

CHAPTER 17

Mythos, Memory, and History: African American Preservation Efforts, 1820–1990

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In 1968 a major television network aired an extraordinarily popular documentary entitled *Black History: Lost, Stolen, or Strayed?* Narrated by Bill Cosby, this program sought to show the public the state of historical research and thought on African Americans. Although the documentary was already somewhat outdated at the time of its airing, the title captures the feelings that many people, Black and white, shared in the late 1960s: that the history of African Americans was simply absent—whether out of willful action on the part of some or benign neglect on the part of others.

Since the 1960s there has been a revolution in the study of African American life, history, and culture. Over the last twenty years, scholars in a variety of disciplines have enlarged and in some cases radically changed our view of the American social landscape and the fundamental role of African Americans within it. Black people were once thought to be marginal to the main story of the American past, but now we know that they are central to it. African Americans were once thought only to be reactive victims of the American experiment; we now know them to have been catalysts for change since the republic's earliest days.¹

While the experience of every ethnic group is distinctive and deserves celebration and analysis, African Americans have a unique his-

tory within the United States. There were both Native American and occasional European slaves at some points in American history, but slavery was an overwhelmingly African American experience.² That enslavement has fueled a powerful debate over the fundamental civil rights and appropriate governmental relationships laid out in documents such as the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Constitution's Bill of Rights, to name only the most important. While conflict among ethnic groups and classes may characterize many aspects of American history, the Civil War had to be fought to resolve the issues relevant to Afro-Americans. Moreover, no other ethnic group has been victimized by state constitutional amendments denying them the right to vote and to share public facilities, as were African American people in the late-nineteenth-century South. While discrimination existed within many areas of American life against certain religious groups and people of foreign origins, at the same time segregation laws were formally enacted in many states for the specific purpose of controlling the social and political access and economic opportunities of one ethnic group: African Americans. Furthermore, the modern civil rights movement, which changed American life and has proven inspirational to activists around the world, was initiated and led by African Americans. In these ways (and in others too detailed to mention) the history of Black people is deeply intertwined with the more general history of this country. African Americans have a unique history, connected at the root with virtually all aspects of the American experience. This uniqueness should be remembered as we separate the historical experience itself from the record of its preservation.

Since the 1890s, academically trained African American historians such as W.E.B. Du Bois, Carter G. Woodson, Lorenzo Greene, and others have published works detailing this history. But because of segregation in the professions, the work of these pioneering historians was not read widely outside Black universities.³ Since 1965, however, there has been an explosion of scholarly interest in African American topics. As evidence has mounted of the enormous complexity of that American culture, scholars in various fields have debated and worked to determine the precise elements of African American life, history, and culture. In musicology, archaeology, folklore, anthropology, literature, history and other disciplines, extraordinary volumes have been published that document the rich cultural life, complex political and social traditions, and convoluted history of African Americans. Before 1965, many academically trained historians did not believe that there

were enough primary sources even to study African Americans, but since then both Black and white scholars have mined the national and university libraries and state and local history archives and unearthed new information. In other cases, scholars have developed new sources, often by eliciting oral histories and doing fieldwork.⁴

Such research has identified (or in some cases rediscovered) publications, manuscripts, letters, and other documents that for years had resided in both public and private collections. Some institutions, such as the Library of Congress and the National Archives, turned out to have important holdings. Historically Black institutions had preserved a wealth of information for decades. Scholars have recently begun to utilize Black church archives and college and university libraries, as well as family and private collections. Few of the scholars who began to tap these rich resources questioned how and why these particular materials had come to be saved.

At first glance, research materials appear to be spotty in all preservation locations. But a deeper look reveals a complex pattern of preservation. In general, historically Black colleges have some very important archival and library collections that date from the 1850s and earlier; a good example is the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University. Some institutions, such as Hampton University, have well-known museums, and others, such as Fisk University, have important art collections. However, historically white museums—whether art museums, cultural-history museums, or natural-history museums—have either no relevant material or relatively small collections, most acquired within the past ten or fifteen years.⁵ The only exceptions are a few early historical societies, such as the Pennsylvania Historical Society in Philadelphia.⁶ Black museums hold by far the greatest wealth of African American material culture. Although some of these institutions are more than one hundred years old, most were founded during the 1960s and later. In short, documentary and archival materials abound, and music and oral history collections have been growing over the last fifty years, but material culture collections are recent and slim.

