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PRESS KIT

**Exhibition Press Release**

**Checklist** (PDF 635kb)

**Press Event Audio** (44:24 min)

**Related Activities**

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The 54th Massachusetts Regiment is Honored in “Tell It with Pride” Exhibition to Mark the 150th Anniversary Year of the Battle of Fort Wagner, National Gallery of Art, September 15, 2013–January 20, 2014



Carl J. Cruz, a great-great-grandnephew of Sergeant William H. Carney of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry, the first African American regiment formed in the North during the Civil War, holds the Medal of Honor awarded to Carney for his bravery in the Battle of Fort Wagner, SC, on July 18, 1863. The Medal of Honor, the first awarded to an African American, will be included in the exhibition “Tell It with Pride,” at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, September 15, 2013–January 20, 2014 and at the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, February 23–May 26, 2014. Photograph by Deborah Ziska, National Gallery of Art.

Washington, DC—Continuing its year-long celebration of African American history, art, music, and culture, the National Gallery of Art announces a major exhibition honoring one of the first regiments of African Americans formed during the Civil War. ***Tell It with Pride: The 54th Massachusetts Regiment and Augustus Saint-Gaudens’ Shaw Memorial*** will be on view in the American galleries on the West Building’s Main Floor from September 15, 2013, through January 20, 2014. The 54th Massachusetts fought in the Battle of Fort Wagner, South Carolina, on July 18, 1863, an event that has been documented and retold in many forms, including the popular movie *Glory*, released in 1989.

“Then, as today, the soldiers of the 54th Massachusetts Regiment captured the imagination: they were common men propelled by deep moral principles, willing to sacrifice everything for a nation that had taken much from them but now promised liberty,” said Earl A. Powell III, director, National Gallery of Art. “This exhibition celebrates the brave members of the 54th, Augustus Saint-Gaudens’ Shaw Memorial commemorating their heroism, and the works of art they and the monument continue to inspire.”

The exhibition is organized by the National Gallery of Art, Washington.

Following its debut at the Gallery, it will travel to the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston, February 21 – May 23, 2014.

The exhibition is made possible through the generous support of GRoW, an initiative of the Annenberg Foundation.

Additional support is provided by the Trellis Fund.

The magisterial Shaw Memorial (1900) by Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907), on long-term loan to the Gallery from the U.S. Department of the Interior, the National Park Service, and the Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, is considered by many to be one of the finest examples of 19th-century American sculpture. This monument commemorates the July 18, 1863, storming of Fort Wagner by Colonel Robert Gould Shaw and the 54th Massachusetts, a troop of African American soldiers led by white officers that was formed immediately after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Although one-third of the regiment was killed or wounded in the assault, including Shaw himself, the fierce battle was considered by many to be a turning point in the war: it proved that African Americans could be exemplary soldiers, with a bravery and dedication to country that equaled the nation's most celebrated heroes.

Part of the exhibition's title, "Tell It with Pride," is taken from an anonymous letter written to the Shaw family announcing the death of Robert Gould Shaw. The letter is included in the exhibition and the catalogue accompanying the show.

When Saint-Gaudens created the figures in the memorial, he based his depiction of Shaw on photographs of the colonel, but he hired African American models, not members of the 54th Massachusetts, to pose for the other soldiers. This exhibition seeks to make real the anonymous African American soldiers of the 54th, giving them names and faces where possible. The first section of the exhibition shows vintage photographic portraits of the soldiers, the people who recruited them—including the noted abolitionists Frederick Douglass, Wendell Phillips, Charles Lenox Remond, and Sojourner Truth—and the women who nursed, taught, and guided them, such as Clara Barton, Charlotte Forten, and Harriet Tubman. In addition, the exhibition presents a copy of the Emancipation Proclamation, a recruiting poster, a letter written by a soldier, Corporal James Henry Gooding, to President Lincoln arguing for equal pay, and the Medal of Honor awarded to the first African American to earn this distinction, Sergeant William H. Carney, as well as other documents related to both the 54th Massachusetts and the Battle of Fort Wagner. Together, these works of art and documents detail critical events in American history and highlight both the sacrifices and the valor of the individual soldiers.

