

It Was November. It must be time to be ...



And so we were.



We're doing something akin to what we did last winter: What I call a Charles Repositioning Trip. To avoid driving Charles in the winter, we're going south to Florida and once we get him safely stored, we'll fly back for the festive season. (Jim insists on it!) (Okay that might be a tiny fib.)

As we crossed the Peace Bridge, it looked like we were getting out just in time.



So, we crossed the bridge, in the direction of sun and warmth.





By day the end of day two, we were in a pretty KOA campground about 45 minutes from our first planned destination: Washington D.C. We've always wanted to spend more time there, to see more of its museums. And it seemed like this might be the last opportunity for a while.





The next day was perfect for touring around. We had considered taking the train into D.C., but instead we drove Charles, which turned out to be fine. The driving was easy, and it gave us a chance to see a bit of the city.







This is the Canadian Embassy. (Our friend Curtis Barlow asked us to wave at it for him. He had fond memories of working there for 6 years.)





We didn't know what to make of the blue rooster on top of this building.

It turned out it's on the roof of the National Gallery of Art.

Katharina Fritsch's 14-ft. *Hahn/Cock* ("Hahn" is German for rooster) has been there since 2016. It became a permanent fixture during covid, because, apparently the rooster is often associated with "regeneration, awakening, and strength". Who knew?



The Gallery of Art was exactly where we were headed, so we very easily found a parking spot nearby and began our visit.





I'm sure there's lots of amazing art to see in this huge gallery, but this special exhibition was garnering a lot of attention, and closing in January.

**Paris 1874: The Impressionist Moment** was first presented at the Musée d'Orsay. It focussed on the year when the first "independent" artists first showed their work, rejecting the status quo reflected in the traditional Salon.

As the introductory text explained "Whether steeped in tradition, rejecting it or somewhere in between, artists were responding to the changing world."



And of course, that response is still resonating. Like this artist, millions have been inspired by the fresh perspective of the world around them.





We had seen many of the paintings before. But you can't see them too many times. And so much better to see the real works, rather than in books or calendars.





These brought back special memories, because we'd been to Monet's Garden, so we'd been in the house and crossed the actual bridge.





Degas' Dancers...



And Prancers...





Van Gogh still life...



And windy life...





This painting was fun. Titled *The Salon of 1874*, it's painted by Camille Cabailot-Lasalle, but not just him. He invited six of his fellow artists to paint scaled-down representations of their works, which had already been approved to be in the Salon.





I'm not sure what this painting, *Niagara*, had to do with the 1874 Salon, but it was very impressive.

In fact, in 1857, when Frederic Edwin Church revealed his seven-foot-wide painting of the falls at a *one-picture exhibition*, it was a sensation. No artist before had been able to capture the power and beauty of Niagara Falls. And it was quickly named "the finest oil picture ever painted on this side of the Atlantic." Thousands lined up to see the newest creation of an American visionary. And just like that, Church became the most important American artist of his day.

When we walked up to it, Jim said, "We've stood there." And like millions of others, we had.





Although there was much more to see, this painting, *The Cliff* was one of the last we saw, and it seemed to be a perfect place to stop. The text about it referred to the young woman looking ahead, with hope for the future. That worked for us.



After the gallery, we moved Charles to another parking spot, right by the water, and across from the Jefferson monument.



