

The Prophet

Smithsonian African American Association

Volume I, Number 1

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We Can Make a Change!

by Phyllis Cunningham

The Smithsonian, as the world's leading cultural institution and resource, has the immediate challenge and responsibility of encouraging a greater understanding of the different cultures that form the mosaic of America.

For the past several years, African American scholars in art and history, museum professionals, and the United States Congress have been imploring the Institution to put forth a more inclusive exhibition and hiring policy. Civil Rights legislation has provided the impetus for change. However, the Smithsonian continues to suffer the brunt of criticism because of the Eurocentric focus of its exhibitions, collections, programs, boards, and staff, particularly at the senior levels.

The 1989 Smithsonian employment profile reveals that of its approximately 6,200 employees, 2,096 are of African descent. Yet, the majority of African American employees are clustered in the lower level jobs.

The Smithsonian African American Association, which began meeting in May 1989, has been organized to support the Institution's commitment and goal to bring discrimination to an end and to encourage positive attitudes, stronger programs, and better use of human resources to assure equal opportunity and cultural equity for African Americans. The Association provides a forum for

communication through monthly meetings, a newsletter, and a network within SI to encourage staff participation. It is open to all Smithsonian employees who support its mission statement.

*"Racism and discrimination
are our common enemies;
both are rooted in ignorance."*

This Institution is changing because it must! Secretary Adams has put forth a mandate for greater ethnic diversity in hiring, exhibitions, and the development of programs for culturally diverse communities. With a keen sense of change and urgency, Adams in his recent "State of the Smithsonian Report" (December 19, 1989) stated, "We are determined to make the whole staff of the Smithsonian, and in particular its professional ranks and senior administration, more representative of the multiracial, multi-ethnic society from which it is drawn. That involves intensified efforts to widen the pools from which it is recruited. . . . It also involves improved training and advancement programs, one of them just beginning, that will encourage employees at lower levels to move steadily ahead and prepare themselves to enter professional or administrative ranks." He further stated, "In everything we exhibit, publish, or otherwise disseminate . . .

the Smithsonian must strive for sensitivity to the conditions, needs, and aspirations of the multiple and growing audiences it has an obligation to reach." The Smithsonian African American Association is equally committed to moving this Institution toward accomplishing these important objectives that so pointedly affect African Americans and other ethnic groups working within SI and in the community at large.

Racism and discrimination are our common enemies; both are rooted in ignorance. We must continue to generate a spirit of unity that opens the way for greater understanding of the different cultures that make up American society. This will help us finally achieve our collective goal of cultural equity in this country. We're pressing on! WE CAN MAKE A CHANGE! ■

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Secretary Endorses SAAA

Announcement 90-13

February 21, 1990

The Smithsonian African American Association (SAAA) has been organized to support and assist the Institution in fulfilling its commitment to cultural diversity.

Open to all Smithsonian employees who share the SAAA's goal of securing equal opportunity and equal treatment for African Americans at the Smithsonian, the group takes a pan-institutional approach to addressing discrimination and other issues and policies that affect its constituents.

SAAA will work to expand and advance opportunities for African Americans in employment, public programs, and exhibitions.

In order to promote full Institutional support for SAAA, I am asking all bureau directors, managers, and supervisors to allow interested employees to attend the organization's meetings the third Thursday of each month at 10:30 a.m. Meeting places vary to encourage the widest possible participation. Persons interested in attending should call Phyllis Cunningham at 357-2920 for details.

The Smithsonian embraces and supports the SAAA's goal of assisting the Institution in its quest for cultural diversity.

Robert McC. Adams
Secretary

Distribution: Heads of bureaus and major offices ■

Smithsonian African American Association Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is comprised of nine individuals representative of the employee body. It advises and reports on issues, trends, and concerns of the body, and on the Institution in its efforts to achieve greater representation of African American employees. Special committees address specific issues and concerns of the organization. Participation in these committees is open to the entire membership.

