



**NEWS RELEASE**  
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**U. S. Commission on Civil Rights Announces Commemoration of the 150th Anniversary of the Passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution**

Washington, DC – The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights commemorates and celebrates the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment, adopted on January 31, 1865 and ratified later that same year. The Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in the United States and provides that "Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." Passage of the Amendment was a monumental achievement and followed the terrible bloodshed of the Civil War whose effects are still felt 150 years later.

Although it took nearly a century after Emancipation to create the Commission on Civil Rights, from its inception in 1957 the Commission has made the ideal of a fully racially integrated society its goal. Much of the Commission's work since its founding has been to document the ways in which descendants of African-American slaves have been deprived or denied equal protection under law because of their race or color. This commemoration recognizes both the wrongs of slavery and the hopeful path to the future in which all Americans live together in a more civil society.

Chairman Martin R. Castro stated, "No action of men has transformed the future of a nation and of countless generations, like passage of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment. While today we commemorate it, the work we perform daily seeks to eradicate the continuing effects the institution of slavery has imprinted on our nation."

The Commission has a unique role in evaluating the state of civil rights on an ongoing basis and to further its outreach is pleased to announce plans to reflect on the enormous significance of the Civil War Amendments in a series of events. These events will engage both scholars and the public and provide opportunities to learn in depth about the remarkable turning point the Civil War Amendments represent in the nation's history.

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The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with advising the President and Congress on civil rights matters and issuing a federal civil rights enforcement report. For information about Commission's reports and meetings, visit <http://www.usccr.gov>.