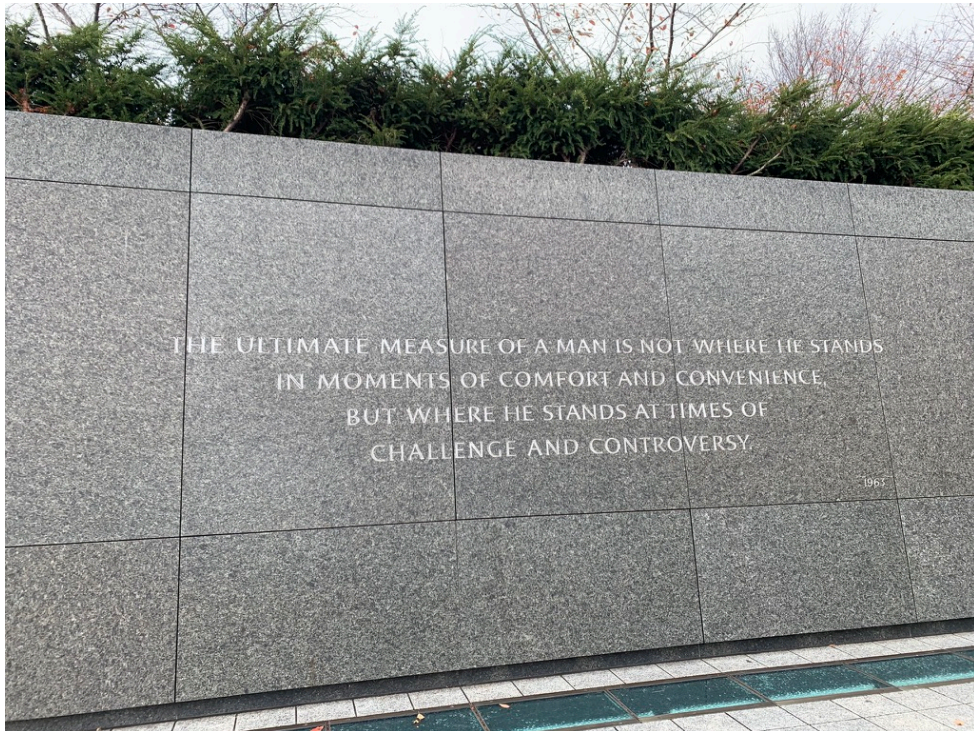


And we walked to the Martin Luther King Memorial, which we had seen for the first time just last year. It's so impressive.

