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Smithsonian Establishes Consortium of Five HBCUs To Support University Museums and Archives

Five-Year Project Includes Internships, Training and a Traveling Exhibition of Artifacts From the Universities' Collections

The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) announced a partnership with five Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to enhance their ability to care for and share archives that tell the story of African Americans and their essential role in American culture and history. The consortium includes Clark Atlanta University, Florida A&M University, Jackson State University, Texas Southern University and Tuskegee University.

The project, led by NMAAHC's strategic partnerships office, features:

- Internships, fellowship programs and professional training for underrepresented groups to establish a pipeline of museum and archive specialists in the next generation.
- Assistance in digitizing HBCU collections and creating a digital archive in an easily accessible format for academic scholars and the general public.
- Development of a traveling exhibition drawing on the most compelling collections from the partner universities that will begin at NMAAHC and then travel to the consortium members and other venues around the country.

A launch meeting of the consortium was held virtually March 23. Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III and NMAAHC Director Kevin Young spoke at the event and were joined by members of the consortium's advisory committee: National Endowment for the Humanities Acting Chair Adam Wolfson, Institute of Museum and Library Services Director Crosby Kemper III and Johnnetta Cole, former director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African Art. Also in attendance were the presidents of the five universities:

- George French Jr., president of Clark Atlanta University
- Larry Robinson, president of Florida A&M University
- Thomas Hudson, president of Jackson State University
- Kenneth Huewitt, interim president of Texas Southern University
- Charlotte Morris, interim president of Tuskegee University

Other members of the advisory committee are H. Patrick Swygert, president emeritus at Howard University; Bryan Carter, director of the Center for Digital Humanities at Arizona State University; Amina Dickerson, president of Dickerson Global Advisors; Mark Puente, an associate dean at Purdue University; and Jennifer Himmelreich, Native American fellowship manager at the Peabody Essex Museum.

NMAAHC's strategic partnerships office, established in 2012 (four years before the museum opened), explores issues facing HBCUs and identifies ways to strengthen and sustain their museums, archives and libraries. Outreach programs such as the consortium are part of NMAAHC's core mission. More information can be found on the office's [website](#).

About the National Museum of African American History and Culture

Since opening Sept. 24, 2016, the National Museum of African American History and Culture has welcomed over 7 million visitors. Occupying a prominent location next to the Washington Monument on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., the nearly 400,000-square-foot museum is the nation's largest and most comprehensive cultural destination devoted exclusively to exploring, documenting and showcasing the African American story and its impact on American and world history. For more information about the museum, visit nmaahc.si.edu follow @NMAAHC on Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram—or call Smithsonian information at (202) 633-1000.

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HBCU HISTORY & CULTURE.

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WHO: This effort is led by NMAAHC's Office of Strategic Partnerships collaborating with Museum and Archive Directors of the Clark Atlanta, Florida A & M, Jackson State, Texas Southern and Tuskegee Universities. Consortium trainings are facilitated by the George Mason University's Roy Rosenzweig Center for History & New Media, and The Compass Group, Inc. This project is made possible in part by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS).

WHAT: The 5-year pilot initiative is designed to create lasting benefits to member organizations by securing the cultural legacy of HBCUs and to greatly enhance resource availability to make known the under-told history and culture of African Americans and their essential role in the story of America. A major goal is to increase understanding of the value Museum and Archives offer the faculty, students, administrators, and stakeholders of their academic institutions.

WHY: Fulfilling a commitment to advance efforts to sustain historically Black institutions by remaining responsive to the expressed needs of HBCU Museum and Archive Directors for increased organizational capacity, training, development, and advocacy; to clearly align campus cultural institutions with the larger mission of the university and its constituent groups.

IMPACT:

- Create a strong and replicable community of practice among consortium members through digital and in-person formal convenings that creates an environment for shared learning and open dialogue about best practices for increased sustainability for museums and archives among participating HBCUs.
- Create an open-source digital archive via the Omeka-S platform, composed of HBCU digitized collections for use by academic scholars and the general public in an easily accessible format.
- Produce a national traveling exhibition featuring HBCU collections, along with an exhibition catalogue designed for international distribution.
- Deliver professional development and skill-building training through internship and fellowship opportunities for a cohort of young professionals from traditionally underrepresented groups, generating a next-generation talent pipeline.