SAAA Steering Committee:

Toni Amos
Dwight Bowman
Kimberly Camp

Spencer Crew
Phyllis Cunningham
Shireen Dodson

John Franklin
Niani Kilkenny
Michael Syphax



(back row, left to right) John Franklin,
Dwight Bowman, Michael Syphax; (front row, left to right) Kimberly Camp,
Toni Amos, Phyllis Cunningham, Niani Kilkenny, Shireen Dodson
(not shown: Spencer Crew)

*Please stay tuned
for news about the
SAAA inaugural event
coming on May 22nd!*

African American Collecting: Challenge or Crisis—Preserving African American's Rapidly Vanishing African American Historical Patrimony

by John R. Kinard *

There is the conclusion among those who operate in the mainstream of America's historical development that the African American has no collectible historical legacy. There are African Americans who believe this also. They didn't learn about their history in school, they haven't seen it on TV, nor have they seen it in many museums. So, "out of sight, out of mind." The conclusion to be drawn is that the African American has no legitimate history to be collected; nor has he made any significant contribution to the development of America. And since museums are collection-driven, his museums couldn't contain much of value except maybe some insignificant curios.

African Americans born between 1900 and 1925 are the collectors of significant treasure-troves of the vanishing African American patrimony. These are our mothers and grandmothers who have stored away in their trunks, suitcases, attics, and basements, our historical legacy—without which we cannot have a meaningful future.

In addition to this, they carry in their collective memory a legitimate oral history of people, ideas, situations, medical cures, folk tales, stories, and accounts of incidents that have affected the lives of African Americans.

These people born between 1900 and 1925, and who are the proud possessors of our historical patrimony, guard it so jealously that they don't tell their children about these letters, pictures, and who's in

these pictures. There are also paintings, diaries, documents, and other three-dimensional artifacts that they have carried over the years.

So, when they die, the children discover this historical patrimony; and because they don't know what it is (and may not have even seen it before), they throw it in the trash, sell the family property, and go back to wherever they came from.

Many African Americans are insensitive to the value of these historical papers and artifacts. They would never in their fondest dreams believe that their local museum would have an interest in these things; and because of fear of embarrassment, even the most sensitive and astute wouldn't have the gall to carry their family things to the local museum; so they might just throw them in the trash.

Many African Americans who have been made to feel worthless, and made to feel that their historical contribution is worthless, feel also that these things are worthless to anyone—even themselves.

So, a massive education and sensitization program must be launched. In terms of African American collecting, this is a part of the challenge.

In addition to this, there is a three-pronged impending crisis that threatens this proposition. First, there are too few existing African American museums that have the economic resources, space (that is temperature-controlled and humidified), or research,

conservation, registrar, or technical staff to handle these materials in any meaningful manner. Secondly, African American museums and archival repositories that would speedily collect this material all across this country need to be developed. The third part of this crisis is that the resources that care for these precious materials are dying every day; and within the next 10 years, I fear they will have perished and their possessions with them.

The solution to this problem is for the African American Museums Association to seek alliances with the American Association of Museums; the Association for State and Local History; The Association for the Study of Afro-American Life and History; the Smithsonian Institution, and several other national organizations.

This alliance will develop a National Trust which will seek funds from the United States Congress; and state and local governments in a matching arrangement of funding to provide monetary resources to existing African American museums and archival institutions, and to fund the development of new museums and institutions in cities and states that have no such museums.

What is the net effect of this whole matter? My opinion is that people cannot live a meaningful or prosperous life without a sense of their history. ■

**This paper was presented by John R. Kinard, American Association of Museums Conference, New Orleans, 1989.*

Kinard's Korner

A Tribute to John R. Kinard



John R. Kinard was the founding director of the Anacostia Museum, serving from 1967 until his death in 1989. Kinard, who was proud to be an African American, played a major role in the cultural life of the nation's capital and the museum world.

