



# The Prophet

Smithsonian African American Association

Volume I, Number 3

Winter 1991

## Carmen Turner Comes On Board

by Susan Foster

**C**armen Turner, newly appointed undersecretary of the Smithsonian Institution, is acutely aware of the importance of first impressions. Moreover, she is especially concerned that the right messages are conveyed.

"... Until you know the audience and know the issues, generalized statements can be read in many ways," she explains.

During the interview, she talked about her career, philosophy of management and feelings about leaving Metro, the organization that she has managed for the last seven years. Although hesitant about addressing any specific plans in her new Smithsonian position, she expressed her feelings about joining the Smithsonian Institution.

She notes the role her father played in instilling in his daughters an understanding of the myriad of social problems in this country. A book written by her father in 1937 titled *Social Problems of the Negro in New Jersey* offers a reminder of how things have both changed and remained the same.

"When you open that book and run down the index, the issues are the same. I think there's been progress," Turner says. "But in terms of solving those long standing social issues—housing, health, education, transportation—we just are not there yet.

"I view progress as incremental and progressive and, in many ways, a building-block process so that as change takes place it becomes institutionalized," Turner adds. "It's not a sugar high. It gets integrated fully. Then it becomes so much a part



Undersecretary Carmen Turner with Secretary Robert McC. Adams

of the organization that it is not discernible as something separate. It is part and parcel of whatever is taking place."

Turner is proud and forth right when discussing her experiences and accomplishments over the last 30 years. At the regional transit system, she has been responsible for the administration of a \$615 million budget and 9,000 employees, while also being accountable to Metro's 12-member board, two governors, a mayor and the U. S. Congress.

"In large complex bureaucracies, you have to work with various interest groups in order to get almost anything done, Turner notes. "So the challenge is to build a kind of consensus, to build a kind of support around issues that allows a large complex organization to move forward."

"I identify strongly, intimately with what I do," Turner says. As evidence of her success and commitment to her job, Turner has earned numerous honors and awards, including 1989 Transit Manager of the Year. A year

earlier, the Metro system was cited as the top transit agency in North America.

When asked to describe her management style, Turner says, "Not only do I have an open-door policy, I believe in the theory of management by walking around. So, I'm not one to sit in my office."

At the transit authority, Turner, who values both formal and informal procedures in an organization, was known to visit the maintenance facilities unannounced. "I'm a people person. I enjoy people. I believe in candor and I believe in good communication and I believe in establishing and defining roles and then holding people accountable."

See 'Turner', p. 2

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Importance of African American Museums – p. 2
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- Calendar of Events – p. 5



## 'Turner', from p. 1

Turner, who began her public service career as a GS-2, acknowledges that her start at the bottom was a very significant part of her education. "As a result of that, I know what it is to be a GS-2 and remember that it was during this time that the federal government practiced overt discrimination," she says. "I think that gives me a special sensitivity and it allows me to communicate with greater understanding as a result of having been there."

There are many similarities between Metro and Smithsonian, particularly in the sizes of the organizations, which Turner suggests will make her transition just a little easier.

Undaunted by the challenges ahead of her, she says she looks forward to "brainstorming sessions" and meeting with diverse constituencies from around the Smithsonian. "I don't deal with 'I' in management," she says. "The word is 'we'. People don't work *for* me, they work *with* me."

Of her appointment to the second-ranking position at the Smithsonian, Turner doesn't hesitate in saying it is the most exciting thing that's happened to her. Perhaps even the reverse is true. ■

## The Importance of the Black Museum to Families

by Claudine Kinard Brown

**"F**or museums, the act of collecting is more than an institutional expression of a human trait. It is society's cumulative effort to save ourselves, our history, our natural surroundings, our technological and creative endeavors" (American Association of Museums, 1984, p. 35).

For African Americans, the need for reaffirmation and accurate attribution is particularly important, given the long history of omissions and distortions of our achievements in the museum community. Most American museums have failed to accurately represent the contributions of African Americans, as well as other peoples of diverse ethnicity, women, and the working class. African American museums share the responsibility of resolving this problem.