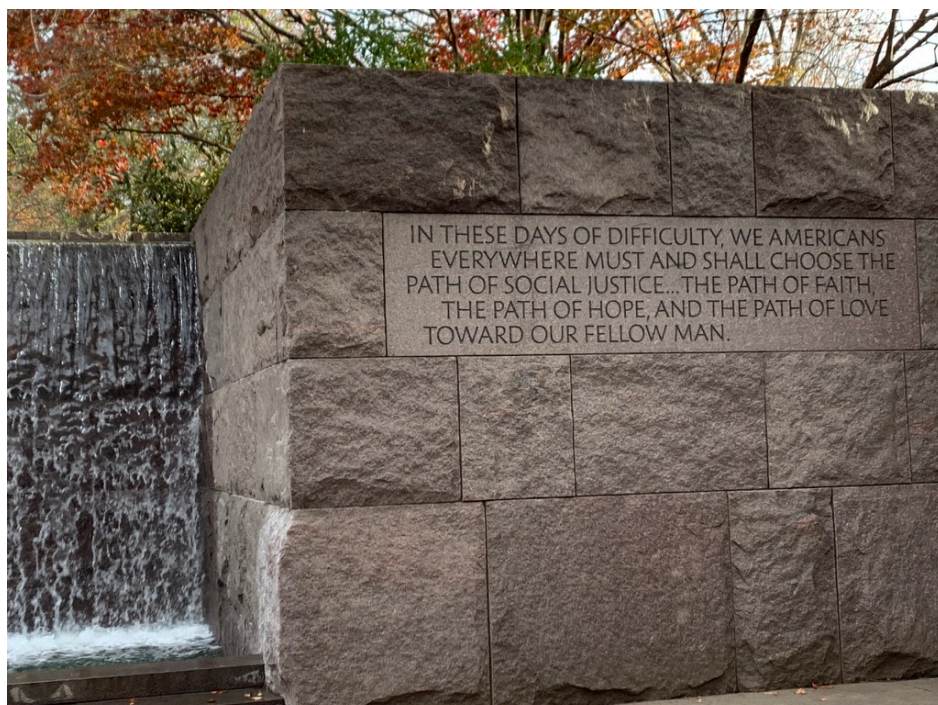




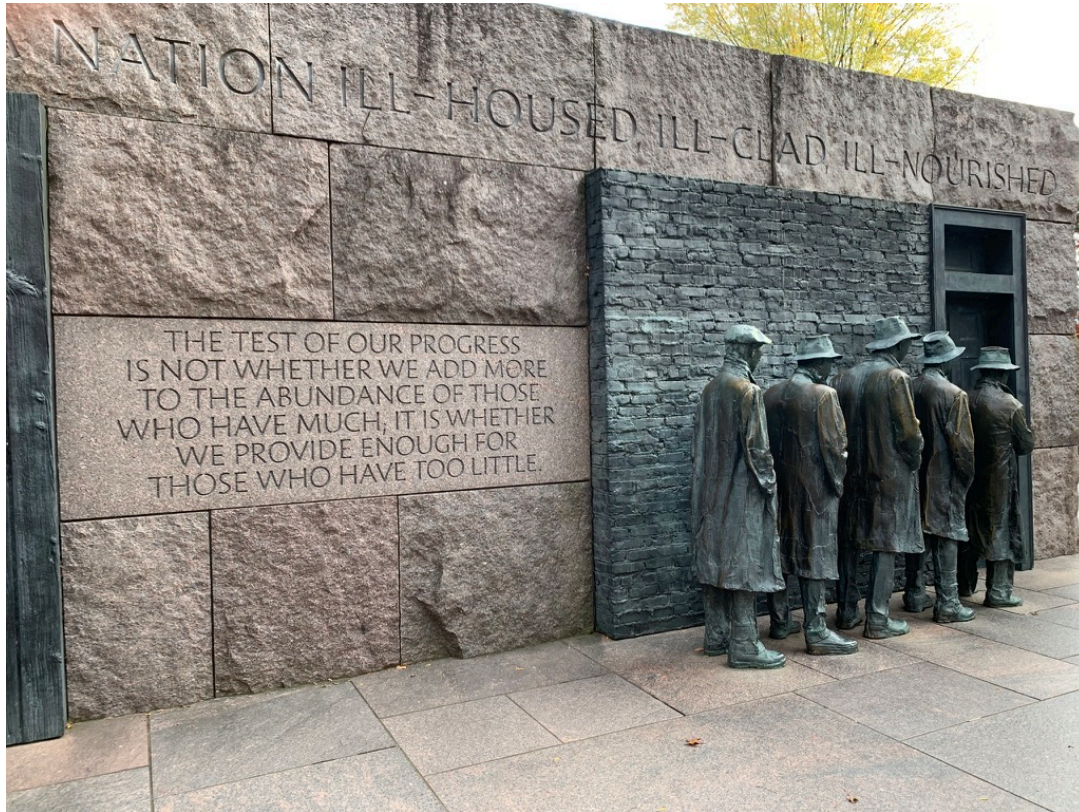
And reading the quotations on the curved wall behind the sculpture made it painfully clear that 80 years later, we still need to be told.



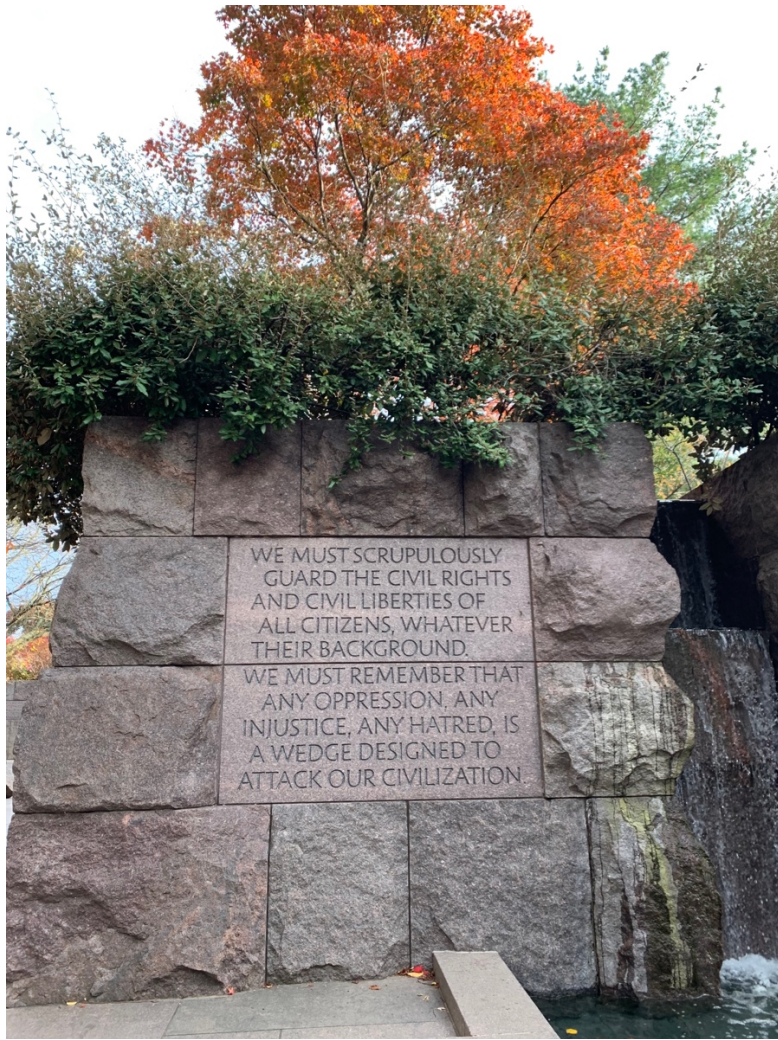
My other favourite monument is the one to FDR. It's so elegantly laid out in a beautiful, peaceful setting. But today, rather than celebrating his inspiring leadership, it serves to remind us how far backward things are heading.