This brief overview suggests how uneven the preservation of African American materials has been. Although the history and culture of Blacks are deeply embedded in American life, the sense that they have been lost or stolen or have strayed remains strong, especially with the general public, to whom this new scholarship has not penetrated. This sense of loss is particularly sharp among the staffs and supporters of

Black museums, who are more aware of what might have been saved from earlier times.⁷

Though uneven, these patterns of preservation are not random, but rather reflect selectivity. That which has been preserved reflects the preservers' interpretations of what was important about the African American past. These different interpretations developed over the course of decades, under different institutional structures, and at different points in the history of particular institutions; as a result, collectors preserved certain parts of Black history and culture while leaving out other elements. Informed by collective as well as idiosyncratic interpretations of the African American past, individuals and institutions have helped shape the evidence of that past by their selective preservation efforts. This essay documents some of the types and outcomes of distinct preservation strategies through the last two centuries.

MEMORY, MYTHOS, AND HISTORY

Within all cultures, various versions of the past exist simultaneously. To better investigate the ways in which views of the past shaped preservation activities, let me suggest definitions of some terms that will help me to refer consistently to visions of the past.

The Past

What most Americans colloquially refer to as "history" is probably more accurately called "the past." By this I mean the enormous body of events and movements, debates and ideas, migrations and discoveries—in short, literally everything that happened before the present. Yet not everything has become a part of recorded history; it is impossible for every single person's life and every local, regional, national, and international event to be taken account of this way. Only some portion of these events and experiences has been actively collected and preserved; this process involves the meaningful reconstruction and analysis of the past. In this sense, all history is an interpretation of the past.

One way to think about the past as being different from history is to see historical interpretation as a snapshot of the past. In a snapshot, the photographer records what he or she thinks is interesting or im-

portant about a given scene. By including certain elements and screening out others, the photographer creates a picture of a scene. But the total scene is always much larger and more complex than any photograph. So, too, the historical interpretation of the past is made out of selections of that past by people in the present in order to help them understand both the past and the present.

Many people are deeply interested in understanding the past: their individual lives at earlier moments; the lives of their older living relatives and ancestors; their ethnic, social, or political past. While most people have some general interest in times before their own, however, only some become genealogists or Civil War buffs, and even fewer become professional historians. There are different ways of remembering and interpreting the past, using different pieces of evidence and distinct methods of recovery. All interpretations contain some validity and some distortion; all have a social reality that makes them important in the present. All interpreters of the past develop their own stories or narratives that highlight the points the interpreter finds meaningful and leaves out that which he or she finds unenlightening. Each kind of narrative mode reflects a different take on past experience.

For the purpose of this essay, three distinct types of narratives are important: *memory*, *mythos*, and *history*. Each mode of interpreting the past emphasizes certain kinds of evidence, and often operates in different modalities. How any one of us interprets life "when we were younger," for example, will always be different from how we interpret lives during the American Revolution. We were not alive then and do not know anyone who was, so our emotional response is always far removed from actual experience. We would have to do research in available sources to find out more about what people of the Revolutionary era said about that time; in order to do research, we have to find out what has been preserved.

Preservation efforts are crucial to understanding the past, yet preservation itself has distinct modes as well. For example, to preserve the blues canon by being a professionally recognized musician is a different form of preservation from being a collector or curator of blues records. Each form of preservation adds something meaningful to our understanding of the past (and possibly the present), yet these different modalities affect what and how we expect to learn from the past. The kind of information encoded in the musical experience of a performer is different from that of a listener. Each element in that musical equation is necessary, yet each experience is qualitatively dif-

ferent. In this qualitative sense, *memory* emerges from personal experience, *mythos* emerges as the symbolic/spiritual/expressive elements produced by groups of people (ethnic groups, national groups, etc.), and *history* emerges from the academic experience of professional historians and other scholars.

Memory

Memory is used here to mean the individual or collective memories of people who have lived through a set of experiences. Whether internally coherent or contradictory, the memories of those who were veterans of a particular war or participants in a singular event constitute a distinctive, personally validated version of the past. For example, those who were soldiers on both sides of the Civil War left many reminiscences of their uplifting and shattering experiences. Personal and collective memories were traditionally saved in diaries, letters, and autobiographies. Today, such memories are more typically preserved as oral history or in audio or video form. Embedded in personal testimony are the different beliefs and practices that make individuals, regions, ethnic groups, and religious groups distinctive.

