

New Item # 3
6-27-06



Securing the Blessings of Liberty:

Freedoms Taken & Liberties Lost

A Permanent Exhibition Installation

Securing the Blessings of Liberty is the story of the African American experience in Alexandria, Virginia. It seeks to document how area blacks survived slavery, helped to destroy it, and went on to shape the community that we know today. Much of the built environment and the agriculture of the Commonwealth of Virginia was created and maintained by black slaves. A brutal institution with old and deep roots in Virginia, slavery still haunts the American consciousness, and affects our attitudes toward race, class and equality in the United States.

This first phase of *Securing the Blessings of Liberty*, titled *Freedoms Taken & Liberties Lost*, covers the establishment and development of African cultures in Virginia and Alexandria to about 1810. Early African cultural traditions, the devastation wrought by the transatlantic slave trade, and the harsh life of slaves in colonial Virginia are among the themes explored. This is a story without a truly happy ending--it is a story of perseverance, rebellion, and faith.

Alexandria Black History Museum

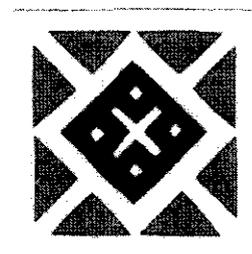
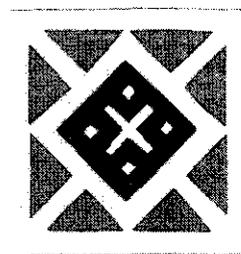
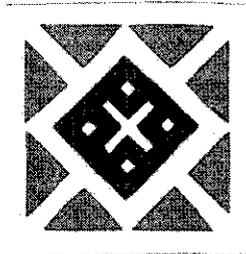
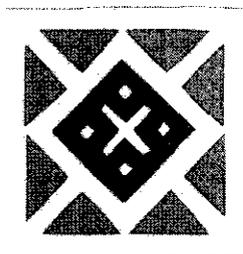
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ALEXANDRIA BLACK HISTORY MUSEUM NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
May 24, 2006

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Securing the Blessings of Liberty: Freedoms Taken and Liberties Lost **An exhibition focusing on the African American experience in Virginia** **opens at the Alexandria Black History Museum**

Alexandria, VA - On Friday, June 23, 2006, the Alexandria Black History Museum opened a new exhibition, *Securing the Blessings of Liberty: Freedoms Taken and Liberties Lost*, to the public. The exhibition, opening in the museum's Robert H. Robinson gallery is free and open to the public. The exhibition opening is the conclusion of the museum's Juneteenth programming, celebrating the emancipation of American slaves.

Securing the Blessings of Liberty is the story of slavery from an African American perspective. It begins in Africa, where Europeans, looking for an inexpensive source of labor, plundered thriving African societies, and enslaved millions of men, women and children. As the story continues, it follows the Middle Passage -- the harrowing voyage endured by Africans. This journey brought enslaved Africans to America, and lives forever changed.

Areas of *Securing the Blessings of Liberty*, highlight early Virginia landowners, the development of a tobacco based economy, and the prosperity it brought to the Chesapeake region. The exhibition examines the differences between plantation and urban slavery and the rise of a free black class in Alexandria by the 1820s.

Artifacts from the DAR Museum, Mount Vernon, Schomburg Center for the Study of Afro-American History, Alexandria Archaeology, Claude Moore Colonial Farm, Smithsonian Institution, and the Arlington County Courthouse help to tell the story and complement design exhibition produced by VisionWorks Studio and Kund and Associates.

Securing the Blessings of Liberty, honors the enslaved men and women whose labor built the Commonwealth, but left little personal evidence behind. The exhibition looks at the parallel paths whites and blacks have taken to achieve the American dream. The exhibition raises the questions – *What is Liberty?* and *When is one truly free?*

The Alexandria Black History Museum, located at 902 Wythe Street in Alexandria is open Tuesday – Saturday, 10 am to 4 pm. Admission is free. The museum complies with the terms of the ADA. Persons requiring reasonable accommodation should contact the museum ten days in advance of the event. The Museum is located five blocks from the Braddock Road Metro on the Yellow and Blue lines. Ample street parking is available on Wythe Street.

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