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Begin With The Past: Building The National Museum Of African American History And Culture



Synopsis

Rising on the National Mall next to the Washington Monument, the National Museum of African American History and Culture is a tiered bronze beacon inviting everyone to learn about the richness and diversity of the African American experience and how it helped shape this nation. *Begin with the Past: Building the National Museum of African American History and Culture* is the story of how this unparalleled museum found its place in the nation's collective memory and on its public commons. *Begin with the Past* presents the long history of efforts to build a permanent place to collect, study, and present African American history and culture. In 2003 the museum was officially established at long last, yet the work of the museum was only just beginning. The book traces the appointment of the director, the selection of the site, and the process of conceiving, designing, and constructing a public monument to the achievements and contributions of African Americans. The careful selection of architects, designers, and engineers culminated in a museum that embodies African American sensibilities about space, form, and material and incorporates rich cultural symbols into the design of the building and its surrounding landscape. The National Museum of African American History and Culture is a place for all Americans to understand our past and embrace our future, and this book is a testament to the inspiration and determination that went into creating this unique place.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Architect's Newspaper
Commissioned by the [National Museum of African American History and

Culture] to mark its recent launch, Wilson delivers with a history of its genesis from century-long civic intent to the intricate teamwork of curators, scholars, and (above all) architects and engineers, who together shaped its conceptual vision. This is an all-too-rare look at what a modern building requires in its realization, especially when the stakes are no less than the historic record itself and a site at the hinge of L'Enfant's plan. [...] The chapter "Inside the African American Story" stands out as a standard of well-explained problem solving; its welcome inclusion of design elevations and blueprints cements this comprehensive intent. What the author describes as "a spiritual feeling like that of a cathedral" comes as much from a soaring interior of long vistas as the combined efforts the book affirms. This is a building that blends strife with hope as its historical mandate deserved. Wilson's book helps show us not only why but how.

MABEL O. WILSON is an associate professor at Columbia University's Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation and a senior fellow at the Institute for Research in African American Studies. Her research investigates space and cultural memory in black America, race and modern architecture, and new technologies and the social production of space. She has written numerous articles and books, most recently *A Negro Building: Black Americans in the World of Fairs and Museums*.

Oh yes, i went to the Museum in September. Awesome! This book provides a lot of background information regarding the planing, developing, and implementing this much needed museum. This is American history's foundation that has finally been placed at it's focal point in Washington, DC. I love this book. This book was sold out in the museums ' bookstore. I had to buy this book as a keepsake and a reminder of the great work and contributions.

What can I say...this is a great book. And the museum itself, the newest on the National Mall is a must see. Got a chance to see it when in Wash. DC. You should too, you won't be disappointed.

This book is my families gift.

Well written, nice pictures.

Necessary presentation of history

Better than I expected !!! Very informative.

We want to go see this in person.

This is a must buy to learn about the African American Museum in the nation's capital.

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