For more information about:

NMAAHC's Office of Strategic Partnerships and support for the HBCU History & Culture Access Consortium please visit:

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/connect/osp>

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The National Endowment for the Humanities: Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at neh.gov.



The Institute of Museum and Library Services is the primary source of federal support for the nation's libraries and museums. We advance, support, and empower America's museums, libraries, and related organizations through grantmaking, research, and policy development. Our vision is a nation where museums and libraries work together to transform the lives of individuals and communities. To learn more, visit www.imls.gov and follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/imls) and [Twitter](https://twitter.com/imls).



The Smithsonian Secretary

Lonnie G. Bunch III is the 14th Secretary of the Smithsonian. He assumed his position June 16, 2019. As Secretary, he oversees 19 museums, 21 libraries, the National Zoo, numerous research centers, and several education units and centers.



Previously, Bunch was the director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. When he started as director in July 2005, he had one staff member, no collections, no funding and no site for a museum. Driven by optimism, determination and a commitment to build "a place that would make America better," Bunch transformed a vision into a bold reality. The museum has welcomed more than 6 million visitors since it opened in September 2016 and

compiled a collection of 40,000 objects that are housed in the first "green building" on the National Mall.

Occupying a prominent location next to the Washington Monument, the nearly 400,000-square-foot National Museum of African American History and Culture is the nation's largest and most comprehensive cultural destination devoted exclusively to exploring, documenting and showcasing the African American story and its impact on American and world history.

Before his appointment as director of the museum, Bunch served as the president of the Chicago Historical Society (2001–2005). There, he led a successful capital campaign to transform the Historical Society in celebration of its 150th anniversary, managed an institutional reorganization, initiated an unprecedented outreach initiative to diverse communities and launched a much-lauded exhibition and program on teenage life titled "Teen Chicago."

A widely published author, Bunch has written on topics ranging from the black military experience, the American presidency and all-black towns in the American West to diversity in museum management and the impact of funding and politics on American museums. His most recent book, *A Fool's Errand: Creating the National Museum of African American History and Culture in the Age of Bush, Obama, and Trump*, which chronicles the making of the museum that would become one of the most popular destinations in Washington.

Bunch has worked at the Smithsonian in the past, holding several positions at its National Museum of American History from 1989 through 2000. As the museum's associate director for

curatorial affairs for six years (1994–2000), he oversaw the curatorial and collections management staff and led the team that developed a major permanent exhibition on the American presidency. He also developed “Smithsonian’s America” for the American Festival Japan 1994; this exhibition, which was presented in Japan, explored the history, culture and diversity of the United States.

Bunch served as the curator of history and program manager for the California African American Museum in Los Angeles from 1983 to 1989. While there, he organized several award-winning exhibitions, including “The Black Olympians, 1904–1950” and “Black Angelenos: The Afro-American in Los Angeles, 1850–1950.” He also produced several historical documentaries for public television.

Born in Belleville, New Jersey, Bunch has held numerous teaching positions at universities across the country, including American University in Washington, D.C., the University of Massachusetts in Dartmouth and George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

In service to the historical and cultural community, Bunch has served on the advisory boards of the American Association of Museums and the American Association for State and Local History. In 2005, Bunch was named one of the 100 most influential museum professionals of the 20th century by the American Association of Museums.

Among his many awards, he was appointed by President George W. Bush to the Committee for the Preservation of the White House in 2002 and reappointed by President Barack Obama in 2010. In 2019, he was awarded the Freedom Medal, one of the Four Freedom Awards from the Roosevelt Institute, for his contribution to American culture as a historian and storyteller; the W.E.B. Du Bois Medal from the Hutchins Center at Harvard University; and the National Equal Justice Award from the NAACP’s Legal Defense Fund.

Bunch received his undergraduate and graduate degrees from the American University in Washington, D.C.

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Director, National Museum of African American History and Culture



Kevin Young is the Andrew W. Mellon Director of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture. Young is best known as a poet, author, essayist and editor. He has written 11 books of poetry, two works of nonfiction and is the editor of 10 other works, including *African American Poetry: 250 Years of Struggle and Song* published in October 2020.

In 2016, he became the director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, a research division of the New York Public Library, and he is also currently the poetry editor at *The New Yorker* magazine. Founded in 1925 and named a national historic landmark, the Schomburg Center is a focal point of Harlem’s cultural life with extensive collections of art and artifacts, reference works, rare books and archives, photography and recordings.