A native of Washington, D.C., Mr. Kinard graduated from Spingarn High School in 1955. He attended Howard University, and in 1960 earned a bachelor's degree from Livingstone College in Salisbury, N.C. Mr. Kinard received a bachelor of divinity degree from Hood Theological Seminary in Salisbury in 1963.

Under his leadership, the Anacostia Museum grew into an important cultural institution that collects, studies and exhibits the history and culture of African Americans in the context of American history.

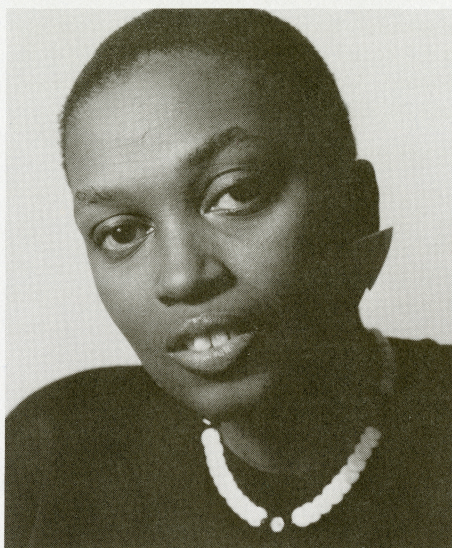
Mr. Kinard was extremely concerned about the popular notion that African Americans do not have a collectible historical legacy. Through his initiative, Anacostia Museum took the leadership role in the formation of the African American Museums Association. Kinard's interest in museology reached beyond

the United States. His ties with Africa go back to 1962 when, as a student at Hood Theological Seminary, he traveled to Tanzania with Operation Crossroads Africa. There, he participated in a building project, resulting in a cafeteria and school dorm. Later, he served as a group leader escorting American students to Kenya.

His interest in African museums took Mr. Kinard back to the continent many times. In April 1987, he was invited to speak at the annual conference of the southern African Museums Association, held in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

In a Washington Post interview shortly before his death, Mr. Kinard expressed his desire for the Anacostia Museum to be "a shining example to other museums of African American history." He also felt that a comprehensive, national African American museum should be on the Mall.

Claudine K. Brown Heads African American Institutional Study



Claudine K. Brown has been appointed interim director of a new project at the Smithsonian that will examine the form and content of an African American entity on the National Mall. As head of the African American Institutional Study, Brown will oversee research and analysis of issues related to establishing a significant institution related to African Americans, which could be a new museum, a research center, a gallery that has exhibitions but does not hold collections, a wing of an existing museum or another option yet to be identified.

Brown will work with a committee of some 20 to 25 Smithsonian and non-Smithsonian scholars and authorities in the cultural arts, education, and business. The group will hold four meetings to focus on such topics as defining the responsibility of this new cultural entity, its goals, and collections. The group will also take a look at quality programming in different places, and it will recommend a structure for governance.

Brown received her bachelor of fine arts degree in 1971 from Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, with a major in fashion (special interest in the history of costumes) and a minor in education. She received a master of

Point of View

Let me be clear on the fact that I do, indeed, favor a separate museum on the Mall, but not for the reasons I've been hearing most often in justification of this measure. My reasons have more to do with requirements than with passion.

One argument in favor says that a separate museum is needed as the appropriate symbol of African American contributions to this country. A separate museum could embrace a wider range of topics including art, history, the sciences and literature. It could also offer a wider variety of related public programs, research, and collecting activities. It could serve as a resource for smaller African American museums, offering training and other support services.

On the other hand, there are those who say that the separate museum will stand, dangerously, as a symbol of the separate but equal philosophy of race relations and will encourage such a view in other areas of society. This is true only to the extent that those who are looking for reasons to exclude African Americans from other areas of society will always grasp at anything to support their discrimination.

