



The African-American Burial Grounds Network Act

Background

Cemeteries and burial sites are places of tribute and memory, connecting communities with their past. Unfortunately, many African-American burial grounds from both before and after the Civil War are in a state of disrepair or inaccessibility. Due to Jim Crow-era laws that segregated burial sites by race, many African-American families faced restrictions on where they could bury their dead, and these sites often failed to receive the type of maintenance and record-keeping that predominantly white burial grounds enjoyed.

There is no official national record or database for African-American burial ground locations, and the location of many sites is unknown. As a result, the family members and descendants of those interred there are unable to visit these sites to honor and remember their ancestors. Too often, abandoned burial grounds and cemeteries are discovered when construction projects inadvertently disturb human remains, slowing or halting completion of those projects and creating distress and heartache within the local community.

The presence and location of historic African-American burial grounds should be chronicled, and there should be coordinated national, state, and local efforts to preserve and restore these sites for future generations. African-American burial grounds are an integral component of the heritage of the United States. Creating and maintaining a network of African-American burial grounds will help communities preserve local history while better informing development decisions and community planning.

The African American Burial Grounds Network Act (H.R. 1179)

The Adams-McEachin-Budd African-American Burial Grounds Network Act creates a voluntary national network of historic African-American burial grounds. This legislation also establishes a National Park Service program to educate the public and provide technical assistance for community members and organizations to research and preserve burial sites and cemeteries within the Network.

- Creates a voluntary, nationwide database of historic burial grounds, with the consent of the property owner, that relate to the historic African-American experience.
- Provides technical assistance to local public, private, state and local partners to research, survey, identify, record, preserve, evaluate, and interpret these burial grounds.
- Establishes educational materials for community members, local groups, and schools about African-American burial grounds.
- Makes available grants for local groups to research, survey, identify, record, and aid in the preservation of sites within the Network.

If you would like more information about the African-American Burial Grounds Network Act or if your boss would like to be added as a cosponsor, please contact Katherine Stewart (Katherine.Stewart@mail.house.gov) with Rep. Adams, Blair Wriston (Blair.Wriston@mail.house.gov) with Rep. McEachin, or Alex Vargo (Alex.Vargo@mail.house.gov) with Rep. Budd.

Endorsements

National/Regional Organizations

The National Trust for Historic Preservation
Coalition for American Heritage
Society for American Archaeology
Society for Historical Archaeology
American Anthropological Association
Association of Black Anthropologists
Society of Black Archaeologists
The Afro-American Historical & Genealogical Society Inc.
Association for the Study of African American Life and History
American Cultural Resources Association
United States Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites
Council for Northeast Historical Archaeology
Archaeology Podcast Network
The National Alliance of Faith and Justice

Alabama

Shadow Lawn Memorial Gardens Maintenance & Perpetual Care Association (Birmingham)

Arkansas

Preservation of African American Cemeteries Inc. (Little Rock)
Preserve Arkansas
Northwest Arkansas African American Heritage Association

California

Save Our Heritage Organization (San Diego County)

Florida

Florida Public Archaeology Network
Florida Anthropological Society

Georgia

Georgia African American Historic Preservation Network

Illinois

Illinois Archaeological Survey

Louisiana

River Road African American Museum
River Road African Burial Grounds Coalition

Maryland

Preservation Maryland

New York

Elmhurst History and Cemeteries Preservation Society, Inc.

North Carolina

Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission
Charlotte Museum of History
Historic Charlotte Inc.
Preservation North Carolina
University of North Carolina System
 Appalachian State University
 East Carolina University (ECU)
 Elizabeth City State University
 Fayetteville State University
 North Carolina A&T State University (NC A&T)
 North Carolina Central University (NCCU)
 North Carolina State University (NC State)
 UNC Asheville
 UNC-Chapel Hill
 UNC Charlotte
 UNC Greensboro
 UNC Pembroke
 UNC Wilmington
 UNC School of the Arts
 Western Carolina University
 Winston-Salem State University
 NC School of Science and Mathematics
The Wake Forest Historical Museum

Oklahoma

Black Genealogy Research Group of Oklahoma
The Coltrane Group (Oklahoma City)

South Carolina

The Gullah Society

Utah

Preservation Utah
Rev. France A. Davis, Pastor of the Calvary Missionary Baptist Church (Salt Lake City)

Virginia

Preservation Virginia
Enrichmond Foundation
The Virginia Outdoors Foundation
Virginia Humanities
The Council of Virginia Archaeologists
The Preservers of the Daughters of Zion Cemetery (Charlottesville)
The Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project
Corhaven Graveyard (Shenandoah)
Coracle (Quicksburg)
Coming to the Table (Harrisonburg)
Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project

University of Virginia (UVA)
Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)

Washington, D.C.

Mt. Zion Female Union Band Society Historic Memorial Park Foundation
Howard University