



FREEDOM: A HISTORY OF US

Exhibition Guide

Developed by

THE GILDER LEHRMAN
INSTITUTE *of* AMERICAN HISTORY

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Contents

GENERAL INFORMATION	3
Format	
Rental Security	
Shipping	
Reporting	
Questions	
EXHIBITION CONTENT	4
Panel 1: Freedom: A History of US	
Panel 2: The Young Republic	
Panel 3: Toward the Abolition of Slavery	
Panel 4: The Breakdown of Compromise	
Panel 5: The Union Threatened, The Union Preserved	
Panel 6: The Limits of Emancipation	
Panel 7: The Price of Freedom	
Panel 8: Reconstruction and Its Legacies	
Panel 9: Votes for Women	
Panel 10: Fighting For Freedom At Home and Abroad	
Panel 11: The Civil Rights Movement	
Panel 12: The Road to Equality	

GENERAL INFORMATION

Freedom: A History of the US is a traveling exhibition developed by the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, featuring select documents from the Gilder Lehrman Collection.

Format

The exhibition is composed of twelve retractable vinyl panels. Each panel measures 80 inches in height and 33 inches in width. It requires a total of 30 running feet and can be displayed separately or together. Detailed setup instructions are provided to the venue's coordinator upon shipment. Setup instructions can also be found on the [FAQ page of the GLI Traveling Exhibitions website](#).

Rental Security

Exhibitions may be displayed in any open areas, but preferably not in a hallway. No exhibition is to be displayed outdoors or in a tent or other temporary structure. It is preferable that a staff member is in the room with the exhibition when it is open to students or guests. If a borrower causes damage or loss of any part of the exhibition, that institution will be responsible for paying the replacement or restoration costs. The value of the *Freedom: A History of US* exhibition is \$3,700. Some institutions choose to add a rider to their insurance policy.

Shipping

The exhibition is shipped in two wheeled, plastic cases measuring 39 inches x 14 inches x 14 inches and weighing approximately 75 pounds. GLI will be responsible for arranging shipping via FedEx. A week before your loan period ends, we will provide a return label and instructions.

Reporting

Each site is required to complete a condition report upon receipt of the exhibition and again after the exhibition has been packed for return. Condition report forms will be sent to the venue coordinator via email.

Questions

If you have questions, please contact

Traveling Exhibitions Program
exhibitions@gilderlehrman.org
Phone (646) 366-9666 ext. 164

EXHIBITION CONTENT

Panel One: Freedom: A History of US

Introductory Text

Since 1776, when the United States declared independence from Great Britain, the idea of freedom and our understanding of its implications have evolved dramatically. Drawing on materials from the Gilder Lehrman Institute and covering American history from the Founding Era to the election of Barack Obama, *Freedom: A History of US* commemorates those who fought and even died for freedom. We hope that their legacy will resonate for Americans today.

The Founding Era

The Declaration of Independence, printed by Peter Timothy, Charleston, South Carolina, ca. August 2, 1776 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC00959)

Phillis Wheatley, *Poems on Various Subjects, Religious and Moral*, London, 1773 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC06154)

John Adams to Catherine Macaulay, December 11, 1773 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC01787)

Paul Revere, "The Bloody Massacre Perpetrated in King-Street, Boston on March 5th, 1770," 1770 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC01868)

Panel Two: The Young Republic

Introductory Text

Once the Revolution had been won, Americans faced the challenge of creating a new, stable government based on the principle of freedom. The Constitution embodied both an ideal and a compromise – a democratic government that tolerated the institution of slavery.

George Washington by Rembrandt Peale, ca. 1853 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09119.01)

George Washington to John F. Mercer, September 9, 1786 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC03705)

First printed draft of the Constitution, August 6, 1787 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC00819.01)

Pierce Butler's notes from the Constitutional Convention, August 28, 1787 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC00819.17)

“Wheresoever any person bound to service or labour in any state, shall flee into another state,... he shall not be thereby discharged from such service or labour: but the legislatures of the several states shall make provision for the recovery of such person.” – Pierce Butler, 1787

“Slave Market of America,” published by the American Anti-Slavery Society, New York, 1836 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04557)

William L. Garrison to Ebenezer Dole, July 14, 1830 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04516)

“For the most trifling or innocent offence, [a slave] is felled to the earth, or scourged on his back till it streams with blood... He may be torn from [his wife and children], or they from him, at any moment, never again to meet on earth.” – William L Garrison, 1830

John Melish, “A Map of the United States with the Contiguous British & Spanish Possessions,” 1820 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04319)

Panel Three: Toward the Abolition of Slavery

Introductory Text

Between 1800 and 1850, the new nation expanded rapidly. Debates about how to govern these vast new territories tested the fragile compromise over slavery, and both supporters and opponents of the extension of slavery invoked the Constitution. Abolitionism gained momentum during this period.