A wing, as part of some larger administrative unit, will have to compete with other areas within the unit. If starvation of such an entity was the goal, it would be far easier, and quieter, to accomplish with a wing. Another argument against a museum is that there is no major

collection (in both size and quality) available around which to build a museum. No one can deny that there is plenty of material worthy of collection and study.

And this brings us to what I think is the best argument in favor of a separate museum. It is a question of adequately addressing the scope of the subject. A wing attached to another museum will be necessarily limited, first by the museum's focus (i.e., American History, Natural History), and second, by space.

The possibility of inadequate funding is always a threat, but a decision to build a museum carries with it, not unreasonably, the funding to support it. If there is to be a fight over continuing support, a separate museum, with its high public profile, will offer a far more powerful platform from which to lobby for funds.

It must also be pointed out that an African American museum on the Mall should not preclude any other museum from addressing the subject from its own perspective. The honesty and integrity of their scholarship should, indeed, require this.

The story of African Americans is too large, the exigencies too great, to be a wing of anything. It is imperative that we have the proper forum and, yes, the proper funding to proclaim the African American heritage of this country in its entirety and in all its richness.

—Michael B. Syphax

science degree in museum education in 1977 from Bank Street College of Education in New York City and a law degree from Brooklyn Law School in 1985.

Before coming to the Smithsonian, Brown was with the Brooklyn Museum as assistant director for government and community relations. ■

100th CONGRESS 2nd Session

H.R. 5305

To authorize the establishment of the National African American Heritage Museum within the Smithsonian Institution and to establish a memorial to the African American, and for other purposes.

Smart Money

Expecting a Refund?

by Freida Austin

If after the computations are done, you find that you owe more than 10 percent of your total tax liability, be concerned. You may have to pay an additional penalty.

Likewise, it is not smart to have a large refund coming to you. If you expect a refund, know that you have enabled the government to use your money interest free.

And, although some people use their planned refund as a forced savings plan, know that you can accomplish the same goal with automatic banking transfer services. When your paycheck is automatically deposited at your bank, you can at many banking institutions arrange to have a portion of it routinely transferred to a savings or money market account. Or, you can arrange to have a set amount routinely transferred from your checking account to a savings or money market account. Either way earns you interest. ■

"Little Brown Bag"

*I made a new contact in town today
He was quite a charming fellow and had a lot
to say
He told me his life was just like peaches and
cream
But from the look of his clothes, I knew it was
a dream*

*He said he'd travelled around the world and
loved old Mexico
He said he'd been to China just to look at
Singapore
He said he'd stopped in England as a guest of
the queen
But that old park bench had been all that he
had seen*

*As he dined from a little brown bag
Found not far away
He looked high into the sky
and this I heard him say*

*Dear Lord, way up there above
Give me happiness, bring me love
And after I have reached my end
Give this little brown bag to another needy
friend.*

—James H. King Jr.

Sizzle!!

Sizzling Caribbean Chicken with Lime-Scented Rice



SIZZLING CARIBBEAN CHICKEN

2 Tbsp. all-purpose flour
1/2 tsp. salt
1 chicken, deboned (about 1 lb), cut into
3/4-inch cubes
2 Tbsp. salad oil
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 medium onion, coarsely chopped
1 tsp. ground ginger
1/2 to 1 tsp. crushed red pepper
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon
1/4 tsp. ground allspice
2 small green peppers, chopped
1 can (14-1/2 to 16-oz size) tomatoes

On wax paper, combine flour and salt; toss chicken with flour mixture to coat. Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Add chicken; sauté until browned on all sides, about 8 minutes. With slotted spoon, remove chicken to small bowl. In drippings remaining in skillet, sauté garlic, onion, ginger, red pepper, cinnamon and allspice for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring frequently. Return chicken to skillet; add green peppers and tomatoes with juice, stirring to break up tomatoes. Bring to a boil; reduce heat to low. Cover and cook for 5 to 10 minutes. Makes 4 servings.

