

The Ancestral Libation Chamber

Memorial on the African Burial Ground National Monument

We commemorate this African Burial Ground National Monument with an “Ancestral Libation Chamber.” Through seven elements, The *Ancestral Chamber* will serve to physically, spiritually, ritualistically and psychologically define the location where the historic re-interment of remains and artifacts of 419 Africans has taken place. It will also serve to acknowledge the site as a sacred place where thousands of Africans are currently buried.

Wall of Remembrance

As one happens by the north wall facing Duane Street you are immediately struck by the scale and detail of a highly polished wall of granite inscribed with following libation text.

For all those who were lost
For all those who were stolen
For all those who were left behind
For all those who were not forgotten

The *Wall of Remembrance* is intended to draw a person in, and thus begin the process of enlightenment and education.

Ancestral Re-interment Grove

A path extends itself north to south from Duane Street. Along this path are seven burial mounds marking the locations of the seven large sarcophagi containing the remains of the 419 African descendants that were re-interred in October of 2003. In addition, a grove of seven trees create a natural buffer and shelter between the re-interment zone and adjacent building. The burial mounds serve as markers and the trees as guardians for the entrance to the *Libation Chamber*. It is appropriate to place flowers and other offerings along the path in front of the burial mounds.

Memorial Wall

The Southern wall of the *Libation Chamber* shall be engraved with a map containing images and text describing the components of the African Burial Ground National Monument site in context of the burial ground’s actual boundaries in lower Manhattan. This map will allow people to understand the extent and scope of the burial ground’s actual size which extends significantly beyond the boundaries of the memorial site.

The Ancestral Chamber

The *Ancestral Chamber* is intended to reflect African cultural, spiritual and ancestral essence. This spiritual form rises out of the ground like an ancestral pillar and represents the soaring African spirit embracing and comforting all those who enter. The *Ancestral Chamber* is oriented towards the east and open to the sky above, allowing natural light to penetrate and illuminate the interior space. The interior of the *Ancestral Chamber* provides a sacred space for individual contemplation, reflection, meditation and prayer.

Circle of the Diaspora

Signs, symbols and images of the African Diaspora are engraved around the perimeter wall encircling the *Libation Court*. These symbols come from different areas and cultures throughout the Diaspora, especially Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Symbolic meaning is described below the image. As one circumambulates around the perimeter of the court and spirals down the processional ramp, these symbols present themselves as a reminder of the complexity and diversity of African culture's manifestation. They all come together to form a communal place and a reminder of the Burial Ground being an international center of gathering.

Spiral Processional Ramp

The Spiral Processional Ramp descends down 4' below street level thereby bringing the visitor physically, psychologically and spiritually closer to the ancestors and original interment level. The ramp and stairs serve as bridges between the living and the spiritual realm. They symbolize the process of transcendence from physical to spiritual and passage from profane to sacred. The process will evolve from the public "secular" space of the city to the spiritual space of the *Libation Court* and culminate in the sacred space of the *Ancestral Chamber*.

Ancestral Libation Court

The Ancestral Libation Court is situated on axis with the *Ancestral Chamber*. It is located 4' below street level, providing a physical and psychological separation from the public activity of the surrounding urban environment. The Libation Court is a communal gathering place where small to medium-scale public cultural ceremonies may occur. This spiritual space is where re-consecration of the African Burial Ground National Monument will continually take place during the libation or other ceremonial rituals. The sacred ceremonial ritual of "libation" is the act which will serve as an offering and an acknowledgement linking past, present and future generations in the spirit of Sankofa (An Adinkra symbol of West Africa meaning 'learn from the past').

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