

Statement for Congressman Donald M. Payne
Committee on Natural Resources - Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands
Hearing on HR 4036: National Liberty Memorial Act
1334 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, DC
Thursday, September 16, 2010 – 10:00am

Chairman Grijalva, Ranking Member Bishop, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share a statement today. I would also like to thank Mr. Maurice Barboza; since 1988 he has been at the forefront of the mission to honor enslaved and free Black persons who fought in the American Revolution.

In the last half of the 18th Century, thirteen colonies in North America joined together to fight for political and economic freedom from the British Empire. In 1776, those colonies succeeded and became the United States of America. At that time, many enslaved and free Black persons within the colonies fought not only for the country's goal of political and economic freedom, but for personal freedom and emancipation from the bondage of slavery.

Over 5,000 enslaved and free Black persons fought for independence, liberty, and justice for all during the American Revolution. Unfortunately, after the war, many were still denied the very freedom for which they risked their lives. These countless forgotten heroes of the American Revolution deserve to be honored; their story deserves to be told.

HR 4036, the National Liberty Memorial Act seeks to memorialize our unsung heroes. The National Liberty Memorial Act will restore honor to these Americans who risked their lives for the sake of the nation by establishing a memorial on Federal land in the District of Columbia. I am honored to serve as the sponsor for this important legislation and appreciate the opportunity to share with you today.