LIME-SCENTED RICE

1 cup raw long-grain rice
1 Tbsp. butter or margarine
1/2 tsp. salt
1 small lime
2 Tbsp. chopped fresh parsley

In medium saucepan over high heat, combine rice, butter, salt and 2 cups water; bring to a boil. Reduce heat to low; cover and simmer for 15 minutes, or until rice is tender and liquid is absorbed. Meanwhile, grate peel from lime and squeeze juice. Stir lime peel and juice into cooked rice.

469 calories.

*Recipe submitted by and tested in the kitchen
of Freida Austin.*

Share your family favorites with our readers.

May at the Smithsonian

ANACOSTIA MUSEUM

Roger Wilkins is the guest speaker for the museum's salute to volunteers. The museum's board of directors will dedicate a memorial tree to its late director, John R. Kinard. May 4 at 11 a.m. For reservations, call 287-3369.

AMERICAN HISTORY

The program in Black American Culture will present "An American Classical Music" series featuring a lecture and concert on gospel and jazz. May 13 at 1 p.m. Hall of Musical Instruments.

AFRICAN ART

The museum will present three programs on the meanings, techniques and influences of African hairstyles, beginning with an illustrated lecture and demonstration. May 19 at 10 a.m.

AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

Lecture by astronaut Mae Jemison, "Say Yes to a Youngster's Future." May 4 at 10 a.m. Langley Theater. Co-sponsored by the Urban Coalition. For information, call 357-1427.

PORTRAIT GALLERY

"Cultures in Motion: Teatro de Hispania y Latino Americano." Readings from the works of 20th-century Spanish and Latin American playwrights. May 22 at 7:30 p.m. Lecture Hall. For reservations, call 357-2729. ■

The Book Shelf

History and Literature

Adoff, Arnold, ed. *I Am the Darker Brother: An Anthology of Modern Poems by Black Americans*. New York: Collier Books, 1970.

_____. *Black on Black: Commentaries by Black Americans*. New York: Collier Books, 1968.

Attaway, William. *Blood on the Forge*. New York: Collier Books, 1970.

Baldwin, James. *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1953.

_____. *Nobody Knows My Name*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1961.

Bayliss, John F. *Black Slave Narratives*. New York: Collier Books, 1970. ■



SAAA Membership

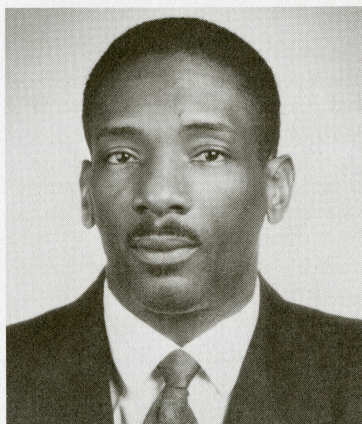
We invite you to become a member of the Smithsonian African American Association (SAAA). Our membership is 500 and growing! The Association was formed to help management fulfill its commitment to equality and cultural diversity at the Institution. The SAAA meetings are held on the third Thursday of each month at 10:30 a.m. For further information, please call 357-1427.

Your participation will help to effect change. Join us today! WE CAN MAKE A CHANGE!

*Toni Amos, Chair
Membership Committee*

A Letter from the Editors

*Ricardo T. Williams
Editor-in-Chief*



*Freida Austin
Managing Editor*



We hope that you find the premiere issue of *The Prophet* interesting, informative and enjoyable! As the editors of this exciting publication, our commitment is to address the challenge of keeping our members abreast of SI issues and policies that have an impact on African Americans working at the

Institution, and on the African American community at large.

It is our hope that *The Prophet* continues to cover the wide range of topics that are of interest to our members. We appreciate your informative articles, and we extend our heartfelt thanks

to those who spent untold hours helping to make this publication a grand success. Your continued participation and support are encouraged, and we look forward to sharing our next issue of *The Prophet* with you.

The Editors

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