

NEWS

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For Immediate Release
September 30, 2013

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Mississippi Breaks Ground on State History and Civil Rights Museums

Governor Phil Bryant and other elected officials, civil rights leader Myrlie Evers and other movement veterans, children and teachers, and volunteers from across the state will lift shovels to break ground on the 2 Mississippi Museums project—the Museum of Mississippi History and the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum—on Thursday, October 24, at 10 a.m. The public is invited to a historic day of festivities that will feature music, food, fun, and children’s activities. The groundbreaking will be held at 200 North Street in downtown Jackson.

“Not only will these museums be a tremendous economic development tool for the state and bring visitors to our capital city, but they will also be an extraordinary educational resource for generations to come,” said Governor Bryant.

MDAH director H.T. Holmes said, “The 2 Museums are the most significant bricks and mortar project the state will undertake to mark the bicentennial of Mississippi’s statehood. Opening in December 2017, the museums will bring Mississippians together to celebrate our rich culture, explore our shared past, and meet the opportunities and challenges of our future. I can think of no better way for us to launch our next century of statehood.”

The Museum of Mississippi History will explore the entire sweep of the state’s history, from earliest times to the present. The Mississippi Civil Rights Museum will focus on the period 1945–1976 and tell the story of the struggle for equal rights and fair treatment under the law. This will be the nation’s first state-operated civil rights museum.

Visitors will enter the complex through a two-story open lobby—to the left will be the Museum of Mississippi History and to the right, the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. Off the lobby will be the Hall of History, which will connect to classrooms and open to an outdoor porch, and an auditorium to be used by both museums for public programming and performance space.

The 2 Museums will be a gateway for visitors to learn about other museums, historic sites, and cultural experiences all over the state. Special features throughout the 2 Museums will point visitors to these other sites and encourage them to visit.

Live music will open and close the groundbreaking ceremony and continue until 1 p.m. Performances will include gospel, bluegrass, blues, and more, providing a sampling of the wide range of Mississippi music that will be featured in exhibits in the 2 Museums.

Hundreds of school children will travel to downtown Jackson for the groundbreaking. Before and after the ceremony, they will make crafts, play games, and visit a hands-on mini museum featuring reproductions of artifacts from the MDAH collection.

“The groundbreaking celebration is a public tribute to the communities statewide that have partnered with us in the planning of these facilities,” said 2MM project director Lucy Allen. “We are grateful for the stories and artifacts that have been shared. These local voices and personal items make museum exhibits come alive.”

“Our tradition of telling stories will be one of the hallmarks of these two state-of-the-art museums,” said former governor Haley Barbour, who worked with the legislature to secure bond funding for the project in 2011. “This is one of the many reasons I am proud to be part of this exciting project for our state.”

Myrlie Evers, widow of Medgar Evers and former chair of the NAACP, said, “Medgar’s story and the stories of thousands of others will be preserved and honored in the Mississippi Civil Rights Museum. By understanding what others did, future generations will be inspired to continue the hard work for equality and justice.”

Former governor William Winter said, “I have been privileged to witness the progress our state has achieved since the dismantling of the ‘closed society.’ These state-of-the-art museums will capture that journey along with the earlier struggles as Mississippians formed a state, fought a war, rebuilt an economy, and created cultures that still exist today. These stories and memories—this rich history of ours—will be preserved to inform us about the past and inspire us to work together to build a more just, vibrant, and healthy Mississippi for the future.”

Support for the 2 Mississippi Museums groundbreaking ceremony is provided by the Mississippi Development Authority Division of Tourism and Downtown Jackson Partners. For more information, contact Stephenie Morrisey (601-576-6850; morrisey@mdah.state.ms.us) or visit the MDAH website, mdah.state.ms.us.

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