Mythos

Individuals, however, refract particularistic and idiosyncratic versions of those beliefs and practices. Encompassing more than individual memory is the larger narrative, or *mythos*, of a people. The term *mythos* is used here to mean the "pattern of meaning and valuation expressive of the basic truths and enduring apprehensions of a people's historical experience."⁸ *Mythos* is often expressed through a medium of high symbolism, such as poetry, the visual arts, drama, political rhetoric, or the oratory of a sermon. In the African American experience, there are both oral and written full-scale narratives as well as songs, stories, and slogans that define the elements of a mythopoetic African American past.

History

There is a third version of the past, one that is produced by academically trained scholars working within the disciplinary perspectives of history, literature, anthropology, and other related fields. Unlike the two kinds of narratives mentioned previously, history as it is

produced in universities is based on certain rules about what kinds of evidence constitute proof of a particular interpretation. Scholarly histories are most often recorded in books and journal articles, which are critically reviewed for their conformance to or innovation beyond these accepted rules of evidence. These rules may or may not be linked to either personal memories or a collective mythos about the past. Western scholarship values a sense of distance, which is interpreted as objectivity. This distance generally means that academic history or ethnography is formally constructed to sound different from the personal memories and collective mythos that reside in the vernacular traditions of all cultural groups.

The Past Interpreted: Interior and Exterior Viewpoints

In addition to these three modalities—history, mythos, and memory (there are probably more)—there is the added interpretive element of points of view as socially defined within a multicultural society. The concepts of mythos, memory, and history make it evident that interior and exterior interpretations of the past are always simultaneously operative. Black Americans, like all ethnic groups, have developed various narrative versions of their past. These narratives can be called interior, in the sense that they were created by African Americans about their own experience. At the same time, there are versions of the African American past that have been developed within political, educational, religious, and media circles that communicate “American” mass cultural narratives about the African American past. While these narratives may not be wholly negative, they do include racial stereotypes. These interpretations can be called exterior in the sense that they are produced by people who are not African Americans.

This difference between interior and exterior views makes manifest the biculturality of African Americans. The notion that African Americans live in not one but two American cultures was expressed most distinctively by W.E.B. Du Bois, the noted Black scholar and activist, in his essay “Of Our Spiritual Strivings” in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Du Bois wrote that within every Negro chest beat two hearts: an American one and a Negro one. This sense of duality—of intimacy with and yet distance from mainstream American culture—is an important modality to consider when looking at extant collections of African American life, history, and culture. Moreover, this cultural duality reflected the extent of segregation at the time Du Bois wrote those lines.

In addition to segregation in the public aspects of American life,



Fig. 17-1. W.E.B. Du Bois. Photo by Carl Van Vechten, courtesy Rose McClendon Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

there was also a segregation of cultural mythos and history. Yet neither the Black tradition nor the white tradition was monolithic. Over time, generations of writers and scholars in each tradition put forth new interpretations that in turn engendered critiques. Particularly within African American communities, new critiques came not only from intellectuals and scholars, but also from lay people—private collectors, self-taught historians, ministers, teachers. These groups constituted the primary audience within African American communities for preservation activities, and they also shaped a distinctive preservation history. Through autobiographies and biographies, through political and religious oratory, through music and the visual arts, African Americans have recorded their own interpretations of their past. What all these versions share is a sense of the special destiny of African Americans.

A SPECIAL DESTINY: INTERIOR VIEWS OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY, 1820–1900

Collectors and curators create collections out of a complex welter of emotions, opportunities, and resources. The life of any individual

collector helps explain the origins and inherent integrity of a personal collection. The institutional history of a museum—the interplay over time of individuals and resources within it—structures how its curators develop that museum's collections. Curators and collectors are influenced also by ideas developed by the scholars and intellectuals of their time. Through repetition, some interpretations become part of a canonical cluster of texts, stories, and songs. The individuals who organized the earliest preservation activities made their decisions within the context of specific worldviews. As private collections passed into institutions and as institutional collections passed from the hands of their creators into those of later generations, the original collecting notions may have been modified, but the broad tropes of these interpretations have remained guiding principles, influencing the formation of Black museums even to the present.

