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(U.S. HELSINKI COMMISSION)

October 5, 2017

National Parks Service
Chief State Tribal Local Plans & Grants Division
1849 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: NPS African American Civil Rights Grant, Historic Clayborn Temple in Memphis, TN

To Whom It May Concern:

I write to express full support of the application from the City of Memphis for the NPS African American Civil Rights grant to support the restoration efforts of the Historic Clayborn Temple in Memphis, Tennessee.

After sitting vacant and exposed to the elements for nearly twenty years, a group led by nonprofit Neighborhood Preservation Inc. acquired Clayborn Temple in 2015. Ambitious plans are underway to restore the building to its former glory. The 2017 NPS application is seeking funding for the second phase of restoration, specifically for aspects of the interior of the space.

In addition to a rich African American civil rights history, Clayborn Temple is historically and architecturally significant and is on the National Register of Historic Places. Clayborn Temple was recently declared a place of national significance by the National Register of Historic Places for its role in Sanitation Workers' Strike of 1968.

On February 12, 1968, Memphis Sanitation Workers went on strike after two African American sanitation workers died due to work-related injuries following years of discrimination and dangerous working conditions. Dr. King came to Memphis in support of their efforts at the height of his "Poor People's Campaign." Clayborn Temple became a hub of civil rights activity and the starting point for daily protest marches to City Hall.

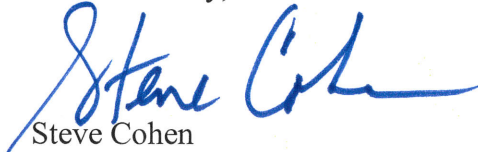
Once again, nearing the 50 year mark (April 4th, 2018) since the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Clayborn Temple is an epicenter for the community to learn about and engage in the civil rights movement of yesterday and today. Clayborn is becoming a vibrant hub of activity for locals and tourists alike. Since reopening at the end of October last year, Clayborn Temple has hosted thousands of people for community events and been featured in a wide range of media coverage.

Soon the City of Memphis will break ground on an adjacent public art installation and plaza paying homage to the 1968 sanitation strikers and the iconic I AM A MAN rallying cry, which will also capture the essence of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s legacy.

Clayborn Temple and the I AM A MAN plaza are key components of Memphis Heritage Trail, an initiative currently underway that showcases historical and cultural assets of Memphis. The history of Clayborn Temple is uniquely Memphis, and we appreciate the favorable consideration of this request for NPS's assistance to continue its restoration.

Thank you for making these funds available to American cities to document the African American civil rights struggle.

As always, I remain,
Most sincerely,



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress