



**Statement Regarding Establishment of the
Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley and Roberts Temple National Historic Site**

October 21, 2022

Bonnie McDonald, President and CEO, Landmarks Illinois

Good morning Secretary Haaland and distinguished colleagues. My name is Bonnie McDonald and I proudly serve as President and CEO of Landmarks Illinois, the statewide preservation nonprofit working with communities to save the places that matter to them.

Together, we are on sacred ground. Sacred in its deserved veneration. In this space that we hold together today, Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley changed the course of history, a course that was long past due the need for change. Emmett Till's life and future were violently stolen. His mother made the heart-wrenching, selfless decision to show the world the truth – here in this hall. Her sacrifice and courage steeled the will of countless human and civil rights activists to fight terrorism and injustice. Her work continues on, and so must ours to ensure this place is protected and that it endures.

Landmarks Illinois gives its ardent support for the establishment of the Emmett Till and Mamie Till-Mobley and Roberts Temple National Historic Site. Its national and international significance is indisputable and it would be unique amongst the other park service units. If funding a new unit is in question, we encourage a public process to identify units with redundant narratives that could be transferred to other stewards and reallocate funding in support of equity and racial healing.

I would like to close by honoring the many who have been stewards of this place and we have been proud to be your partner.

The Roberts Temple National Historic Site would be about more than bricks and mortar. It would be a monument to resistance, resoluteness, resilience, dignity and justice. In every way, this would be amongst the greatest of our monuments holding us to account for the best, and the worst, of humanity. We are on sacred ground.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak and we look forward to your action to establish this new site.