Within nineteenth-century African American communities, many internal debates were affected by the rhetoric of antislavery agitation and, in the Northern states, the quest for full civil rights. In the earliest African American newspapers (started in the 1820s) and in the Negro Convention Movement (beginning in the 1830s), publishers and political activists argued for the full emancipation of enslaved African Americans by contending that Christian charity required outlawing the fundamental inhumanity of slavery. They asserted that free African Americans deserved all the rights of other Americans because they had demonstrated their equality through their historical and literary achievements. Such an argument was a founding principle in the organization of African American literary and historical societies, the earliest of which was begun in Philadelphia in 1828.⁹

Since the free Black communities of the North and Midwest were vehemently antislavery, African American institutions there provided support for the abolitionists' work. For example, independent Black churches served as way stations on the Underground Railroad as well as centers of abolitionist argument. African American notions about the individual historical roles of Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth and their relationship to a wider national history coalesced into a full-scale mythos. The nineteenth-century African American mythos forged a direct expressive link between the enslaved Hebrews of the Old Testament and the enslaved Africans in America.

One of the distinctive elements of nineteenth-century African American theology was the significance of this linkage between Hebrews and African Americans. Spoken of in innumerable sermons and abolitionist campaign oratory and written about in individual

“slave narratives,” this special connection emphasized not only the Old Testament notion of the enslavement and deliverance of a whole people, but also contemporary Protestant millennialism. Spurred by the Great Awakenings of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, African Americans connected their enslavement (and eventual freedom) with the story of Christ. Their suffering ennobled them; their history was proof that the Lord loved the humble and that the meek might yet inherit the earth. Through the sermons of great preachers such as John Jasper, the pronouncements of locally significant writers in Black newspapers, and the lectures at literary societies, many Black people heard repeated the idea that African Americans had a special destiny within the United States, and that this special destiny, so aligned with the heroism of the Hebrew children and the unforgettable sacrifice of Christ, would lead eventually to freedom.

The mythos of a special African American destiny contained within it the notion of a special social role: that of the truth-teller. In effect, African Americans would ultimately find freedom in part because they would more perfectly embody this role. Upon taking the name Sojourner Truth, Isabella van Wagener epitomized this concept.¹⁰ She felt that her religious experiences compelled her to preach to Black and white alike about the kind of world that should exist, about the freedoms that all people, both women and men, should have. Such ideas became fundamental to African American versions of American history.

Nowhere was this sense of history, of a special destiny, more evident than in the antebellum autobiographies (formerly called slave narratives). Although there are seventeenth- and eighteenth-century narratives, after the 1830s abolitionist presses brought out dozens of these accounts each year. These narratives detailed personal memories of slavery that intersected with this larger mythos. Many of these authors recalled intense and life-shaping religious experiences. All of these writers put forward a philosophy of heroic personal striving in the face of massive violence and oppression. Many of these women and men had experienced fraud and deceit on the part of slaveholders. Most had dramatic tales of conflict, escape (perhaps after several unsuccessful attempts), and eventual freedom. Upon achieving freedom, virtually all these people tried to locate or purchase lost family members (including children borne by women while enslaved). Most had married or remarried by the end of their autobiographies; this was especially true for the men, many of whom had not married or fathered children while enslaved. Virtually all were active members of

established churches. The freed people constituted a noble elite of suffering and achievement in the minds of all Black and many white Americans of a more liberal persuasion. Virtually all said that they had written their stories to help free others, to witness to the inhumanity of slavery, and to lend their hammers to strike a blow for freedom. These men and women provided the most fundamental expression of Black humanity and transcendence of earthly pain in their time. They saw themselves, and were often seen by sympathetic whites, as the ultimate truth-tellers in American society.¹¹

Perhaps Frederick Douglass was the life most emblematic of this larger mythos. Born enslaved about 1817, Douglass escaped to freedom as a young man and began to lecture for abolition in the United States and England. Founder of a newspaper, *The North Star*, in 1846, Douglass wrote several versions of his autobiography. Upon his death in 1896 his Washington home, Cedar Hill, was made into the

