About the Urban Civil Rights Museum in Harlem

The Urban Civil Rights Museum in Harlem, is the National Urban League's groundbreaking institution that explores the overlooked history of civil rights activism, racial justice, and Black life in America's urban centers, with a particular focus on the North. Located in Harlem, the historic birthplace of the National Urban League, the museum will illuminate how African Americans shaped, transformed, and fought for equality in cities across the nation while confronting discrimination, segregation, and systemic barriers that existed far beyond the Jim Crow South.

As one of the few museums in the nation dedicated to examining the civil rights movement in Northern cities, the Urban Civil Rights Museum in Harlem challenges conventional narratives that confine civil rights history to the South and the 1950s and 1960s. Instead, the museum takes a sweeping view of the African American freedom struggle, tracing its roots from enslavement and the Atlantic slave trade through Reconstruction, the Great Migration, the Harlem Renaissance, the modern Civil Rights Movement, and the Black Lives Matter era.

Led by Founding Executive Director and Chief Curator Jennifer Scott, the museum explores little-examined stories of Black communities in Northern cities, including free Black settlements, labor and economic history, housing and educational inequities, grassroots activism, and the cultural movements that transformed urban America.

The museum is designed not only to preserve history but also to inspire civic engagement and social change. immersive exhibitions, educational programming, public forums, arts and cultural events, and community dialogue offer a deeper understanding of the struggles and achievements that have shaped American democracy and continue to influence contemporary battles for justice and equality.

A brainchild of National Urban League President and CEO Marc H. Morial, the Urban Civil Rights Museum is a cornerstone of the Urban League Empowerment Center, a transformative $242 million development in Harlem that also includes the organization's national headquarters, affordable housing, nonprofit office space, and community-serving retail. Together, these elements reflect the National Urban League's enduring mission to advance economic empowerment, civil rights, and equal opportunity for all.

By preserving untold stories, amplifying underrepresented voices, and connecting historical lessons to present-day challenges, the Urban Civil Rights Museum in Harlem serves as a vital national destination for learning, reflection, dialogue, and action.