

# Buffalo Soldiers National Museum – Press Release

October 31, 2022

## BUFFALO SOLDIERS NATIONAL MUSEUM TO EXPAND AND EXTEND ITS IMPACT WITH \$13 MILLION CAMPAIGN

*The nation's largest African American military history museum, located in Houston's Museum District, receives \$2 million anchor gift from Kinder Foundation*

HOUSTON – October 31, 2022 – [The Buffalo Soldiers National Museum](#), the nation's largest museum dedicated to the legacy of African Americans in the military and the largest private collection of African American military memorabilia anywhere in the world, announced today the receipt of an anchor gift of \$2 million from the Kinder Foundation toward the museum's recently launched \$13 million "Ready & Forward" campaign. The gift, along with gifts given by Texas Historical Commission, Houston Endowment, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation, will support the museum's efforts to repair and renovate the museum facility (the historic Houston Light Guard Armory building), expand and improve its exhibitions and programming, and establish long-term sustainability and an endowment.

Also known as the Center for African American History, the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum is a national asset located right here in Houston. It exists to tell, by way of performing and visual arts, educational programming, and exhibitions, the stories and contributions of African Americans in the military. Named the Buffalo Soldiers by Native Americans during the Indian Wars, African American soldiers have served in the United States Armed Forces in every war in our nation's history.

"We are grateful to our partners including the Kinder Foundation for endorsing the importance of our mission," said Desmond Bertrand-Pitts, CEO of Buffalo Soldiers National Museum. "Their gift equips us to expand our reach, improve the visitor experience and preserve our historic building so that generations to come can learn and grow appreciation for the gallant efforts of those who serve."

### **A history of the museum**

Buffalo Soldiers National Museum was founded in 2000 by Vietnam veteran and African American military historian Captain Paul J. Matthews and his wife Barbara Matthews after realizing there was no place to learn about the roles and contributions of African Americans in the military. When the Matthews' private collection of African American military memorabilia outgrew their garage and dining room, they opened a space in Houston's historic Third Ward to display the collection and share their passion for the Buffalo Soldier's unique history with the broader community. Captain Matthews stated, "although we focus on and feature the African American military experience, we are an American History institution and we want the world to know that."

In the following years, the museum expanded and eventually moved to its current home, the historic Houston Light Guard Armory building in the city's Museum District. In 2017, Hurricane

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Harvey caused extensive damage to the building. Funds raised from the *Ready & Forward* campaign will allow crucial interior and exterior repairs to be completed, as well as make essential improvements that will expand exhibit and archival spaces and enhance the visitor experience.

The museum itself is a bastion of generational legacy. Today, Buffalo Soldiers National Museum is run by founder Captain Matthews' grandson, Desmond Bertrand-Pitts.

“My charge as a legacy leader is to carry forth the vision of my grandfather, but my responsibility as an educator, community advocate and descendant of African American men and women who built this country, is to continue to tell the unapologetic truth of service and sacrifice,” said Bertrand-Pitts.

### **Its collections and impact**

Buffalo Soldiers National Museum's collection consists of more than 4,500 items, approximately half of which were donated to the museum by founder Captain Matthews. The collection includes photographs and paintings, sculptures, medals and insignia, memorabilia, military rifles, handguns, grenades, currency, letters, discharge papers, proclamations, uniforms, and helmets, and it continues to grow over time through gifts and acquisitions. The collection is displayed through permanent and rotating exhibits covering seven wars spanning over centuries of military conflicts ranging from the Revolutionary War to present day.

As the premier venue for the subject matter in the United States and abroad, Buffalo Soldiers National Museum sees 30,000 visitors annually through its extensive partnership network, which includes local public and private schools, colleges and universities, community organizations, research centers, arts organizations, business groups, and veteran associations.

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