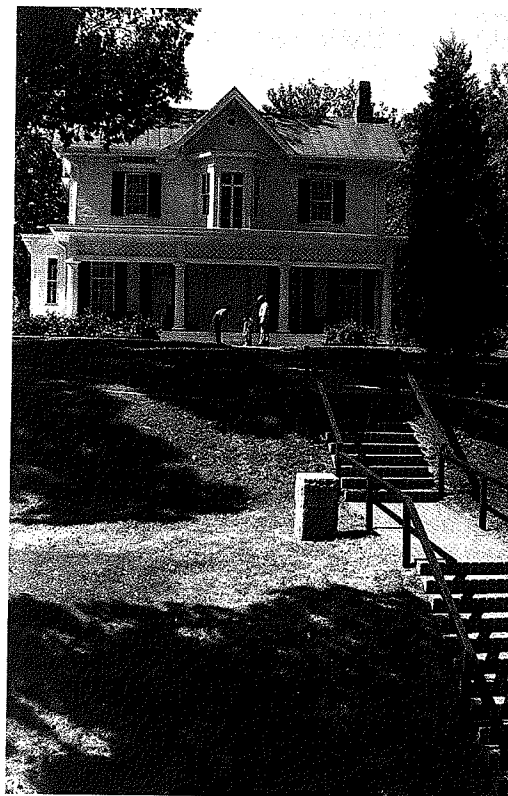


Fig. 17-2. Frederick Douglass Home, Cedar Hill, in Washington, D.C. Photo by Bill Clark, courtesy National Park Service.

first Black historic house. And in 1899 Douglass became the first African American for whom a public memorial statue was made when a monument to him was erected in Rochester, New York.¹²

Douglass was an archetype for this mythos of suffering, heroism, and eventual deliverance. Reified in his house was the image of the enslaved man who had achieved worldwide fame due to his inherent nobility and his just fight against slavery. For nearly seventy years after his death, a succession of mostly Black organizations such as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs and the National Council of Negro Women worked hard to pay off the mortgages on the Douglass home and keep the grounds intact. In 1963 the National Park Service acquired the house as part of the celebration of the centennial of the Civil War. Douglass's home became the first African American property so acquired by the Park Service. As in life, Douglass was an archetype in death. His home was preserved for most of its history by Black institutions; however, eventually it was given national recognition and perpetual support by the federal government. Today, the Douglass home is well maintained by a dedicated, predominantly African American staff.

Douglass also embodied more prosaic notions of achievement, self-reliance, and racial pride. Afro-Americans saw themselves as embodying the notion of the heroism of everyday life. In the nineteenth century, Black people (especially men) who founded businesses, bought property, practiced professions such as law, dentistry, or medicine, taught school, or led congregations were seen not only as model citizens but as living proof that Black people could and did achieve middle-class respectability.

Perhaps the earliest written history based on this model is William C. Nell's 1854 book *Colored Patriots of the American Revolution*. This book is believed to be the earliest known example in English of African American history. In this book, Nell recounted the life histories of exemplary African Americans who were heroes in their time but whose memory he was afraid would be lost if he did not record it. A Black Brahmin from Boston, Nell was instrumental in the fight to integrate the Boston public schools in the 1850s. In writing this history, Nell was not only recounting narratives of everyday heroism and military bravery suitable for everyone's edification, but also preserving a family history of his ancestors—New Englanders since the eighteenth century. Nell was trying to ensure that as others had memorialized the lives of Washington, Adams, and Jefferson, his book would cause his ancestors, participants in America's greatest narrative, also

to be remembered.¹³ In a sense, Nell's work embodied the other key element in interior versions of African American history: the idea that African Americans are important, perhaps even heroic, because they can enact fully the rites and rituals of early Victorian propriety—learning, family stability, and military service.

A most intriguing aspect of the nineteenth-century Afro-American mythos was an ambivalence about Africa and African origins. In contrast to eighteenth-century African Americans, many of whom identified their connection to Africa in the titles of their organizations (such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church), the leading African Americans of the abolitionist generation rarely mentioned Africa. While some voices emerged that favored emigration to Africa, such as Alexander Crummell, Edward Wilmot Blyden, and Reverend Henry Highland Garnet, they represented a minority opinion in these years. By the 1820s, the overwhelming number of Afro-Americans were at least third- or fourth-generation Americans, most Africans having arrived in the United States before 1808.¹⁴ Some scholars argue that the rise of the American Colonization Society (founded in 1816) also affected African Americans. The stated goals of the society were to relocate free Black people in Africa. By the 1830s, many Afro-Americans had changed their self-designation from African to Colored American, perhaps to indicate their firm belief in staying in the country of their birth. Mid- and late-nineteenth-century African Americans tended to have little direct experience of Africans and Africa. To a large extent, they were affected by European attitudes of superiority to Africans. In the 1880s and 1890s, Europeans stepped up their efforts to annex sections of the African and Asian continents. Justifications for these military episodes often hinged on the need for "civilization." For all these reasons, the African past was usually not included in mythopoetic statements about the special destiny of African Americans. While a few Black Americans emigrated to Liberia and Sierra Leone, most had contact with Africans only through their independent church missionary societies.¹⁵

