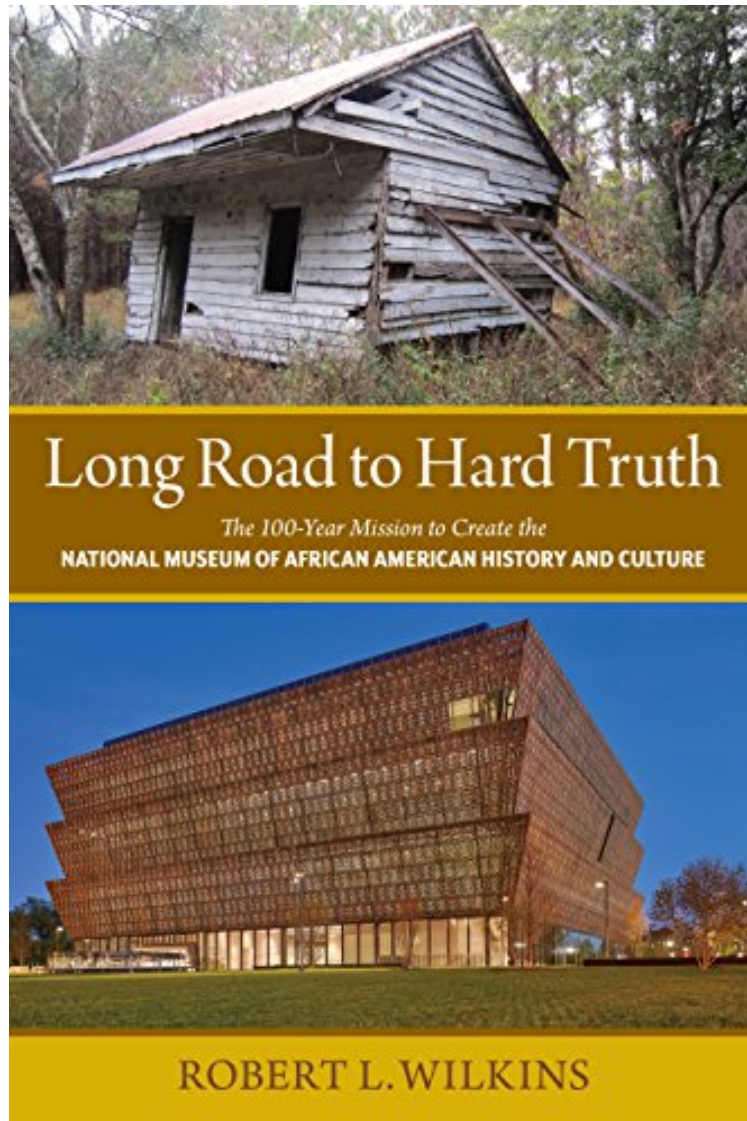


[Download pdf ebook] Long Road to Hard Truth: The 100 Year Mission to Create the National Museum of African American History and Culture

# Long Road to Hard Truth: The 100 Year Mission to Create the National Museum of African American History and Culture

*Robert Leon Wilkins*

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**Robert Leon Wilkins : Long Road to Hard Truth: The 100 Year Mission to Create the National Museum of African American History and Culture** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Long Road to Hard Truth: The 100 Year Mission to Create the National Museum of African American History and Culture:

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. Beautiful, personal story of the fruition of a long-deferred dream. By

Terrence Franklin Just finished reading this thin beautiful volume about the long struggle to create this extraordinary new museum. Truly personal, it explains how the author was led to a mission to build on the work of his spiritual ancestors, and move the arc of history forward. Forsaking gainful enjoyment, and with a pregnant, supportive saint of a wife, he brought all his skills as a Harvard-trained trial lawyer to overcome endless obstacles to help bring the museum to fruition. The testament to his work now sits on the National Mall, across from the memorial to our First President, a profiteer of slavery. It calls this country to account and reckon with its past, even as it embraces hope for our future.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The Amazing Story of How the NMAAHC Was Built By Angela J. Davis Robert Wilkins does a great job of recounting the surprising story of how long it took to establish the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Well-researched and well-written, this book will leave the reader with a great appreciation of the struggle to build this beautiful museum that now stands as the crowning glory of the National Mall. Most interesting is the critical role that Wilkins himself played in making the dream of this museum a reality. This is a must-read for anyone interested in the National Museum of African American History and Culture.

