



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Contact:

Emma Vodick, 630.305.5250

vodicke@naperville.il.us

523 S. Webster St. • Naperville, Illinois 60540-6517

P: 630.420.6010 • F: 630.305.4044 • W: [napersettlement.org](http://napersettlement.org)

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### **Naper Settlement explores the evolution of freedom**

**Naperville, IL** — During a month that is full of historic dates and notable birthdays significant in telling our country's journey to freedom, Naper Settlement is pleased to announce that *Freedom: A History of US* exhibit is on view from Feb. 15 to March 12. This traveling exhibit, on loan from the Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History, explores the evolution of freedom by examining critical figures and events in U.S. history from founding until 1968. This exhibit is free with daily museum admission, which is \$5.25 adults, \$4.75 seniors (62+) and \$4 youth (4-12). Naperville residents (with proof of residency) and members receive free admission.

"We are always looking for ways to connect Naperville's story to the larger context of national history," said Naper Settlement's Curator of Exhibits & Interpretation, Jennifer Bridge. "The topic of freedom touches on so many social and political movements in American life— woman suffrage, abolition and civil rights. It's exciting to see the range of artifacts represented by reproductions in the exhibit, as well as the original items we're adding to the display."

This exhibition examines how the idea of civil rights has changed over time with panels displaying important documents, letters and speeches. Visitors will be able to view reproductions of a rare 1776 printing of the Declaration of Independence, a secretly printed draft and official copy of the U.S. Constitution, Lincoln's handwritten notes of speeches and letters by leading figures such as Frederick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony and others.

Naper Settlement will also have a variety of local components on display, including items courtesy of North Central College Archives. Among reproductions of a letter written from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and a NCC Chapel Convocation Program, there are a pair of shoes on display that were worn by North Central College student, Mike Bibler, who wore them to the Selma March in 1965. Bibler borrowed these shoes from his roommate, Hal Temple, who then donated them to the college in 2005.

North Central College's Associate Professor and Chair of History, Dr. William Barnett thinks it's important to tell Naperville's civil rights story, especially to college students. "Students are interested in learning about the North Central College students who took buses down to Selma, and the fact that Martin Luther King spoke at their college. It puts Naperville on the map historically," said Dr. Barnett. "They realize students 50 years ago made a difference, and that they can make a difference too."

The museum's local artifacts include a book published in 1864 titled "The History of Slavery and the Slave Trade", which was donated to Naper Settlement by the Nichols Library, and the Naperville Lyceum's record of proceedings from 1836-1843 where they recorded discussions on topics such as the future of slavery and a women's place in society.

On Feb. 16, Naper Settlement hosted an opening ceremony for the exhibit. Guests enjoyed a special preview of the exhibit and presentation by Dr. William Barnett. His presentation brought the exhibit's topic of freedom into the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Dr. Barnett thinks the exhibit can reach a wide age range from elementary school kids to retirees. "The exhibit is well done," said Dr. Barnett. "In just two rooms you are getting a really complicated layer of story about what freedom means from the Founding Fathers to the Civil War to emancipation."

### **About Naper Settlement**

Naper Settlement is a nationally accredited, award-winning outdoor museum set on 12 magnificent acres in the heart of Naperville, where history comes to play and community comes to connect. For more information, visit [www.napersettlement.org](http://www.napersettlement.org) or call (630) 420-6010.

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