



**NEWS RELEASE
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Tampa Bay History Center Hosts Emancipation Day Celebration

(Tampa, FL) - The Tampa Bay History Center, together with the Tampa Bay Chapter of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), is celebrating Florida Emancipation Day on Wednesday, May 20, 2009 at 5:00 p.m. The program is free and open to the public.

Dr. Cheryl Rodriguez, director of the Institute on Black Life at the University of South Florida, will preside. Local elected officials and other community leaders will take part in a staged reading of the Emancipation Proclamation in the History Center's TECO Hall followed by guest speaker Dr. Sydel LeGrande. The program will end with Attorney Warren Hope Dawson moderating a panel discussion on the 55th anniversary of the Brown vs. Board of Education Supreme Court decision.

"We're very excited to see this Emancipation Day commemoration take place and we think the new Tampa Bay History Center is the perfect setting for the event," said Fred Hearn, president of ASALH and organizer of the Florida Emancipation Day Celebration.

It was May 20th 1865, two years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, that Florida's African Americans were freed from the indignity of bondage. U.S. soldiers and freed blacks traveled throughout Florida, trumpeting the news that Florida's slaves had been set free.

Emancipation Day begins at 5 p.m. at the Tampa Bay History Center, 801 Old Water Street. Call (813) 248-0097 or visit www.tampabayhistorycenter.org for more information.

About the Tampa Bay History Center

The new 60,000-square-foot Tampa Bay History Center in Tampa's bustling Channelside District takes an illuminating walk through 12,000 years of powerful stories. The Center features the first native inhabitants, Spanish conquistadors, pioneers, sports legends, a 1920s-era cigar store, interactive maps, and exhibits that feature a rich ethnic heritage and adventurous spirit that has inspired generations. The four-floor Center boasts a visually captivating atrium, a theater, map center, library, event hall, museum store and the Columbia Café.

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