5 of 6 people found the following review helpful. 100 Years By AMNB Received a digital ARC via Netgalley. LONG ROAD TO HARD TRUTH is a thorough examination of the trials and triumphs in the mission to create the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Robert L. Wilkins does a magnificent job researching the lengthy history. It's also part memoir and you feel with every word written the depths of passion Mr. Wilkins felt in making this museum a reality. This is a powerful and proud read and something that should be considered in high schools and colleges across America.

In *Long Road to Hard Truth: The 100 Year Mission to Create the National Museum of African American History and Culture*, Robert L. Wilkins tells the story of how his curiosity about why there wasn't a national museum dedicated to African American history and culture became an obsession—eventually leading him to quit his job as an attorney when his wife was seven months pregnant with their second child, and make it his mission to help the museum become a reality. *Long Road to Hard Truth* chronicles the early history, when staunch advocates sought to create a monument for Black soldiers fifty years after the end of the Civil War and in response to the pervasive indignities of the time, including lynching, Jim Crow segregation, and the slander of the racist film *Birth of a Nation*. The movement soon evolved to envision creating a national museum, and Wilkins follows the endless obstacles through the decades, culminating in his honor of becoming a member of the Presidential Commission that wrote the plan for creating the museum and how, with support of both Black and White Democrats and Republicans, Congress finally authorized the museum. In September 2016, exactly 100 years after the movement to create it began, the Smithsonian will open the National Museum of African American History and Culture. The book's title is inspired in part by James Baldwin, who testified in Congress in 1968 that "My history... contains the truth about America. It is going to be hard to teach it." *Long Road to Hard Truth* concludes that this journey took 100 years because many in America are unwilling to confront the history of America's legacy of slavery and discrimination, and that the only reason this museum finally became a reality is that an unlikely, bipartisan coalition of political leaders had the courage and wisdom to declare that America could not, and should not, continue to evade the hard truth.

A brief history of the creation of the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, D.C. Shortly after the conclusion of the Civil War, a "Grand Review," or a massive military parade, was organized to celebrate the accomplishments and sacrifices of the Union soldiers. Although 200,000 veterans marched over two days, African-American soldiers felt disenfranchised from the celebratory affair, in which they were relegated to second-class status. George Washington Williams, a well-known African-American historian, responded to this under representation by proposing the construction of a monument commemorating the African-American soldier. In 1915, a re-enactment of the Grand Review was staged, and an organization called the National Memorial Association formed in response to it, which officially advocated for Williams' proposal. By the 1920s, the original idea of a monument had grown to encompass a full memorial building of some kind, which would not only honor the martial valor of African-Americans, but also acknowledge their contributions to the United States in other domains. In 1929, President Calvin Coolidge signed legislation into law that sanctioned the creation of a National Memorial Building to Negro Achievement and Contributions to America, but it was a stillborn measure, radically underfunded. Yet another bill was introduced in 1965 to study the feasibility of a museum devoted to African-American history, but that project, too, died from neglect, as did another in 1995. Eventually, however, the National African American Museum and Cultural Complex was formed, and Wilkins, the debut author of this book, was its president. He's spent 20 years researching this work, which is nearly as much of a purposeful labor of love as the museum itself. In it, he skillfully relates not only the myriad practical problems—political, financial, and otherwise that slowed the museum project down, but also addresses its moral dimension, as well as the sometimes-tepid support the project had in the African American community. Ultimately, the author furnishes a rigorous history that captures the struggle of African-American people and the proud contributions they made to a country that did not always accept them: "The beauty of the African

American story is that the toil of our people has not been in vain," he writes. Given all the historical minutiae that Wilkins provides, it's a surprisingly gripping historical drama. A delightful, edifying tale written with intelligence and emotional sensitivity. Kirkus s "Comprehensive yet refreshingly brisk account," nbsp;"delivers a passionate narrative of the struggle to honor and share the complex and powerful stories of African-American people" ~nbsp;BookLife, Publishers Weekly" Judge Robert Wilkins was a knowledgeable, passionate, and persistent visionary in the effort to make the National Museum of African American History and Culture a reality. Thenbsp;Long Road to Hard Truthnbsp;demonstrates that the greatest achievements often require a legacy of struggle to be birthed into existence. It is about a people who never gave up on themselves, regardless of difficulty, and in the end made a contribution that will serve all of humanity. Both Robert and I are proud to have played a role in that effort." ~nbsp;Congressman John Lewis One of the "Best Books of 2016" ~ Bloomberg About the Author Robert L. Wilkins is a judge on the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. He served as chairman of the site and building committee of the Presidential Commission that Congress established to plan the National Museum of African American History and Culture. Prior to becoming a judge, he was an attorney with the Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia and a partner in a large private law firm. He is a graduate of Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology and Harvard Law School.