OTHER PROGRAMS

African American Civil Rights Network

The African American Civil Rights Network (AACRN) program authorizes the National Park Service (NPS) to identify and interpret sites that commemorate and honor the history of the modern civil rights movement (1939-1968). The AACRN encompasses all NPS units and programs related to the struggle for African American equality. It also includes places in or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and other directly related sites with permission of the owner.

Background

Patterned after the National Underground Railroad to Freedom Network, the AACRN recognizes sites associated with African American civil rights from 1939 to 1968. This date range was identified because 1939 was the year Marian Anderson sang from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Congress passed the African American Civil Rights Network Act in December 2017 and it was signed into law in January 2018. The AACRN program offers a comprehensive overview of the people, places, and events associated with the civil rights movement of the 20th Century. Thirty-four sites, facilities, and programs have been chosen for inclusion in the AACRN thus far, including: Little Rock Central High School in Arkansas; the 1908 Springfield Race Riot Archaeological Site in Illinois; the Brown v. Board of Education National Historic Site in Kansas; and the Leona Tate Foundation for Change in Louisiana.

FY 2022 Appropriations Request

Please support $1 million to administer and enhance the African American Civil Rights Network in the FY 2022 Interior Appropriations bill.

APPROPRIATIONS BILL: Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies
AGENCY: National Park Service
ACCOUNT: Operation of the National Park System
ACTIVITY: Park Cultural Resource Support Function, National Networks

Recent Funding History:

FY 2020 Enacted Funding: $250,000
FY 2021 Enacted Funding: $1.5 million
(The final bill provides $1.5 million total for four networks in Resource Stewardship)
FY 2022 President’s Budget Request: TBD
FY 2022 NTHP Recommendation: $1.0 million

JUSTIFICATION: Increased funding would provide additional support for the National Park Service to enhance the administration and expansion of the African American Civil Rights Network.
African American Civil Rights Network: Highlighted Sites

Leona Tate Foundation for Change, New Orleans, LA

In November 1960, six-year-old Leona Tate and her classmates Gail Etienne and Tessie Prevost became the first black students to desegregate a public school in Louisiana. Nearly fifty years later, Tate founded the Leona Tate Foundation for Change dedicated to the idea that every person is deserving of affordable, comparable opportunities, particularly in education. Now part of the AACRN, the foundation is working to turn the old public school that Tate attended into The Tate, Etienne, and Prevost (TEP) Interpretive Center. The center will provide exhibits and programs on New Orleans’ civil rights history, a community educational space, and affordable housing for seniors.

The Lorraine Motel, Memphis, TN

On April 4, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on the balcony of his room at the Lorraine Motel a day after delivering his prophetic “I’ve Been to the Mountaintop” speech. King had traveled down to Memphis to support the 1,300 African American sanitation works striking for better working conditions and pay. The motel now serves as the home of the National Civil Rights Museum and was the second site designated in the African American Civil Rights Network.

The Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site, Washington, DC

The first person in her family born free, Mary McLeod Bethune became a world-renowned educator, civil rights champion, leader of women, and presidential advisor. Bethune established both a missionary school and a school for Negro girls in Florida. When her school for girls was merged with the all-men Cook Institute, Bethune became the first African American woman to serve as a college president.

Her work to end segregated education, improve healthcare for black children, and advance women’s equality propelled her to serve as the eighth national president of the National Association of Colored Women. Bethune went on to create the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW) and was unanimously elected its first president.

Bethune’s prominence and national recognition inspired attention from several U.S. presidents. After serving as an advisor to Presidents Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover, Bethune was called to Washington to serve as Special Advisor to the National Youth Administration under President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Impressed with her work, Roosevelt created the Federal Council on Negro Affairs and appointed Bethune as Director of Negro Affairs. Bethune was the first African American woman to head a federal agency.