

# LOCKE LORD DIVERSITY AWARENESS

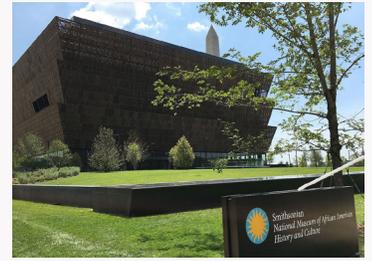
February 2017: Black History Month

This month we celebrate Black History Month to recognize the achievements of Black Americans and their central role in U.S. history. There may be no better single embodiment of this purpose than the recent opening of The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture ("NMAAHC") in September 2016.

The NMAAHC was originally established by the Smithsonian in December 2003. The museum's building, designed by David Adjaye, is on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The museum has close to 37,000 objects in its various collections related to such subjects as community, family, the visual and performing arts, religion, civil rights, slavery and segregation.

Early efforts to establish a federally-owned museum featuring African-American history and culture can be traced to 1915, although the modern push for such an organization did not begin until the 1970s. After years of little success, a much more serious legislative push began in 1988 that led to authorization of the museum in 2003. A site was selected in 2006. The museum opened on September 24, 2016, in a ceremony led by U.S. President Barack Obama.

During the opening ceremony, President Obama remarked: ". . . [a]nd so this national museum helps to tell a richer and fuller story of who we are. It helps us better understand the lives, yes, of the President, but also the slave; the industrialist, but also the porter; the keeper of the status quo, but also of the activist seeking to overthrow that status quo; the teacher or the cook, alongside the statesman. And by knowing this other story, we better understand ourselves and each other. It binds us together. It reaffirms that all of us are America—that African-American history is not somehow separate from our larger American story, it's not the underside of the American story, it is central to the American story. That our glory derives not just from our most obvious triumphs, but how we've wrested triumph from tragedy, and how we've been able to remake ourselves, again and again and again, in accordance with our highest ideals."



Exterior of the museum July 20, 2016

## ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS FROM LOCKE LORD DC LAWYERS



**Edward F. Glynn, Jr.**

### ***A Civil Rights Lawyer Among Us***

I was counsel in *Fikes v Long*, 388 F.Supp. 418 (MD AL 1975) in a petition for a writ of habeas corpus seeking to vacate the conviction of a man based on a confession that had been obtained on the same day as a confession that was found unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in *Fikes v Alabama*, 352 U.S. 191 (1957). Because under Alabama ethics rules, my firm was unable to donate the direct costs of my travel, a collection to pay my expenses was taken up by the Black churches of Selma, Mr. Fikes' hometown. The courtroom was packed, and the judge (appointed by President Nixon as part of his Southern strategy) really didn't want to grant the writ, but, given the circumstances, had no choice (which the opinion makes clear—he wants folks to know he had no choice). My other civil rights case involved spending three days (along with two other lawyers from my firm) in Parchman Prison, Mississippi, interviewing inmates as part of an application for contempt against the warden and guards for beating up prisoners to demonstrate that the guards were not intimidated by a federal court injunction restraining such conduct. Parchman is where "Cool Hand Luke" was shot; it is a very unpleasant place. The inmates—our clients—were terrified, understandably did not fully trust us, and spoke in accents that were very difficult for northerners to understand. But the guards were sufficiently shook up that lawyers from a big firm had come to their prison to seek to punish them that an understanding was reached and the ringleaders were fired. The violence ended (for a while anyway). See *Gates v Collier* 501 F.2d 1291 (5th Cir. 1974). In 1976, I joined the Government and my civil rights cases came to an end.



**Denise Hanna**

### ***Reverence for the Unsung Black Community***

Each year as we celebrate Black History Month, I remember the politicians, activists, ministers, inventors, physicians, lawyers, entrepreneurs, writers, artists, athletes and, now, President who have contributed to the great heritage of our Country and have opened our minds to an even greater vision of the promise of America. More importantly, during Black History Month, I also reflect on my more personal heroes in traditionally Black America who had an even greater impact on my life and helped shape the person I am today. These personal heroes are my parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles and the church ladies with the big hats. They are mostly the unknown, unsung men and women who shopped the aisle of the grocery stores, rode the bus to work and took their little ones by the hand to Sunday School. My Black heroes did the everyday things while stoically braving the barbs and hiding the scars of bigotry in their daily lives. I celebrate all of them during Black History Month because they chose to persevere to hold a safe space for me and my peers so that we might one day enjoy the opportunities in this Country that still alluded them. The faces of these unknown heroes are forever etched in my mind, whether or not we are celebrating Black History Month.

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