



## NEW YORK CITY COMMEMORATES BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH LAUNCH OF FILM CELEBRATING BLACK LIVES IN EARLY NEW YORK

*—NYC & Company, the Black Gotham Experience and New York City Public Design Commission Launch “Epicenter, The Grounds: The Black Experience Through the Eyes of City Hall”—*

*—Also in Celebration of Black History Month, NYC & Company Launches New Content on [The Black Experience in NYC](#), “Rising Stars of the Black Community”—*

**New York City (February 3, 2023)** – NYC & Company, the official destination marketing organization and convention and visitors bureau for the five boroughs of New York City, is proud to support today’s launch of a new film tour highlighting NYC’s early Black history, created by the [Black Gotham Experience](#) in conjunction with [New York City Public Design Commission](#). The new film, “**Epicenter, The Grounds: The Black Experience Through the Eyes of City Hall**,” celebrates the achievements, struggles and the historical resonance of the African diaspora’s impact on NYC within the built environment of City Hall. Black culture is integral to the identity of NYC, the city with the largest Black population in the United States—making up nearly a quarter of residents—and its influence can be felt across the five boroughs in many forms. The new film tour is now available at [nycgo.com/bgx](#) and [nyc.gov/designcommission](#).

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DATE  
February 3, 2023

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“I am thrilled to see this historical narrative shared with New Yorkers and beyond. This is a historic moment of recognition—“Epicenter, The Grounds: The Black Experience Through the Eyes of City Hall” presents a lens through which to understand the critical yet undervalued history of the African diaspora in the making of City Hall and New York City,” said **Maria Torres-Springer, Deputy Mayor for Economic & Workforce Development**. “The contributions of Black New Yorkers will not be buried, and we are committed to continuing to share the stories of the diverse communities that make up our great city.”

“New York City takes another critical step toward restoring suppressed narratives by establishing the Epicenter program,” said **Kamau Ware, Founder, the Black Gotham Experience**. “These walking tours and short film series center the African diaspora’s impact on New York City over four centuries and three City Halls. It has been an honor to work with the New York City Public Design Commission to create the first walking tour to focus exclusively on the Black experience in New York City Hall.”

“New York City’s Black communities enrich the diversity and vibrancy felt across the five boroughs, providing experiences like no other destination in the



world,” said **Fred Dixon, President and CEO of NYC & Company**. “It is essential to educate locals and visitors alike on the untold stories of early Black New Yorkers who contributed so much to our city. We commend Kamau and his important storytelling through the Black Gotham Experience and are proud to support the launch of the new Epicenter film.”

“We are proud to support the Black Gotham Experience and the New York City Public Design Commission on the momentous launch of the Epicenter film,” said **Rondel Holder, SVP, Content and Diversity Initiatives at NYC & Company**. “This enlightening film educates viewers on early Black history in New York City that has historically been left out of conversations but is such an integral part of our history and the city we know and love today.”

“Epicenter, the short film, is eye-opening and has had such a positive impact on my experience working in City Hall every day,” said **Sreoshi Banerjea, Executive Director of the New York City Public Design Commission**. “I cannot wait for others to experience the film and expand their knowledge around the African diaspora’s impact on New York City and City Hall. I look forward to working on finding ways to scale the impact the Epicenter program can have on New Yorkers.”

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The 14-minute film educates viewers on Black lives in early NYC through a guided tour of City Hall. City Hall is not just the epicenter of NYC’s government, it is a portal through which to understand the history of New York, America and the world. Enslaved Africans played a critical yet underappreciated role in this history. With the Epicenter tour, Black Gotham reveals some of their stories through an interactive exploration of the African diaspora’s impact on lower Manhattan from the 1600s through the early 1800s. Participants will learn about the lives of enslaved and freed Black people under Dutch and British rule, the early days of our republic, the rebellions of 1712 and 1741, and the hidden stories of revolutionary New York.

Following a New York Emmy Award for the Freedom To Be Series, NYC & Company launched [“Rising Stars of The Black Community,”](#) featuring a handful of dynamic locals leading and cultivating culture in NYC while exemplifying the vast array of expressions within the Black experience. Rising Stars features an artist who creates beauty and sanctuary through knitting, a photographer-historian with a distinctive lens on local life, a TV network executive turned convention founder who champions Black creatives, a businessman devoted to Black entrepreneurship and economic empowerment and a Brooklyn couple—a journalist and lawyer by trade—who document Black stories and cultivate collaborative spaces.

For more ways to explore Black culture across NYC’s five boroughs, visit NYC & Company’s content hub [The Black Experience in NYC](#), dedicated to celebrating and amplifying NYC’s Black experiences and communities.

**About NYC & Company:**

NYC & Company is the official destination marketing organization and convention and visitors bureau for the City of New York, dedicated to maximizing travel and



tourism opportunities throughout the five boroughs, building economic prosperity and spreading the positive image of New York City worldwide. For all there is to do and see in New York City, visit [nycgo.com](http://nycgo.com).

**About Black Gotham Experience:**

Started by Kamau Ware in 2008, Black Gotham Experience has been giving walking tours of lower Manhattan since 2010, combining history and visual storytelling to celebrate the impact of the African Diaspora on New York City. Black Gotham also creates graphic novels that fill in the missing visuals of these lived experiences.

**About New York City Public Design Commission:**

As New York City’s design review agency, the Public Design Commission (PDC) has jurisdiction over permanent structures, landscape architecture, and art proposed on or over City-owned property. The mission of the PDC is to advocate for innovative, sustainable, and equitable design of public spaces and civic structures, with a goal of improving the public realm and therefore related services for all New Yorkers throughout the five boroughs. The PDC also acts as caretaker and curator of the City’s public art collection, which is located throughout the city’s public buildings and open spaces and maintains an extensive archive documenting the history of New York City’s public works.

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**Link to Video:** <https://spaces.hightail.com/space/ir8nS1fqr6>

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