visitors – actual and virtual – to understand her struggle and the struggle of all enslaved people, intellectually and viscerally. While we will reference and summarize her link with Jefferson and its 200-plus-year controversy, the main story is Sally Hemings and her children."

***African American Museum, Dallas to feature expanded content***

Highlights of the touring exhibition include:

- A featured section on Sally Hemings and her children. Daughter, mother, sister, aunt. Seamstress. Negotiator. Liberator. World traveler. Enslaved woman. Concubine. Inherited property. Mystery. Sally Hemings was all of these things. She is one of the best-known African American women in American history. Sally Hemings had at least six children fathered by Thomas Jefferson. Four survived to adulthood. Two left Monticello in 1822 and passed into white society (before TJ's death in 1826), and the two younger sons were freed in his will upon reaching their majority. In a later account, their son Madison Hemings described his mother as Jefferson's concubine.

- “Picturing Mulberry Row” is a digital recreation of the lost landscape of Mulberry Row, the industrial hub of Jefferson’s plantation that describes how the plantation thoroughfare changed over the course of Jefferson’s lifetime.
- The *Getting Word* film introduces some of the descendants of Monticello’s enslaved families, shares their perspectives on the role of Monticello in their family histories, and highlights the important contributions their families have made towards shaping America. The updated film will feature a new generation of descendants and new footage of descendants on-site at Monticello.
- New descendant stories, recorded by Monticello historians through the *Getting Word Oral History Project* since 2012.
- Slavery at Monticello App: Debuted in 2015, the app makes use of the most recent scholarship on Monticello’s enslaved community and the activities and livelihoods centered on Mulberry Row.

“The integrity and quality of this exhibition are stellar, and it’s a tremendous privilege for the African American Museum, Dallas to partner with the Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello,” said Dr. Robinson. “We are excited to welcome not only visitors – but thousands of schoolchildren – to come learn about this significant period in our country’s history.”

The exhibition began as a partnership between the Thomas Jefferson Foundation at Monticello (TJF) and the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, in Washington, D.C. before embarking on a successful four-venue tour between 2012 and 2015. Described as “groundbreaking” in the *Washington Post*, it attracted a wide, diverse audience, estimated at more than 1.2 million visitors in Washington, Atlanta, St. Louis, and Philadelphia.

The previous venues were the Smithsonian’s National Museum of American History, Washington, D.C.: Jan. 27, 2012-Oct. 14, 2012; Atlanta History Center, Atlanta, GA: Feb. 1, 2013-July 7, 2013; Missouri History Museum, St. Louis, MO: Aug. 10, 2013-March 2, 2014; and the National Constitution Center, Philadelphia, PA: April 9, 2014-Jan. 4, 2015.

“Dallas has become a destination that draws visitors across America and the world,” said Jones. “This exhibition enhances Dallas’ reputation as a multicultural hub promoting diversity, and VisitDallas is excited to play a role in its success, by marketing it to both North Texans and out-of-town visitors.”

#### **TICKETS, KEY INFORMATION AND WEBSITE**

The exhibition’s first stop will be the African American Museum (3536 Grand Ave. at Fair Park in Dallas, Texas) and will run Sept. 22-Dec. 31, 2018. It will continue on to three or four additional venues.

Tickets are \$10 for adults, \$5 for children 3-12, and free for children 2 and under. Also, admission will be free on Thursdays only for seniors 65 and older.

They may be purchased at [MonticelloInDallas.com](http://MonticelloInDallas.com) or at the Museum. The exhibition is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11 a.m.-5 p.m. and closed on Sunday and Monday.

For additional information about Monticello, go to its companion site at [Monticello.org/Slavery-at-Monticello](http://Monticello.org/Slavery-at-Monticello). Also, get the smartphone companion app – *Monticello at Mulberry Row* – at the App Store or Google Play.

**NOTE: FOR PHOTOS AND LOGOS, GO TO [tinyurl.com/MonticelloInDallas](http://tinyurl.com/MonticelloInDallas)**

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**About The Thomas Jefferson Foundation**

The Thomas Jefferson Foundation was incorporated in 1923 to preserve Monticello, the home of Thomas Jefferson, in Charlottesville, Virginia. Today, the foundation seeks to bring history forward into national and global dialogues by engaging audiences with Jefferson's world and ideas and inviting them to experience the power of place at Monticello. Monticello is recognized as a National Historic Landmark, a United Nations World Heritage Site and a Site of Conscience. As a private, nonprofit organization, the foundation's regular operating budget does not receive ongoing government support to fund its twofold mission of preservation and education. About 440,000 people visit Monticello each year. For information, visit [Monticello.org](http://Monticello.org).

**About the African American Museum, Dallas**

The African American Museum, Dallas was founded in 1974 as a part of Bishop College and came to life under the vision of Dr. Harry Robinson, Jr., Founding President/CEO. The Museum has operated independently since 1979. For more than 40 years, the African American Museum has stood as a cultural beacon in Dallas and the Southwestern United States. Located in Dallas' historic Fair Park, the African American Museum is the only museum in the Southwestern United States devoted to the collection, preservation and display of African American artistic, cultural and historical materials that relate to the African-American experience. The African American Museum incorporates a wide variety of visual art forms and historical documents that portray the African American experience in the United States, Southwest, and Dallas. The Museum has a small, but rich collection of African art, African-American fine art and one of the largest African American folk art collections in the United States. Learn more at [aamdallas.org](http://aamdallas.org)

**About the Office of Cultural Affairs**

The Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA) is a division of the City Manager's office and fosters support, partnerships, and opportunities for Dallas citizens, visitors, artists, and arts and cultural organizations.

The OCA works to enhance the vitality of the City and the quality of life for all Dallas citizens by creating an environment wherein arts and cultural organizations thrive and people of all ages enjoy opportunities for creative expression and the celebration of our community's multicultural heritage.

OCA's mission is to establish a cultural system that ensures all Dallas citizens and visitors have an opportunity to experience the finest in arts and culture. Learn more at [DallasCulture.org](http://DallasCulture.org).

**About the National Endowment for the Humanities**

Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at [neh.gov](http://neh.gov)

**About VisitDallas**

VisitDallas markets Dallas as the ideal visitor and convention destination in Texas. Dallas – The Most Texan City in Texas – celebrates its heritage in hospitality, and it's the one city where Southern meets modern and legacy meets luxury. Dallas is the leading business and financial center in the Southwest offering travelers an unparalleled array of amenities and a central location with two major airports with more domestic nonstop flights than any other U.S. city. As the ninth-largest U.S. city, and part of the fourth-largest metropolitan area in the nation, Dallas is the top visitor destination in Texas. You really can do it all in Dallas. For more information, visit [visitdallas.com](http://visitdallas.com).

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