The second half of the exhibition looks at the continuing legacy of the 54th Massachusetts, the Battle of Fort Wagner, and the Shaw Memorial. By presenting some of the plaster heads Saint-Gaudens made in preparation for his work on the Shaw Memorial, the exhibition discusses its development from 1883, when Saint Gaudens' concept began to take shape, through the installation of the bronze monument on Boston Common in 1897, to the artist's final re-working in the late 1890s of the original plaster now on view at the National Gallery of Art. The exhibition concludes by showing how the Shaw Memorial remains a deeply compelling work that continues to inspire artists as diverse as Lewis Hine, Richard Benson, Carrie Mae Weems, and William Earle Williams, who have reflected on these people, the event, and the monument itself in their own art.

Sarah Greenough, senior curator and head of the department of photographs, and Nancy Anderson, curator and head of American and British paintings, are the curators of the exhibition, which is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue and a printed brochure. The catalogue includes essays by Greenough and Anderson, along with Lindsay Harris and Renée Ater; Richard J. Powell wrote the preface.

An online feature about the memorial is available at [www.nga.gov/feature/shaw/home.shtm](http://www.nga.gov/feature/shaw/home.shtm).

Two films will be presented in the Gallery's East Building Large Auditorium in conjunction with the exhibition, as listed below. Admission is free of charge; first-come, first seated.

### **Glory**

Introduction by Ed Zwick  
Washington premiere of the digital restoration  
Sunday, September 15, 4:00

In conjunction with the exhibition *Tell It with Pride: The 54th Massachusetts Regiment and Augustus Saint-Gaudens' Shaw Memorial*, and in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Civil War, this new restoration of *Glory*, the landmark film dramatizing the establishment of the first African American fighting unit and the July 18, 1863, storming of Fort Wagner (a turning point in the war) will be introduced and discussed by director Ed Zwick. (Ed Zwick, 1989, DCP, 122 minutes)

### **The Massachusetts 54th Colored Infantry**

Introduction by Mark Samels  
Saturday, September 21, 2:30

This PBS *American Experience* production about the formation of the 54th Massachusetts, the volunteer regiment of northern black soldiers formed after Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, is introduced by WGBH-Boston's award-winning executive producer Mark Samels. Discussion follows the screening. (Mark Samels, 1991, HD-Cam, 120 minutes)

## General Information

The National Gallery of Art and its Sculpture Garden are at all times free to the public. They are located on the National Mall between 3rd and 9th Streets at Constitution Avenue NW, and are open Monday through Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. and Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. The Gallery is closed on December 25 and January 1. With the exception of the atrium and library, the galleries in the East Building will remain closed for approximately three years for Master Facilities Plan and renovations. For specific updates on gallery closings, visit <http://www.nga.gov/content/ngaweb/Collection/modern-art-during-renovation.html>.

For information call (202) 737-4215 or the Telecommunications Device for the Deaf (TDD) at (202) 842-6176, or visit the Gallery's Web site at [www.nga.gov](http://www.nga.gov). Follow the Gallery on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt](http://www.facebook.com/NationalGalleryofArt) and on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/ngadc](http://www.twitter.com/ngadc).

Visitors will be asked to present all carried items for inspection upon entering. Checkrooms are free of charge and located at each entrance. Luggage and other oversized bags must be presented at the 4th Street entrances to the East or West Building to permit x-ray screening and must be deposited in the checkrooms at those entrances. For the safety of visitors and the works of art, nothing may be carried into the Gallery on a visitor's back. Any bag or other items that cannot be carried reasonably and safely in some other manner must be left in the checkrooms. Items larger than 17 by 26 inches cannot be accepted by the Gallery or its checkrooms.

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