

# The African American Burial Ground

During 1991 and 1992, at 290 Broadway in Lower Manhattan, an old cemetery was uncovered by construction workers. What they found was part of a 6.6 acre area of land that contained the remains of 419 African Americans. The efforts of many people, including citizens, politicians, historians, scientists and anthropologists finally persuaded Congress to halt the excavation and make the area a national monument.



# History of Slavery in New York

The first slaves were brought to New York by the Dutch West India Company in 1626. The Dutch allowed these men to gain conditional freedom through a petition granted in 1644. They were given 100 acres of land which became known as the Land of the Blacks. However if they did not give the Dutch Company a certain amount of produce from their land each year then they would be put back into slavery.



## The British take over New Amsterdam

In 1664 the British named the city New York. The new rulers enforced stricter slave laws. The British prohibited blacks from owning any land. The first slave revolt came in 1712. In 1741, a rumor of a slave revolt led to the execution of two white men, two white women, and thirty black men in the middle of Foley Square, just a few blocks from this site.

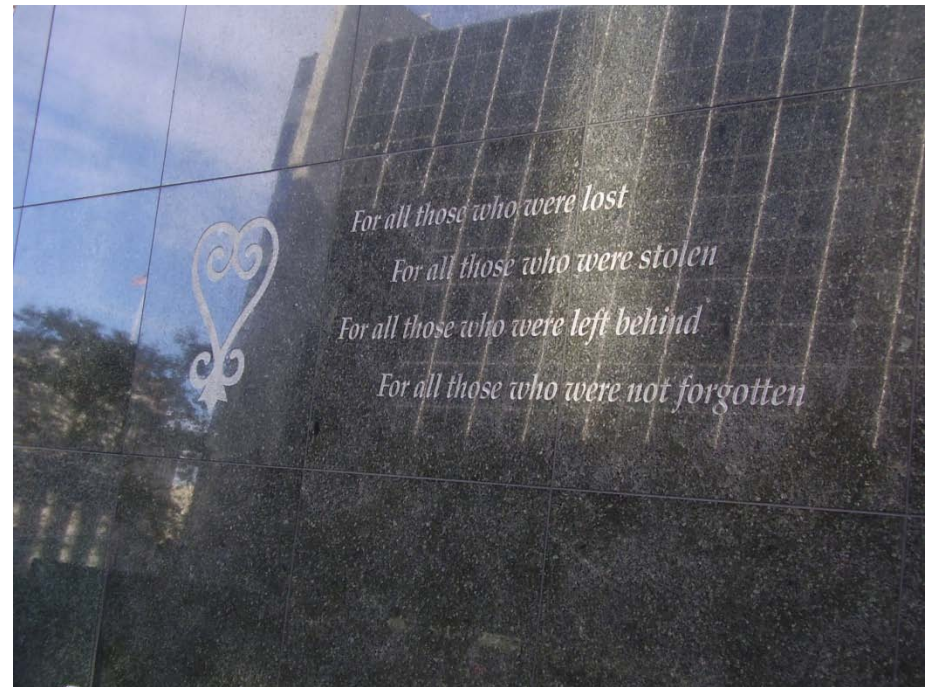
This is a view of the larger part of the monument as you enter the site



## Slavery ends in New York

Many organizations were formed in New York during the 1700s and early 1800s in an attempt to bring slavery to an end in the state. In 1827 New York became the next to last northern state to abolish slavery.

These photos are of the inscription on the side of the memorial designed by Rodney Leon in 2005. The symbol to the left is Sankofa, a West African Akan symbol telling the importance of learning from the past. In order to inform the future we must return to our roots to gather wisdom.





# The story of the ancestral remains

When the burial site was first uncovered, all of the remains were taken to the Cobb Laboratory at Howard University in Washington, D.C. Every bone, skeleton and possession was logged, sorted and cataloged. On October 4, 2003, 413 remains were reinterred at the site, each in hand carved mahogany coffins lined with kente cloth from Ghana.



This is the burial area at the right of the monuments as you enter where the coffins were carefully laid on top of each other and became their final resting place.

## Freedom, Humanity, Dignity

The center of the monument is an Ancestral Libation Chamber. The entrance is through the triangular shaped walkway which leads into the cosmogram, the crossroads of birth, life, death, and rebirth in Congo cosmology.

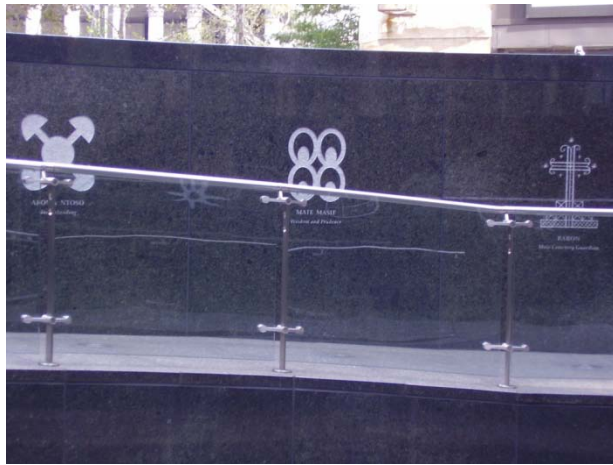


Once you walk through the chamber you see the map of Africa and the Americas engraved into the floor as a remembrance to the journey taken on the Middle Passage





Surrounding the map is a circular walkway that has etched into its walls various other symbols of world culture that also represent birth, life, death, and rebirth.





Foley Square was the site of several executions of African Americans and white anti-slavery supporters. The only evidence to these events is an elaborate, circular monument in the sidewalk.



Unfortunately little is depicted as to the public hangings that took place in Foley Square. Today it has become a hang-out for skateboarders. Someday we may change all of that and build another monument?