John Quincy Adams to Roger S. Baldwin, November 11, 1840 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC00582)

Photograph of Frederick Douglass, 1856 (National Portrait Gallery, Washington DC)

Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave. Written by Himself*, Boston, Massachusetts, 1845 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC06117)

Harriet Beecher Stowe to Ralph Wardlaw, December 14, 1852 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04631)

Banner illustrating *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, ca. 1852 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC06894)

Advertisement for John Warner Barber's *A History of the Amistad Captives*, 1840 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04295)

Panel Four: The Breakdown of Compromise

Introductory Text

The 1850s began with a political compromise on the issue of slavery in the United States; the decade ended with a presidential election fought over whether the country would embrace a free-labor or slave-labor future. In the *Dred Scott* decision of 1857, the Supreme Court denied the right of citizenship to Black Americans, destroying any hope for equality.

“Read and Ponder the Fugitive Slave Law!” Boston, 1850 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC01862)

Abraham Lincoln, photograph by Alexander Hesler, June 3, 1860 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04347)

Abraham Lincoln, notes for the “House Divided” Speech, ca. 1857 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC02533)

Abolitionist Flag of the United States, ca. 1859 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC05762)

Panel Five: The Union Threatened, The Union Preserved

Introductory Text

In 1860 the election of Abraham Lincoln, who opposed the extension of slavery, precipitated the secession of southern states. The Civil War encompassed Lincoln's entire presidency. To his role Lincoln brought, above all, the ability to translate war aims into powerful and compelling rhetoric. Despite many setbacks and grievous losses, the campaign to preserve the Union and end slavery ultimately triumphed.

“The Union is Dissolved!” *Charleston Mercury*, extra edition, December 20, 1860 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC02688)

Abraham Lincoln, telegram to Ulysses S. Grant, June 15, 1864 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC01572)

Ulysses S. Grant and staff after Battle of the Wilderness, photograph by Alexander Gardner, June 1864 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC00588)

“The Room in McLean House, at Appomattox C.H., in which Gen. Lee Surrendered to Gen. Grant,” published by Major & Knapp, New York, 1867 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC02979.01)

Panel Six: The Limits of Emancipation

Introductory Text

On January 1, 1863, when Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, slaves in the states in rebellion were declared “forever free.” Thus, the Civil War transformed into a battle to both preserve the Union and end slavery. The Proclamation also made it possible for African Americans to fight in the military. Despite their contributions and evidence of their courage and commitment to the Union cause, Black Americans continued to face discrimination at home and at war.

Francis Fletcher, African American soldier in the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, to Jacob Safford, May 28, 1864 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC07345)

“Just one year ago to day our regt was received in Boston with almost an ovation... in that one year no man of our regiment has received a cent of monthly pay all through the glaring perfidy of the U.S. Gov’t.” – Francis Fletcher, 1864

Photograph of an anonymous private, Company I, 54th Massachusetts Infantry, ca. 1863 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC03027)

Emancipation Proclamation, 1864 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC00742)

“Men of Color, to Arms! To Arms!” Philadelphia, ca. 1863 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC10021)

Broadside recruiting African Americans for military service, 1863 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC08249)

“The Gallant Charge of the Fifty Fourth Massachusetts (Colored) Regiment,” published by Currier & Ives, New York, 1863 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC02881.23)

Panel Seven: The Price of Freedom

Introductory Text

The preservation of the Union and freedom for four million African Americans exacted a bitter cost. An estimated 750,000 soldiers died in the Civil War, more Americans than in WWI and WWII combined, and

comparable numbers were wounded or suffered from disease, deprivation, and wretched medical care. In ways beyond measure, the destruction ravaged families and communities. For many Americans, the biggest price was the loss of the nation's greatest president. In his second inaugural address, Abraham Lincoln urged Americans to face the future "with malice toward none, with charity for all." His assassination changed the trajectory of American history.

"A Harvest of Death" by Timothy O'Sullivan, July 1863 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC00244)

David V. Smith to Elizabeth Smith, July 10, 1863 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04189)

Mary Kelly to Sarah Gordon, March 31, 1862 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04197.25)

Mary Kelly, wife of Union soldier James R. Kelly, undated [1860s]. (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04197.40)

"The President Is Dead!" New York, April 15, 1865 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC06680)

President Lincoln's funeral car, April 1865 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC05111.02.0042)

Panel Eight: Reconstruction and Its Legacies

Introductory Text

In the years immediately after the Civil War, conflict remained surrounding the political and economic future of the nation. Under Reconstruction (1865-1877) the federal government enacted laws granting newly freed African Americans full rights as citizens. However, throughout the South, state and local governments supported "Black Codes" and Jim Crow laws, the rise of White supremacist groups like the Ku Klux Klan, and systemic oppression and violence against African Americans. For many, the promises of emancipation remained unrealized until the twentieth century.

Booker T. Washington, Speech to the Cotton States and International Exposition, Atlanta, Georgia, October 1895

"In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." – Booker T. Washington, 1895

Booker T. Washington, by Frances Benjamin Johnston, ca. 1895 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

W.E.B. Du Bois, "On Being Ashamed on Oneself," *The Crisis*, September 1933

"The next step...involves the organization of intelligent and earnest people of Negro descent for their preservation and advancement." — W.E.B. Du Bois, 1933

W.E.B. Du Bois, by C.M. Battey, May 31, 1919 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

Notice from the Ku Klux Klan to Davie Jeems, 1868 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09090)

"To Jeems, Davie, you must be a good boy... I am a Ku Klux sent here to look after you and all the rest of the radicals and make you know your place. I have got my eye on you every day."

Frederick Douglass to Robert Adams, December 4, 1888 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC04997)

"For the Good of America," published by the NAACP, 1922 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC06197)

"The Fifteenth Amendment Celebrated," New York, 1870 (Private Collection)

Panel Nine: Votes for Women

Introductory Text

In July 1848, American suffragists gathered in Seneca Falls, New York. Led by Lucretia Mott and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the convention drafted a "Declaration of Sentiments, Grievances, and Resolutions," demanding the right to vote and "securing to women an equal participation with men in the various trades, professions and commerce." After decades of campaigning, White women finally won the vote with the Nineteenth Amendment on August 26, 1920, but other freedoms were not realized.

Susan B. Anthony, et al., *An Appeal to the Women of the United States*, Hartford, Conn., 1871 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC06861)

Susan B. Anthony (standing) with Elizabeth Cady Stanton, ca. 1880-1902 (Library of Congress)

Woodrow Wilson to Carrie C. Catt, January 25, 1917 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC07144)

Broadside printed for the Woman Suffrage Party of the City of New York, New York, 1915 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC08963)

Broadside printed for the New Jersey Woman Suffrage Association, Plainfield, New Jersey, 1910 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC08962)

Women marching in New York City suffragist parade, American Press Association, May 4, 1912 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

Panel Ten: Fighting for Freedom at Home and Abroad

Introductory Text

The First and Second World Wars offered African Americans and women an opportunity to serve their country and fight for equality. African Americans served in segregated units and few saw combat. Women served as nurses on the front, and took up formerly male professions at home. After the end of each war, violence against African Americans in the United States increased despite the bravery of Black soldiers in battle, and most women returned to their traditional roles.

“True Sons of Freedom,” broadside by Charles Gustrine, Chicago, Illinois, 1918 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09121)

“For Every Fighter a Woman Worker,” art by Adolph Treidler, YMCA poster, ca. 1918 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09550)

Eleanor Roosevelt to Addie Frizelle, May 13, 1944 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09544)

Sidney Diamond to Estelle Spero, May 8, 1944 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09120.408)

“It is indeed shameful that upon the return of these men, the community of thought and consideration will be shattered by the narrow minded idiots whose revolting greed or ignorance is more than stomach can stand!!” – Sidney Diamond, 1944

“We Can’t Win without Them,” 1942 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09543)

“United We Win,” 1942 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09542)

Panel Eleven: The Civil Rights Movement

Introductory Text

During and after World War II, the NAACP and other civil rights groups brought several legal challenges to Jim Crow laws before the US Supreme Court. In the 1960s, activists took the civil rights struggle out of the courtroom and onto the streets of the Jim Crow South. Attracting a diverse group of volunteers, the civil rights activists brought national attention to segregation. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 outlawed discrimination in all “public accommodations,” including workplaces and schools. The Voting Rights Act, passed in 1965, made it illegal for states to enact any “prerequisites for voting” designed to deny African Americans the freedom to vote. These landmark legislative acts showed that a grassroots protest movement could influence national lawmakers.

Martin Luther King Jr., Speech delivered to Yale University, January 14, 1959 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC07706)

Robert F. Kennedy, Report to President John F. Kennedy on civil rights, January 24, 1963 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC05630)

“I Am a Man,” 1968 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC06124)

NAACP voter registration poster, 1965 (The Gilder Lehrman Institute, GLC09623)

Civil Rights March on Washington DC, US Information Agency Press and Publications Service, August 28, 1963 (National Archives)

Panel Twelve: The Road to Equality

Introductory Text

The 1960s were a time of monumental upheaval in American social and political life. The advances in civil rights for African Americans inspired activists to fight for the rights of women, American Indians, gay men and women, immigrants, and others. More and more Americans protested policies that did not protect them from violence and discrimination. Through the last decades of the twentieth century, new legal measures were put in place to ensure the civil rights of all Americans. In the twenty-first century, the United States continues to address issues of freedom and equality that faced the country’s founders.

President Richard Nixon meeting with leaders of the Taos Pueblo American Indian Tribal Council, July 8, 1970 (National Archives)

President Gerald R. Ford signing the Proclamation on Women's Equality Day, August 22, 1974
(National Archives)

Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn Carter sing with Martin Luther King Sr., Coretta Scott King, Andrew Young, and other civil rights leaders during a visit to Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, January 14, 1979 (National Archives)

Women holding banner, "If Men Got Pregnant Abortion Would be Sacred," at the National Women's Conference, 1977 (National Archives)

Presidential candidate Barack Obama, his wife Michelle, and his children Sasha and Malia at the Democratic National Convention, photography by Carol Highsmith, Denver, Colorado, August 25-28, 2008 (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)