

RAISE IT UP!

STAR-SPANGLED BANNER ☆ 1814-2014



Smithsonian
National Museum of American History
Kenneth E. Behring Center

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Smithsonian Celebrates Star-Spangled Banner Bicentennial

Aloe Blacc, Renée Fleming, Angie Johnson, Brian McKnight and Esperanza Spalding Support Yearlong Celebration of Flag's 200th Anniversary

Aloe Blacc, Renée Fleming, Angie Johnson, Brian McKnight and Esperanza Spalding are just some of the celebrities supporting the National Museum of American History in celebrating the 200th anniversary of the Star-Spangled Banner. These artists are encouraging Americans to take part in the museum's coast-to-coast celebration on Flag Day, June 14, known as "Raise It Up! Anthem for America," a national sing-a-long event in which Americans are invited to come together and sing their anthem at 4 p.m. EDT. Details are at anthemforamerica.si.edu.

The National Park Service, Little League International, Girl Scout Council of the Nation's Capital, the National Civic League, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and Chorus America are among more than 50 partners bringing audiences across the nation together for this celebration. Macy's will activate flagship stores in select cities to gather customers to sing the anthem and will showcase the "Raise It Up!" campaign in store windows and through social media.

"Two hundred years ago, Francis Scott Key, inspired by the sight of the flag's 'broad stripes and bright stars,' wrote a song that gave new significance to a national symbol and started a tradition through which Americans have invested the flag with their own meaning and memories," said John L. Gray, director of the museum. "It is an honor for the museum to be the home of the Star-Spangled Banner flag and to preserve it for future generations," he added.

In Washington D.C., the museum is offering special displays and events throughout the summer, including a Flag Day concert featuring Grammy-winning composer Eric Whitacre conducting "America the Beautiful" and MacArthur 'genius' Fellow Francisco J. Núñez

conducting “Lift Every Voice” with a 500-person choir and performance by The U.S. Air Force Band and Singing Sergeants under the direction of commander and conductor, Col. Larry H. Lang. Also beginning on Flag Day, the Maryland Historical Society is loaning Francis Scott Key’s original manuscript of the “Star-Spangled Banner” lyrics for a short term display through July 6, uniting it for the first time with the flag Key saw at “dawn’s early light.” Visitors will be able to see the 30-by-34 foot flag and the manuscript, side-by-side in the banner’s environmentally controlled chamber.

The museum will also display Grammy award-winning opera singer Renée Fleming’s Super Bowl gown beginning June 12. Worn when she sang the national anthem during the 2014 broadcast, viewed by more than 111 million people, the long black gown, custom-made by Vera Wang, features hand draped details and pleated accents at the waist.

On June 17, the Smithsonian will present Ralph Lauren, the youngest son of immigrant parents, with the James Smithson Bicentennial Medal in a naturalization ceremony welcoming 15 new Americans. The medal recognizes Lauren’s lifetime contributions to American entrepreneurship, artistry, creativity and vision. Additionally, Lauren played a leadership role in the preservation of the Star-Spangled Banner.

The anthemforamerica.si.edu website will feature an interactive timeline titled, “The Banner Yet Waves: 200 Years of the Star-Spangled Banner,” which will have traditional renditions of the anthem from its origins as well as contemporary renditions and interviews by music artists including Blacc and Johnson. Content will be updated regularly throughout May and June with additional recordings. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) will air through Litton Entertainment on ABC’s Saturday morning programming. <https://vimeo.com/93398986>

The Smithsonian Channel and the museum are collaborating on a documentary titled, *A Star-Spangled Story: Battle for America*, which premieres June 14 at 9 p.m. EDT. The film documents the story behind the 200-year-old anthem – from the burning of Washington to the creation of the iconic American flag – revealing the forgotten battle that could have changed the fate of the nation.

Through incomparable collections, rigorous research and dynamic public outreach, the museum explores the infinite richness and complexity of American history and helps people understand the past in order to make sense of the present and shape a more humane future. It is currently renovating its west exhibition wing, developing galleries on business, democracy and culture. For more information, visit <http://americanhistory.si.edu>. To engage with “Raise It Up!” on Twitter use #raiseitup.

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