After Reconstruction ended in 1876, a virulent racist literature developed that extolled the virtues of the Old South, idealized the moonlight-and-magnolias version of Southern history, and presented the Reconstruction era as a period of unparalleled Black violence and venality. Epitomized by Thomas Dixon's books *The Leopard's Spots: A Romance of the White Man's Burden* (1902) and *The Clansmen: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (1906), which was later made into the movie *Birth of a Nation* (1915), this version of Ameri-

can history declared that the African background of Afro-Americans was the reason they deserved enslavement. In this environment, it is perhaps easy to see why many Afro-Americans were either silent or ambivalent about their African heritage.

Consequently, the story of William H. Sheppard is particularly striking. A graduate of Hampton Institute in Virginia, Sheppard became a missionary among the Kuba in the Belgian Congo (now Zaire) in 1890. Sheppard arrived in Africa with many notions about the primitiveness of African peoples, but during his twenty years there he completely changed his mind. He became an early interpreter of the sophistication of African peoples. Schooled by the Kuba, Sheppard was eventually granted an honorary royal status, as the Kuba perceived his presence as the return of an ancestor from America. Sheppard amassed a sizeable personal collection of Kuba objects, both religious items and everyday ones. In the 1890s, he began to donate and sell objects from his collection to the museum at Hampton Institute.¹⁶

The museum at Hampton Institute was established in 1867 by the institute's founder, General Samuel Chapman Armstrong. Armstrong was a major figure in the white philanthropic groups committed to the freedmen. The child of American missionaries in Hawaii, Armstrong founded Hampton Institute as an educational facility for African Americans and later Native Americans. He established the museum as a way of introducing these students to natural history and world cultures. Using his sources in the Pacific, Armstrong solicited donations of material culture from the area's peoples as well as lava rock, rare species, and other natural wonders, such as petrified wood, from the American Southwest. Under its head, Cora Mae Folsom, the Hampton Museum grew over the years. Its acquisition of Sheppard's Congo artifacts gave the museum some of the earliest and finest African materials in American collections. In the twentieth century the Hampton Museum continued collecting both African and Native American materials, but also established an important collection of works by nineteenth- and twentieth-century African American artists. The Hampton library, containing important images by a number of early Black and some white photographers, is also a significant resource.¹⁷

Strikingly, there was only one area in which nineteenth-century Afro-Americans were slow to collect: the material culture of enslaved and rural Black people. Today we prize the comparatively few examples of antebellum Afro-American vernacular culture. Virtually no

eighteenth-century examples of quilts, gourd banjos and fiddles and other instruments, distinctive dress, jewelry, ceramics, basketry, and carvings exist. Other than archaeological findings, these materials simply were not saved by postbellum Afro-Americans.

Now curators and collectors work hard to unearth quilts and other textiles, instruments, and other distinctive examples of Afro-American material culture. In most cases, these items have been preserved by families, often white families, who kept them as curiosities. Much more work needs to be done in the Southern plantations, especially those that are public or private museums. There may be a wealth of Afro-American materials contained therein that have not been identified or reinterpreted as such. However, the presently known items in public collections are few and far between. Most are preserved by Black museums established in the last thirty years.

Why were nineteenth-century Afro-Americans not much interested in this material we find so precious today? Perhaps because the African-influenced, often illiterate, considerably oppressed rural Black communities of that and earlier times simply did not fit easily into the heroic mode of nineteenth-century Afro-American historical mythos. Perhaps the people these vernacular objects represented seemed to stand for both a past the Afro-American elite of that era was proud of escaping from and a contemporary reality of ignorance and oppression. While these same Black Victorians were often active in civil rights organizations, anti-lynching campaigns, and other progressivist activities, they often saw rural Black people as a group much in need of "improvement."¹⁸ Since, for reasons I will discuss later, no predominantly white institutions of the same era preserved these objects either, this material culture and these elements of oral traditions, once so very common, are now quite rare.

