



D.C. CONTINUES COUNT DOWN TO AMERICA 250 WITH '51 STEPS TO FREEDOM'

*Groundbreaking Immersive Media History Trail Turns Washington into the
Largest Outdoor Museum — In the World*

*Supporters Say the Augmented Reality Tour Will Attract Tourists, Boost the Economy and
Foster Deeper Understanding of America's Shared History*

WASHINGTON — June 30, 2025 — District of Columbia leaders have begun the countdown to July 4, 2026, the 250th anniversary of the United States, and have officially unveiled a key element the nation's capital will use to celebrate this milestone.

[51 Steps To Freedom](#), an augmented reality walking tour, transforms Washington, D.C., into the largest outdoor museum — in the world. The name stands for "50 States, One Nation," and in the coming year, it will grow to include 51 locations. The pilot app, featuring the first 16 immersive stops in beta, is now available for public use, kicking off the countdown to America 250.

This immersive media tour brings America's untold stories to life in the palm of a person's hand, right where they happened. From unsung changemakers to overlooked landmarks, the app allows users to explore the powerful legacies that continue to shape our nation's path toward liberty and opportunity.

In addition, this tour encourages visitors to explore the full breadth of D.C. and engage all neighborhoods, as many of these stops are located in spots beyond traditional, heavily trafficked areas.

Participants use the free mobile app to unlock interactive media, videos, music, artwork and archival audio that bring D.C.'s untold stories to life, in a format some supporters compare to Pokémon GO.

"As you walk the trail, your phone becomes a portal into the past," says H.H. Leonards, co-founder of 51 Steps To Freedom. "You unlock powerful moments from America's journey — stories of resilience, activism and innovation that continue to shape who we are and where we're going."

More than a tribute to the past, 51 Steps To Freedom is designed to inspire understanding and civic reflection. Along the trail, users can engage with the U.S. Constitution and digitally sign the Declaration of Independence as a recommitment to civic ideals.

The experience, when completed, will span eight miles and include over 300 stories. Some stops in the pilot app include the Washington Monument, Frederick Douglass' home, NASA headquarters, National Archives, African American Civil War Memorial, The Howard Theatre and Lafayette Square Park.

“D.C. is more than just a historic place and 51 Steps To Freedom is the stage for our collective story. It’s not about one place or one moment — it’s about the people, principles and progress that connect every part of the country, and it invites visitors to take their step forward in the American story. Just like there’s ‘only one D.C.,’ there’s only one tour like this, anywhere, in the world,” says Leonards.

51 Steps as an Economic Driver

Elliott Ferguson, President and CEO of Destination DC says, “We’re ready to welcome the nation and the world to our capital city and we need a new and exciting way to mark America 250. Congratulations to 51 Steps To Freedom for kick-starting what we know will be a monumental celebration.”

Ferguson notes that a similar initiative in Boston, the Freedom Trail, attracts over 4 million visitors each year. He joins others in suggesting 51 Steps will create similar success in the District.

“Events DC is proud to be a founding sponsor of 51 Steps To Freedom,” says Events DC President and CEO Angie M. Gates. “51 Steps To Freedom vividly brings to life the diverse narratives of Washington, D.C.’s neighborhoods, highlighting the rich cultural heritage that shapes our city. From our historic corridors to our vibrant local businesses, 51 Steps To Freedom serves as a dynamic museum that connects residents and visitors alike.”

The trail was developed with support from the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, Destination DC, Events DC, the DC Office of Cable Television, Film, Music and Entertainment, and the DC History Center.

51 Steps To Freedom: Pilot App Details

Pay What You Can/Free Tickets: www.51stepstofreedom.org (ticket allows user to download the app for iOS and Android)

Watch how the trail works: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cli1YD9Eq0>

Watch a featured site, The Howard Theatre: <https://vimeo.com/985125041>

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51 Steps To Freedom is a Washington, D.C.-based non-profit organization dedicated to creating the largest outdoor museum — in the world. This trail fosters a deeper understanding of America’s shared history. 51 Steps provides an educational experience that encourages reflection, inspires hope and fosters understanding, helping us to move forward together toward a brighter tomorrow. www.51stepstofreedom.org

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