The 120 African American museums play a unique role in the Black community. They serve as traditional repositories for artifacts and objects to be displayed and interpreted, and they function as cultural centers that preserve and present a multiplicity of cultural expressions that lack other outlets in the community. The African American Museum of History and Culture in Philadelphia is a primary venue for jazz in that city, and the Studio Museum in Harlem's Artists-in-Residence Program is a model program that celebrates and supports the efforts of working artists. Institutions like the Anacostia

Museum here in Washington, D. C., the Black American West Museum in Denver, the Weeksville Society in Brooklyn, and the National Afro-American Museum in Wilberforce are places where families can augment their school experiences, reaffirm their personal and racial identity, and share their traditions. Each of these museums is of critical importance in the Black community.

The African American museum experience encourages critical thinking, enabling us to reexamine the films we view, the history books we read, the popular images that we encounter daily, and the non-inclusive exhibitions that we visit for inaccuracies and false representation.

African American museums are the authentic family album for Black America, containing true reflections of the impact of our achievements upon the world and a wellspring of knowledge that can imbue us with personal strength and collective well-being.

African American museums need our support. We must be actively committed to these institutions, which are so meaningful to our families and communities. By attending programs, serving on committees and boards, and assisting with contributions and fundraising efforts, we help to keep these museums afloat. Our legacy is only as serious as we believe ourselves to be, and the job of preserving it vests in each of us. ■



"Here, Look at Mine," by local artist John Robinson.



## Kinard's Korner

### SAAA Salutes...

#### Building Management Laborers/Riggers

**B**uilding Management laborers/riggers are the first recipients of the Museum of American History Director's Annual Award for exceptional service. Each employee received a cash award and plaque. Award recipients include:

Ken I. Jordan, general foreman, 15 years  
Stephen Jones, rigger foreman, 13 years  
Donald Phillips, rigger leader, 14 years  
Harrison Hawkins, rigger worker, 24 years  
John Rideout, rigger worker, 24 years  
Andrew Goffney, rigger worker, 24 years  
Fred Dunsmore, maintenance worker, 28 years  
Milton Williams, rigger worker, 10 years  
Leo Morgan, labor leader, 27 years  
Gregory Powell, rigger, 3 years ■



(first row, l. to r.) Andrew Goffney, Donald Phillips, Harrison Hawkins, John Rideout; (second row, l. to r.) Ken I. Jordan, Stephen Jones, Gregory Powell, Leo Morgan, Milton Williams, and Fred Dunsmore; (third row) MAH Director Roger Kennedy.

## America's Mutual Funds

by Freida Austin

**A**ccording to current data about 50 percent of new jobs created between now and the year 2000 will require some college education. Consequently, many African American employees, particularly those with limited education, will have a difficult time finding employment or supplementing their incomes. Were you prepared for the furlough? Are you prepared for a family crisis, a medical emergency, or forced early retirement?

Further, beyond the effects of furloughs and racial discrimination, many analysts concur that the financial insecurity of African Americans today is largely due to their basic investing and spending habits.

A 1989 U. S. Census report cites the investment choices of African Americans and minority groups and states how they differ from nonminority groups. The data suggests that African Americans consciously avoid risky investments.

Economic researchers are telling us that unless things change the wealth gap of this country will widen in the 90s. Unless there are extreme changes, America will not share the wealth equally—at least not before the next century. Statistics show us that at best, we can look for this gap to close in the 22nd century.

To counteract the dilemma, this country must continue breaking down the racial barriers and put those who have been disenfranchised on a more equal footing with others. Ideally, the federal government should commit more effort and money to ensure equal opportunities in employment, housing and education.

President Bush speaks of a kinder, gentler nation. Highway signage now and then reminds us of this. But the Bush administration has not adequately addressed the issue of funding for education or job training. Seemingly, it would be helpful for the federal government to restore college grants and some of the work-study programs of the 1970s.

Banks, mortgage companies and insurance companies must make greater disclosures to regulators and to the public. Such disclosures would hinder discriminatory practices. The "Savings and Loan Bailout" law proves to be a move in the right direction. It requires banks, mortgage companies and the like to report to regulators, the race, gender and income of every mortgage applicant and borrower.

