

Contemporary public libraries are the pinnacle example of our democratic republic. Public libraries, as non-partisan institutions, truly live up to the sentiment of Emma Lazarus' poem crafted in recognition of our Statue of Liberty: "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me, I lift my lamp beside the golden door!" Yes, our library doors are open to all and our reach is extended even farther through our virtual doors, our website and it's wealth of electronic resources, and increased partnerships that continue to open doors.

The Saint Petersburg Library System's team strives to achieve the mission: **Inform. Connect. Empower.** The renaming of our library after President Barack Hussein Obama, who championed these aims among many others, is a distinct privilege. And, with privilege, comes great responsibility, which is why our library team has already started preparing for the future, including collecting materials on civics, civic engagement and social justice issues already available and certain to be a long-term focal point of our collection.

By virtue of the renaming, investment and reinvigoration of this library, the central core and heartbeat of our City's library system, our diverse community can expect resources regarding the Office of the Presidency, active citizenship, community development and community organizing. All of our City's residents can look forward to enhanced, innovative and collaborative programming: for youth, who are so keenly interested in community issues, service learning, as well as leadership and advocacy training, will equip them to positively contribute to our city, nation and world. And for adults, lecture series, opportunities for increased community engagement, positive dialogue and think tanks about civic matters can be expected, and more.

Equally important, the library will focus on resources and programming that reflect the lives of President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, both of whom are inspirations for increased civic engagement by people of all walks of life, various ideologies, philosophical mindsets and myriad backgrounds, all compelled to become more active in their communities.

During the unveiling of the plans for the forthcoming Presidential Library Complex, President Obama stated he desired "a hub for the community". Our City's libraries help serve as our local hub, with our Main Library being the central point of community-driven services and programs throughout our city. While preserving the distinct character of our six additional community libraries, it is my intent to further honor the inspiration and legacy of our soon to be namesake, by ensuring this central library's new focal points of service extend throughout our library system, thereby emphasizing one City, one Library and one very grand opportunity for growth and development for our entire community.

I invite you to visit the website www.StPete.org/ObamaCommunityLibrary to take our survey and give us feedback on this auspicious initiative.

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President's Day and African American History Month Statement
on the renaming of the St. Petersburg Main Community Library
to the President Barack Hussein Obama Main Community Library
and renovation of the library.