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

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 Anthropological Society
Florida Public Archaeology Network

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.

New Jersey
The Archaeological Society of New Jersey
New Jersey Historic Trust
North Jersey History and Genealogy Center

North Carolina
Charlotte Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission
Charlotte Museum of History
Historic Charlotte Inc.
North Carolina Museums Council
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
The Coltrane Group (Oklahoma City)
Black Genealogy Research Group of Oklahoma

Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Archaeological Council

South Carolina
The Gullah Society (Mount Pleasant)

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

**Virginia**
- Corhaven Graveyard (Shenandoah)
- Coracle (Quicksburg)
- Coming to the Table (Harrisonburg)
- The Council of Virginia Archaeologists
- Enrichmond Foundation
- First Unitarian Universalist Church of Richmond
- The Preservers of the Daughters of Zion Cemetery (Charlottesville)
- Preservation Piedmont (Charlottesville)
- Preservation Virginia
- The Sacred Ground Historical Reclamation Project
- Shenandoah Valley Black Heritage Project
- University of Virginia (UVA)
- Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU)
- Virginia Humanities
- The Virginia Outdoors Foundation

**Washington, D.C.**
- Howard University
- Mt. Zion Female Union Band Society Historic Memorial Park Foundation