Next, all of us would do well to learn to diversify our investments—learn more about stocks, bonds and mutual funds. This eases the emphasis on real estate and broadens our financial asset options. This practice might help ensure more prosperous and stronger families and communities; thus, promoting a greater nation as a whole.

Unless more Americans do their part to eliminate a primary distraction—discrimination—our country's economy will continue to falter and we all pay the price, one way or another. ■



## Point of View

### And Still We Rise

In the last several months, the Smithsonian African American Association has continued to grow and mature. We have refined and adopted our constitution and by-laws. Our presence is known through **The Prophet**; our perspectives sought out by our colleagues; and our membership, whether GS-3s or GS-13s, are assured of our concern for their fate at the Smithsonian. We have streamlined our committee structure to avoid overlapping missions. Our committees now fan out across the Institution to inform the membership of the processes of the Smithsonian. This restructuring allows us to assess the often heard promises of improved sensitivities, equal access to training and promotions and the inclusion of African American subject matter in SI products developed for the public. Finally, SAAA's election process begins with the new year and will end with the elections in June. Our mission is clear: Combat racism at the Smithsonian.

All of this occurs at a time when the institution is undergoing major change and experiencing the resistance to change. We welcome the insistence of the Secretary that the Smithsonian reflect the diversity of our nation in its management team, staff, research, exhibitions, media products, and public programs. We hail the creation of the Office of Human Resources, and with it the commitment by the Institution to further develop the able human resources already here.

In my opinion, this change of attitude is definitely worth fighting for although the battle will not easily be won. Four years ago, a long-time friend already employed by the federal government, warned me that the Smithsonian was the most racist federal agency in Washington, D. C. Just a few weeks ago, a colleague asked me if there was really racism at SI. One need only ask African American employees near retirement to learn how racism operates here. One will learn of those who have spent 10, 15, 20, 25 and more years only to leave at one grade above their entry level grade. I have heard stories of supervisors calling their African American employees "nigger." I've been told that senior-ranking African American employees have seen young and inexperienced technicians enter SI, have access to all the training possible and whiz by those who have never had access to training. The same young and inexperienced technicians are promoted through the ranks to become supervisors. One will hear those who refer to the Smithsonian as the "plantation."

We are the products of our society and so are our institutions. American society belittles the role of the African American in shaping our history and culture. Begrudgingly, a token holiday and month are granted to let us sing and read poetry. However, we want more than that. African Americans have been a part of every region of the Americas since the 16th century, but one is hard pressed to see that pervasive presence at the Smithsonian. We brought technologies, skills, knowledge, religions and languages to these

shores, in addition to the acknowledged foods, art, music and song.

Generations have fought for freedom, citizenship, education for our children, decent housing, formability within the workplace and for access to unions, the professions and public and private universities. Those who have preceded us have fought in order that we could have a voice in public and private institutions, such as museums. These institutions must be held accountable for their responsibility to service and reflect the diversity of the nation's people. We are part of these historic processes.

To promote change at the Smithsonian will take the scrutiny of Congress and the public, and the will and funding from within. For those who think that this "diversity thing" will pass and that things will return to normal, remember that we are used to being told to wait, that its not time, that there just isn't any money for that, that we just can't find any and that you just don't qualify. Those are transparent and unacceptable excuses for resisting change. These excuses have not held us back and won't discourage us this time either. ■

—John Franklin

*The next issue of **The Prophet** will highlight interviews of soon-to-be retired African American colleagues who have encountered racism at the Smithsonian.*



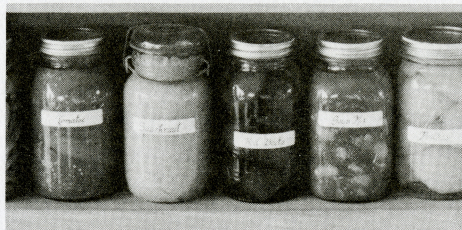
*"I wish I could personally thank each of you for your generous support during SAAA's first 'International Holiday Bake Sale', for without you it would have never been so overwhelmingly successful!"*

