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Dr. Perez

SOC147NOS: Our America

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African Burial Ground National Monument at 290 Broadway

The history of this museum is that it was built as a result of both the initial discovery of thousands of African corpses interred under its foundation in 1991 in 290 Broadway between Duane Street & Reade Street, and mainly of the many protests that not only echoed experiences of previous ancestors, but sought fairer treatment of the graves and emotional outpouring. The museum was placed in the community so that descendants of African slaves in New York could properly honor their dead when they couldn't back then, since in the eighteenth century and throughout slavery, they were disallowed from becoming members of most churches.

The short documentary film that we watched at the beginning of the trip stood out as most prominent to me. Why that short film stood out to me was because of how many felt that the place was special even before the graves were discovered, and because the film illustrates that even when the museum was built, the treatment of Black people throughout American history, even in death, was shown to be reflective of the racially hierarchical inferiority complex that has been glued to the history of this nation, even before its foundation, for more than 400 years.

While the staff was courteous, there was no representation of the group of people exhibited in the museum.

I learned that Africans in New York were among the first people to resist slavery in America; another thing I learned was “Ago? Ame!”—meaning “Do you hear me? We hear you!”—which would be cried out by the mourning family members of a lost loved one during the burial

ceremony. Visiting the African Burial Ground has shown me how we as a nation can use these dark experiences of the past history of America as a catalyst of repentance and moving forward to affirming a future of Light by shining the good news of Jesus Christ, doing justly, loving mercy, and spreading His love and compassion to all who have been afflicted (Mic. 6:8; Ps. 34:2).