The sky, as we left to settle in a nearby campground, seemed to reflect our outlook for the days ahead.



The next morning, when we headed back into D.C., we were greeted by ...



Yes, that white stuff is SNOW! In D.C. On November 22<sup>nd</sup>!



It didn't last long, but it was a brisk day! Fortunately, we had planned to spend the first part of it inside.

We'd just recently seen a documentary about Quincy Jones and we found out he'd been instrumental (haha) in the creation and development of the Museum of African American Culture and History. So, we decided we'd check it out. It's an impressive building, inside and out.



There are four floors and each covers a different aspect of African American history. We went to the top floor which focused on culture. It was massive and thrilling.



The first part dealt with role visual arts have played in protests over the rights of African Americans.



This quilt used “strips of decommissioned prison uniforms and American flags, conflating the stars and stripes with the bars of imprisonment.”



This gorgeous quilt, called *Sharecropper's Masterpiece*, is pieced by Avis Collins Robinson, who describes her work as "poetry made out of fabric."



The relationship between African Americans – and especially African American males – and imprisonment runs throughout the displays.





The text from *But I'm Still Fly* by Fahamu Pecou reads: "Grave representations of Black men act like a force of gravity, restricting their mobility. We meet Black youth with fear and loathing, limiting their potential with tragic stats and stories of death. *But I'm Still Fly* offers an alternative narrative, one that locates the tension between aspiration and limitation. What if we believed in the abilities of our Black boys more than we lamented their identity? What if we taught them that they could transcend their so-called limitations? What if we encouraged them to fly? Pecou's painting features the fashion trend "saggin," where underwear is worn above sagging pants. The style was popular among younger African American males and often perceived by others as a negative marker of social status."





From these rooms, we're guided into a warren of huge spaces filled with all kinds of creativity. Everywhere you look there are examples of the ways in which African Americans have contributed, shaped, mastered and influenced culture in America – and the world.





**EVERY BLACK AMERICAN  
IS BILINGUAL. ALL OF THEM.  
WE SPEAK STREET VERNACULAR  
AND WE SPEAK JOB INTERVIEW.**

DAVE CHAPPELLE 2005











I'd rather play a maid and make \$700 a week than be one for \$7.

**HATTIE MCDANIEL** (ATTRIBUTED)

**SERVANT ROLES**

From the 1930s through the 1950s black actors appeared most often in unimportant roles in movies, behind the scenes, or as extras. Some rose to fame playing servant roles, usually inside households and during the Depression, when the black community was particularly hard hit. Some argued that the merits of a leading role were not only for a black actor but better than none. Others rejected these assignments, seeing them as a way to challenge racial discrimination in Hollywood.

**SEGREGATED THEATERS**

Through the mid-1930s the policies of racial segregation defined not only the images shown on American movie screens but how and where Americans went to the movies. White-owned theaters that admitted both white and black audiences required black patrons to sit in the balcony or attend separate late-night screenings. Other theaters offered exclusively white or black audiences. In addition to segregated theaters, black theaters showed movies produced for black audiences, popularly known as "race films."



*I want to help show my people  
how beautiful they are.*

ALVIN AILEY 1971



ER  
...in 1944,  
...influence  
...and  
...dance  
...Ailey,  
...with African  
...and  
...African, who  
...embodied the  
...performances.

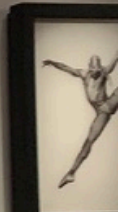
Photographs by Jack Mitchell



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 1971



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 1971



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 1971



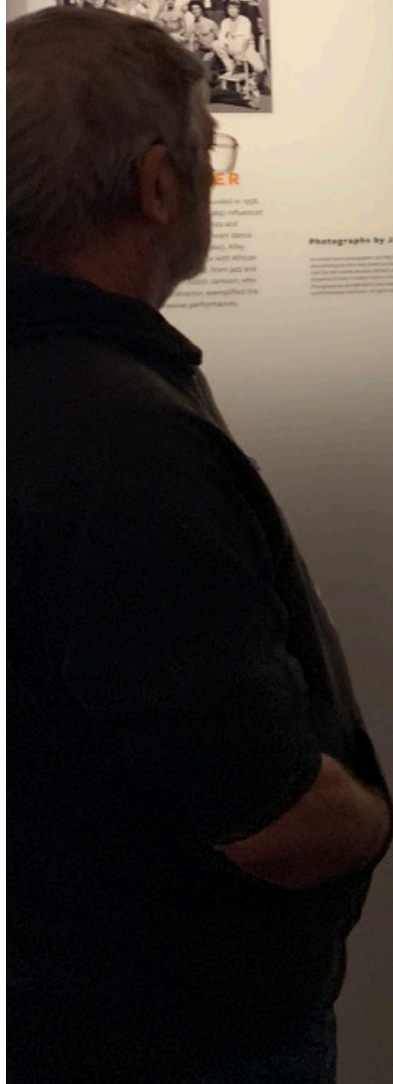
Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 1971



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 1971



Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, 1971











Throughout, I kept wondering how it must feel to be an African American person walking through this museum and seeing their lives and the lives of their ancestors acknowledged in such an exciting and moving way.

