



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Centennial Celebration at Allensworth

Hollywood Star Leads Tribute to Town at Center of California's African American Roots

Hollywood actor William Allen Young will headline the 100th Anniversary celebration October 11 and 12 at Allensworth, the "black town that refused to die."

Young, an awarding-winning actor and director will be taking center stage. Young is recognized by millions of fans as Frank Mitchell, the touch-but-loving father on the hit TV series "Moesha," and as the corrupt Chief Judge Joseph Ratner on "CSI Miami."

In addition, Rick Moss, the director and chief curator for the African American Museum in Oakland, will also be attending and speaking. Moss has held the position since July 2001, prior to which he was the Program Manager of History at the California African American Museum of Los Angeles (CAAM), a State of California Museum. He is currently a member of the California State Historical Resources Commission.

"We are blessed to live in challenging times because it forces us to rise to the occasion or be content to watch from the sidelines. I am honored to have been asked to participate in the Allensworth Centennial Celebration, and always encouraged by the vision of this remarkable man who confronted the greatest challenge of his time and did not waver."

Revving up the Centennial celebration will be the world famous musical group, the Crenshaw High School Elite Choir. The group has performed for Kings, Queens, presidents and others around the world and at such prestigious events as the World Choir Games and they provided the music for the celebration of life of the legendary Ray Charles during the private family celebration and observances. The Crenshaw High School Elite Choir has gained worldwide acclaim under the direction of Professor Iris Stevenson, the renowned music teach and Chairperson of the Music Department at Crenshaw High School in Los Angeles.

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From the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C., the founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, Lonnie G. Bunch III, will be attending and speaking at the celebration. Bunch brings the considerable stature and prestige of the Smithsonian in drawing attention to the significance of this historic community to the African American community of America.

Why would the famous take time to go to a centennial celebration in a tiny town named Allensworth in the remote southern reaches of the San Joaquin Valley?

This formerly thriving community, which most people have never heard of, is the place where African Americans put down their own roots in California, the only town in California founded, financed and governed by African American citizens. As such, this community became one of the most important places in the history of African Americans in this nation. It is the place in California where African Americans felt they could start new lives in a new land, a place to live in a self-sufficient environment, free from discrimination. This accomplishment, not long after the years of slavery, is seen as profound and distinguished and worthy of an extraordinary celebration.

To celebrate the Allensworth Centennial, California State Parks, the California Department of Transportation, the Legislative Black Caucus and the California State Park Foundation, have scheduled a grand two-day celebration at the State Historic Park on October 11 and 12. During this 100th anniversary celebration, the town will be filled with educational programming, movie stars and entertainers, volunteers in period costumes, special events and tours, live music and entertainment, and a wide variety of great food.

“The significance of Allensworth has import for all Californians. Our history, indeed, is the platform from which we spring. Col. Allensworth’s dream of progress and self-sufficiency, shared with his contemporary, Booker T. Washington, imbued the residents of Allensworth with a can-do attitude which they took with them and spread throughout California. Let’s celebrate that pioneering spirit, which is indeed the spirit of our Golden State.”

Getting to Allensworth the Easy Way

It is anticipated that many thousands of celebrants and supporters from all across the country will be arriving on Saturday, October 11. So, if you want an easy way to get there, Amtrak has agreed to provide special trains and added stops by many regular service trains from the major metropolitan areas of California to assist the thousands who are expected to make the journey. For information on the schedule of trains and the rates, please visit the following web site: www.parks.ca.gov/allensworth/allaboard .

Allensworth is a town founded by a former slave, Allen Allensworth, who escaped and joined the Union Army during the Civil War and later became chaplain to the 24th Infantry, becoming a Lieutenant Colonel, the first African American to attain such high rank. He believed that through education and hard work, African Americans could rise above the effects of slavery and realize their potential. To attain that dream, Allensworth and several others founded a town in 1908.

Other contacts:

1. Office of Assembly Speaker Karen Bass
Press contact – Steve Maviglio (916) 319-2408
2. Office of Senator Mark Ridley-Thomas
Press contact – Fahizah Alim (916) 651-4026
3. California Black Media
Press contact – Regina Brown Wilson (916) 319-0693

Special note to editors, reporters and photographers

This town provides an amazing opportunity for journalists who wish to gather photographs and special stories that capture the pioneering spirit that built this unique settlement. Homes and businesses, the school and community church and many other buildings have been restored as they were in the early 1900s.

Please visit our State Parks websites for Press Pictures

www.parks.ca.gov/allensworth/centennial - Information about the centennial event

www.parks.ca.gov/allensworth/allaboard - Information about the Amtrak trains to Allensworth during the event

www.parks.ca.gov/allensworth/virtualtour - **Press Pictures** -- Images of Allensworth's buildings, photos are copyrighted to California State Parks but may be used for press/media use only (credit line is © 2008 California State Parks)

www.parks.ca.gov/allensworth/formedia – **Press Pictures** --Information specifically for the media, including press releases, links, and information about requesting photographs for media use (in addition to and in higher resolution than those on our Virtual Tour webpage mentioned above) (Please do not release this address to public, it is press only)

About the Allensworth Restoration

Allensworth is one of the 50 State Historic Parks within the State park system. Since 1985, California State Parks has spent over \$9.4 million for reconstruction, restoration, furnishings and infrastructure at the historic park. Extensive road, utility and other infrastructure improvements have been made. More than 22 different structures have been reconstructed or restored, to include the historic Baptist church, the Hackett house, Hackett barn, Ashby house and barn, Johnson Bakery/residence, the Carter Livery Stable and the historic hotel. Today, a walk through this town and through the historic homes, businesses, the church and the school, is an experience in turning back the clock, because one sees much of this restored community as it appeared in the early 1900s.

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