In summary, nineteenth-century Afro-Americans preserved the literary achievements of the time, the artifacts of great men, the histories of independent Black churches, and, to a much lesser extent, the histories of Africa and of Black Americans in Africa. These books and documents were preserved because they reflected Christian millennialism and the perceived special destiny of African Americans: a mythos about the African American past originated by the abolitionist generation of activists. Emphasizing a special role as truth-tellers, African American historians and collectors prided themselves on a story of achievement, self-reliance, and racial pride. While ambivalent about Africa, a small group certainly took the lead in preserving African materials in the United States. Yet they were unable to see the value of

the distinctive material culture of rural Black Americans. Reflecting a Yankee, urban, and bourgeois cluster of values, these men and women selectively preserved a history that extolled their vision of what they wanted Afro-Americans to be.

BOOKS AND NOT OBJECTS: NINETEENTH-CENTURY HISTORICALLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS

As George Frederickson's and Winthrop Jordan's works have shown, the development of racist ideologies is nearly synonymous with the birth of the United States.¹⁹ During the Revolutionary War and with the first generation of presidents, Americans created a new mythos for themselves as a nation. In literature, art, and politics, Americans were striving to define their distinctive characteristics. During this same nation-building period, theoretical racism emerged to define African Americans as being outside the American polity and national character.

Racist theories utilized Biblical exegesis, scientific arguments, and economic rationales for Black inferiority. First, and perhaps most important, to many Europeans and European Americans, Africans represented the most extreme version of the primordial "other," the absolute antithesis of civilized humanity. For many of these same people, African Americans were but a slight step up. Christianized and operating under the control of a white slaveowning and/or capitalist class, African Americans were moving toward civilization. There was, of course, some distance between them and the white folks at the top, but they were on their way.

These attitudes contained specific stereotypes of African Americans, who were seen variously as primitive, childlike, violent, musical, sexually voracious, and superstitious. Specifically, many European Americans did not believe that African Americans had developed a distinctive culture. Rather, they labeled as deviant any African American cultural forms that differed from mainstream European American forms. Africa was seen as having no meaningful relationship to Black American culture except as evidence that confirmed an inferior or primitive past.

Scientists of the nineteenth century formalized this viewpoint into several different theories of Black inferiority. Before about 1830, the dominant theory was monogenesis: the idea that all humans were part of the same species, but that Black people were at a lower level of

civilization largely because of environmental factors and cultural deprivation. By midcentury, pioneers of American science, including Louis Agassiz of Harvard University, had developed a new theory: polygenesis, the notion that different human races were actually different species. Polygeneticists held that because of the inherent biological inferiority of the African race, no amelioration of circumstances would change Black character or allow African Americans to become fully civilized. People who were more favorable to the notion of racial progress tended to maintain monogeneticist views, searching for ways to change American social conditions (such as the abolition of slavery). These comparative liberals hoped that Black people, at that time certainly inferior, would actually approach equality with whites under favorable conditions that promoted the assimilation of Anglo-American middle-class views.²⁰

After 1870 and the diffusion of Charles Darwin's ideas among American intellectuals, a new theory, called Social Darwinism, largely replaced polygenesis. Social Darwinists included not only American biological scientists and naturalists but a wide range of policymakers, intellectuals, and scholars in other disciplines. This ideology held that all people were of the same species, but that Africans (and others, such as Asians) inhabited a lower rung on the ladder of evolution. Not only were they less evolved and so less civilized, but these inferior, darker peoples might need generations to approach northern European superiority (and might always remain somewhat behind).²¹

During these years of scientific racism, many of the great museums of the United States were founded. The Smithsonian Institution is the earliest example.²² Funded in 1829 by the bequest of a British doctor, James Smithson, the Smithsonian actually opened as a research center in 1846. The American Museum of Natural History in New York was announced in 1869 and opened to the public in 1877. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York was founded in 1870 and opened in 1880. The Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago was established in 1893. These were among the earliest publicly accessible, large-scale museums in the United States. Each in its own way is an American version of earlier European universal museums such as the British Museum, the Musée d'Histoire Naturelle, and the Louvre.²³

Significantly, three of these museums were natural-history museums: the American Museum of Natural History, the nineteenth-century Smithsonian, and the Field Museum. Their purpose was to conduct scientific research and present this research to the public.

These museums incorporated the new science of anthropology along with the basic disciplines of natural history: botany, geology, and biology. As such, these museums became the primary scholarly means by which the public came into contact with the "primitive"—that is, people of color. These museums became the primary purveyors of scientific racism and provided scholarly support for Social Darwinist attitudes.