—Charlotte Brown  
Bake Sale Coordinator



## Sizzle!!

### Cranberry Cheesecake



Makes 12 servings

3 Tbsp. butter  
1 cup graham-cracker crumbs  
4 8-oz. packages cream cheese (room temperature)  
1 cup sugar  
3 Tbsp. cornstarch  
2 Tbsp. lemon juice  
1/2 tsp. grated lemon zest  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
3 eggs  
1 cup sour cream  
1 cup jellied cranberry sauce

Heat oven to 325 degrees. Butter a 9" springform pan and wrap outside in 2 layers of foil. Melt the 3 Tbsp. butter. Toss melted butter with crumbs. Press onto bottom of prepared pan. Put cream cheese and sugar in a food processor until smooth. Add all remaining ingredients except cranberry sauce. Process until smooth. Reserve 1/4 cup of the cheese mixture and pour the rest into the springform pan. Combine cranberry sauce. Blend cheesecake mixture in food processor.

Pour this mixture onto cheesecake in a spiral. With a chopstick or skewer, draw circles along cranberry spiral to form a swirl pattern. Put springform pan in a larger pan. Fill pan half full with warm water to form a water bath. Bake for 1 3/4 to 2 hours, or until toothpick inserted in center of cake comes out slightly moist. Turn off heat and let cake cool in oven with door ajar 1 hour. Remove cake and let cool completely. Refrigerate over night.

*Submitted by Mildred Haltiwanger*

## Calendar of Events

The Smithsonian is sponsoring a wide array of programs to mark **Black History Month 1991**. The Institution's pan-institutional program takes place Monday, Feb. 4 at noon in the Museum of American History's Carmichael Auditorium. Niara Sudarkasa, president of Lincoln University, a historically Black college founded in 1854 at Lincoln University, PA, will address the education issue. E. Ethelbert Miller, director of the Afro-American Studies Center at Howard University, will give a poetry reading. For more information call (202) 357-2700.

**AFRICAN ART:** The Gullah people of the Sea Islands of South Carolina and Georgia, a group of African Americans who trace their heritage to West Africa, particularly Sierra Leone, will be the focus of a series of programs at the Museum. Programs include: Emory S. Campbell, executive director of the Penn Center of the Sea Islands, S.C., discussing the history and traditions of Gullah culture, Feb. 3, 2 p.m.

Cornelia Bailey, a folklorist and Gullah Historian who has traced her family history in the Georgia Sea Island to 1790, will recount Gullah folk tales and tall tales on Feb. 20 at 2 p.m.

On Feb. 24 at 2 p.m., Margaret H. Washington, associate professor of history at Cornell University and author of *A Peculiar People*, will discuss African aspects of Gullah religion.

**AMERICAN ART:** An exhibition, "Harlem: Photographs by Aaron Siskind, 1932-1940," consisting of 50 photographs, will be on view through March 17.

Throughout the month of February, free tours highlighting works by African American artists will be offered on Sundays at 3 p.m. Visitors should meet in the museum's lobby before the tours begin.

### AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM:

Benjamin O. Davis, the first African American general in the U.S. Air Force, will deliver a lecture based on his autobiography, *General Benjamin O. Davis, Jr.: American*, on Feb. 5 at 7:30 p.m.

**ANACOSTIA:** "Gathered Visions: Selected Works by African American Women Artists," an exhibition of works by 15 local artists, will be on view through April 28.

Januwa Moja, a well-known local fiber artist, will give a lecture, showing slides of her African influenced unique wearable art on Feb. at 1 p.m.

A conservation seminar takes place on Feb. 20 from 9 a.m. to 2:20 p.m. Designed for church historians, archivists and lay people, the seminar will provide information on conservation of photographs and other memorabilia. There is a \$3 charge. Please call (202) 287-3369 for more information.

On Feb. 26, the Anacostia Senior High School Choir will be in concert.