And it was great to see classes of kids going through the museum. One teacher had them doing a scavenger hunt to find words and items.

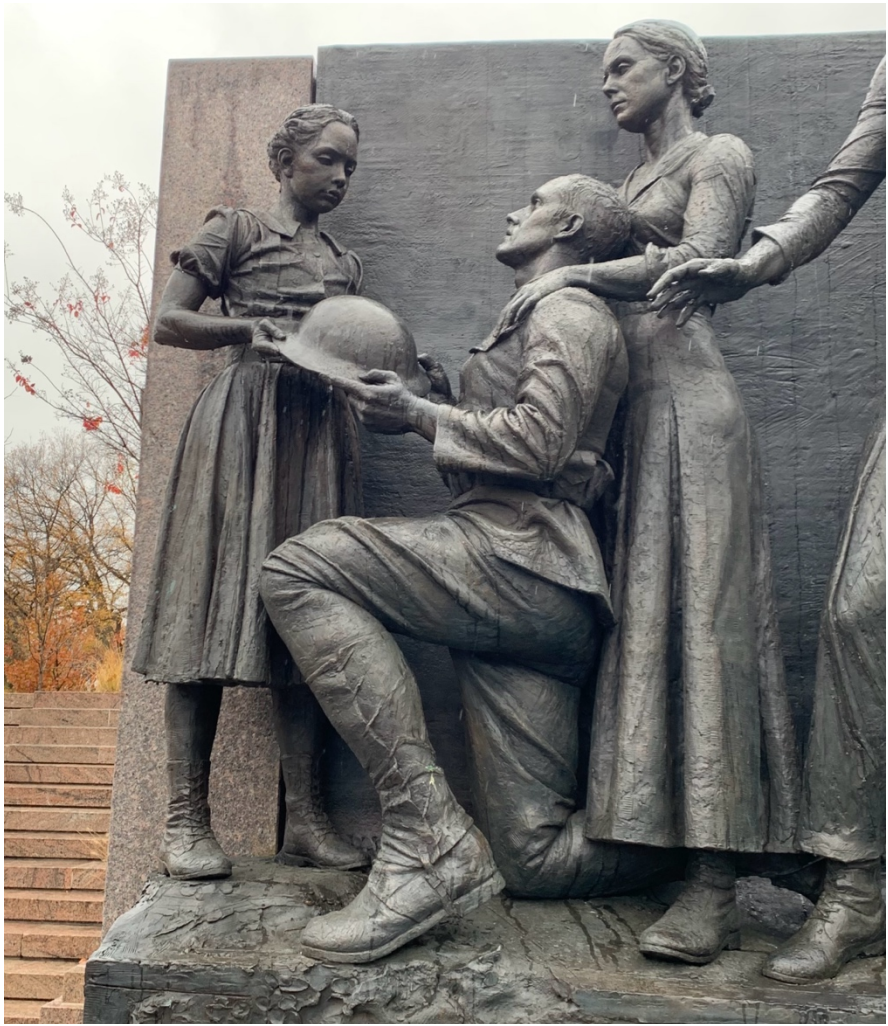
It was overwhelming. And we only explored one floor. We'd need three more days to take in the other floors! Unfortunately, we didn't have the time, so we headed out.

Not too far from the museum was a new monument I'd heard about and wanted to see. It's a monument to the people who served in World War I and was the work of Sabin Howard.

*A Soldier's Journey* sculpture "The Everyman" has 38 separate figures, spread over approximately 58 feet of wall, portraying the experience of one American soldier.

Starting from the left, the soldier takes leave from his wife and daughter, charges into combat, sees men around him killed, wounded, and gassed, and recovers from the shock to come home to his family. It's incredibly moving.













Apparently, the symbolism of the young girl looking into the upturned helmet represents her looking into the future ... and seeing another world war ahead.

That afternoon, we left Washington, and couldn't help wondering what the future holds.

Actually, the past was in our future. And that will make sense when you receive our next blog.