During his four-year tenure as director of the Schomburg Center, Young secured several high-profile acquisitions, including the Harlem-based archives of Harry Belafonte, James Baldwin, Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee, Sonny Rollins and Fred “Fab 5 Freddy” Brathwaite and the manuscript of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, including a once-lost chapter.

In addition to raising \$10 million in grants and donations and raising attendance by 40 percent, Young enhanced the entire profile of the Schomburg Center, developing the “Home to Harlem” initiative, the new Schomburg Center Literary Festival and continuing the popular Black Comic Book Festival. Recently, while closed for the pandemic, the Schomburg Center developed a Black Liberation Reading List with 95 books and affiliated programs.

Before joining the Schomburg Center, Young was the Charles Howard Candler Professor of Creative Writing and English at Emory University in Atlanta where he taught for 11 years. He also was the curator of Emory’s Raymond Danowski Poetry Library, a 75,000-volume collection of rare and modern poetry, and curator of literary collections. He has produced a wide range of poetry and cultural criticism, including two non-fiction books, *Bunk: The Rise of Hoaxes, Humbug, Plagiarists, Phonies, Post-Facts and Fake News* (Graywolf Press, 2017), longlisted for the National Book Award, and *The Grey Album: On the Blackness of Blackness* (Graywolf Press, 2012), which won the PEN Open Book Award and was named a *New York Times* Notable Book.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture opened Sept. 24, 2016. Located next to the Washington Monument, the 400,000-square-foot museum is the nation’s largest and most comprehensive cultural center devoted exclusively to exploring, documenting and showcasing the African American experience. The museum has a collection of more than 37,000 objects, with about 3,000 on display. Highlights include artifacts belonging to Harriet Tubman, including her shawl and hymnal, Emmett Till’s casket, a slave cabin from Edisto Island and a Jim Crow-era railroad car. The museum has more than 10,000 digitized objects and collection stories online. While closed for the COVID-19 pandemic, the museum continued to publish online educational content, including the “Talking About Race” website, online Juneteenth program, virtual Community Day and March on Washington digital resources.

Young earned his bachelor’s degree from Harvard College in 1992, held a Stegner Fellowship in Poetry at Stanford University (1992–1994) and received his Master of Fine Arts degree in creative writing from Brown University in 1996. A former Guggenheim Fellow, he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 2016 and was named a Chancellor of the Academy of American Poets.

Young succeeds the founding director, Lonnie G. Bunch III, who is now the Secretary of the Smithsonian.

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Interim Director, National Museum of African Art



Associate Director, National Museum of African American History and Culture | Office of Strategic Partnerships

Deborah L. Mack is the interim director of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African Art, the nation’s premiere museum devoted to the arts of Africa. Founded as a small museum on Capitol Hill in 1964, the museum became a part of the Smithsonian in 1979 and, in 1987, it moved to its current location on the National Mall. The museum’s collection of more than 12,000 objects represents nearly every area of the continent of Africa and contains a variety of media and art forms.

Mack joins the museum from the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History and Culture, where she served as the associate director for strategic partnerships. Beginning in 2012, she was responsible for overall planning, management and coordination of professional partnership programs and international activities.

As an independent museum consultant (2000–12), Mack advised organizations nationwide and internationally on museum organizational and strategic planning, interpretive and exhibition development, and cultural and heritage tourism. She also served on the Smithsonian Council (1999–2005) and the National Museum of African American History and Culture’s Scholarly Advisory Committee (2005–11).

She is an active service member of several professional organizations, including the Association of African American Museums (board of trustees and vice president, 2011–15), Southeast Museums Conference (board of trustees), National Council on Public History (editorial board of *The Public Historian*, 2013–18), National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities and the Institute of Museum and Library Services as a peer reviewer.

Mack holds a doctorate, a master of arts in anthropology from Northwestern University and a bachelor of arts in geography from the University of Chicago.

Mack succeeds Gus Casely-Hayford, who resigned in March 2020.



HISTORICALLY BLACK COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY (HBCU) INSTITUTIONAL PARTNERS

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For more information about:

NMAAHC's Office of Strategic Partnerships and support for the HBCU History & Culture Access Consortium please visit:
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