**HIRSHHORN:** An exhibition, "Comparisons: An Exercise in Looking," will be on view through April 21. The show compares the works of various artists, including the works of African American artists, Bob Thompson and Alma Thomas.

### RESIDENT ASSOCIATE

**PROGRAM (RAP):** On Feb. 7 at 6:30 p.m., Lonnie Bunch, historian and curator at the Museum of American History, will discuss the migration of African Americans to California, \$10.

The Philandanco Dance Company, will perform "Rosa," a tribute to Rosa Parks, as part of their repertoire on Feb. 21 at 7:30 p.m., \$16. Call (202) 357-3030 for ticket information. ■



## The Book Shelf

Lewis, Jerry  
*The Long Struggle*  
New York: Brummer, 1983

A study of Black working-class families in the inner city. Primary focus on the socio-economic context of family competence as revealed in the family structure and function.

Greenberg, Jonathan D.  
*The Story of Jake Simons*  
New York: Atheneum, 1990

Story of Jake Simons, the first Black oil entrepreneur, and his family. Simons brought the first desegregation suit to the Supreme Court in 1938 and served as the head of the Oklahoma NAACP.

Flourney, Valerie  
*The Patchwork Quilt*  
New York, N. Y.: Dial Books for Young Readers, 1985

A grandmother shares her memories with her granddaughter while she puts together a quilt made from scraps of the families clothes. During the grandmother's illness, her granddaughter, with the help of the family, finishes the quilt.

Barnes Lung Transplant Center in St. Louis, Missouri. A successful lung transplant is now the only means by which Philip can hope to again live and active life.

The Philip Thompson Fund has been established at the Riggs National Bank. Anyone wishing to make a donation should contact Faye Thompson, (202) 287-3100, x 217.

### WANTED: A FEW GOOD MEN

SAAA member Harry Jackson is working with a group of 15 to 18 year old pre-adjudicated young men. He is looking for male role models who would be willing to donate an hour to talk to them about their careers and the importance of getting an education. Please call him at (202) 357-2920.

## Announcements

### AN APPEAL FOR HELP

In 1985, Philip C. Thompson, son of Conrad and Faye Thompson, suffered severe lung damage in a house fire that nearly cost him his life. Philip has been accepted as a participant in the

special gratitude is given to the Office of Public Service for their administrative support and financial contribution.

To Jordan, Ross and Brown Marketing Consultants and Herman Thompson and the SI Duplicating Branch, thank you for your supreme patience, allegiance and for helping us to put our best foot forward.

*Ricardo T. Williams*

P.S. Please send letters, articles, and comments to: 1111 North Capitol Street, N.E., Room 402, Washington, D. C. 20560. Remember, WE CAN MAKE A CHANGE! ■

## Letter from the Editor

On behalf of the Smithsonian African American Association, we welcome Carmen Turner to the Smithsonian Institution family. We look forward to working with her and pledge our support to her as undersecretary of the Smithsonian Institution.

To our readers, this is the third issue of *The Prophet* and I encourage you to show your support by submitting articles that are of concern to all of us. Our next issue will be an *Anniversary Issue* that focuses on the progress of SAAA and the Institution, as well as future plans concerning African Americans at the Institution and in the community.

Thanks goes out to an exceptional group of professionals—the Smithsonian African American newsletter committee and our Managing Editor, Freida Austin, the driving force, who assists me in moving the production of this newsletter smoothly along. As a team, these talented people have proven to be hardworking and dedicated to our mission of producing an interesting, informative and enjoyable newsletter.

Special thanks go to Phyllis Cunningham for her hard work and dedication in helping to make this newsletter a positive tool for all employees. Many thanks to the members of the SAAA Steering Committee for their ongoing support. And



*The Prophet Committee: (front row, left to right) Johnnie Douthis, Freida Austin, Helen Holley, Cassandra Williams, Ricardo T. Williams; (back row, left to right) Carole Broadus, Michael Barnes, Michael Syphax, Jo Ann Webb; (not shown) LaVonda Mosley and Omar Wynn.*

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**Prophet**—The chief spokesperson of a movement or cause

### Editorial Board

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