Elite museums became the preserve of scholars and curators who in general were trained to see African Americans as unimportant to or even invisible in American history and culture. Many of the same people believed that the documentation of vanishing Native American cultures was extremely important. The identical scientific-historical attitude of racial superiority resulted in opposite preservation outcomes for the histories of Native Americans and African Americans. American Indians were seen as "authentic," as the original Americans, but they were also seen as an outmoded race whose way of life was declining. This perception of incipient loss propelled a tremendous burst in American archaeology and anthropology, and resulted in hundreds of thousands of objects being removed from Native American communities and stored in museums. Sacred and everyday objects were purchased and stolen; graves were ransacked for treasure and human skeletons; enormous numbers of picture postcards, portraits, and Western allegorical illustrations were created. Native American images and objects filled the treasure houses of many American museums, though the values, philosophy, and traditions of the peoples themselves often did not inform the museums' records or dioramic representations. The United States National Museum at the Smithsonian (now known as the National Museum of Natural History) became a primary repository for American Indian objects, and it vied with other large museums as well as private collectors such as George Heye to acquire the largest, most diverse collection of North and South American Indian artifacts.²⁴

By contrast, antebellum African American objects are few and far between in major American museums. The natural-history museums did not collect from any people of color other than American Indians, nor did they collect the objects of poor, ordinary, or immigrant European Americans. The major American museums were as segregated as other aspects of American society. In local historical societies as well as local museums, no object was collected specifically because it reflected African American culture; however, African American-related materials can be found in some of these collections. Noted aboli-

tionist families with origins in the bluebloods of New England often have papers related to Black people. A number of Southern plantations, such as Mount Vernon and Monticello, have archaeological, artifactual, and documentary materials in which African Americans are deeply involved. Governmental papers relating to constitutional debates, legislation, and executive actions regarding slavery, abolition, citizenship, and segregation all contain information about African Americans. The records of government agencies, now stored in the National Archives, reflect how deeply intertwined the history of the United States generally is with African Americans. So there are resources that do demonstrate many aspects of African American life and history. However, all these items were inadvertently collected, and consequently reflect comparatively less about the past of African Americans, especially artifactually, than do the richly documented collections that focus on Native Americans.

Perhaps the only systematic collection of specimens and information about nineteenth-century African Americans was the group of skeletal remains and body measurements (especially of the cranium) that several naturalists collected for the Smithsonian and some universities. The most famous of these naturalists was Louis Agassiz, who created a sizeable collection of skeletal remains for Harvard University. The Swiss-born son of a Protestant minister, Agassiz first became a noted scientific figure in Europe. He came to the United States in 1846 and became a star lecturer and Harvard University faculty member. A naturalist who became a polygeneticist, Agassiz spent years trying to prove certain aspects of this theory—such as that Africans, Asians, and a variety of Europeans were all different species. In the process, he collected thousands of comparative measurements of racial types and a number of skeletal remains. European and Asian populations were represented in natural-history museums' collections of skeletal remains, but the largest collections were of American Indian specimens; African or African American examples were usually less than half the number of the American Indian examples.²⁵

If African Americans were visible only as skeletons in major natural-history museums, they were completely absent from major art museums. The Metropolitan Museum of Art was founded to bring European and classical art to the unwashed in America. Finding that all Americans were in dire need of civilization, yet realizing that not all could afford the Grand Tour, the founders of the Metropolitan wanted to bring a little of that culture home. Believing that everything in American culture was imitative of purer and better traditions, this

museum collected virtually nothing American and certainly nothing produced by African American artists.²⁶

In preserving little related to African Americans, major nineteenth-century American museums were echoing scholarly versions of American history and a popular sense of American culture in which African Americans were invisible. The African American materials that some of these institutions inadvertently acquired usually documented the history of interactions between Blacks and whites instead of the distinctive memories and traditions of African Americans. The structure of these collections communicated the sense that Africans and most other peoples of color were absent from world culture except as the occasional subject of European artists. Hence such museums showcased American stereotypes about Africans and African Americans.

The collections of important American libraries contrast strongly with museums' preservation history. The Library of Congress was founded in 1800. In 1814, the personal library of Thomas Jefferson was purchased and added to the small existing collection. For many years, the library was a small set of rooms in the Capitol building itself, functioning almost as a lending library for members of Congress. In 1866 the books of the Smithsonian collection were added to the Library of Congress. During the 1870s, a move to establish the library on a more professional footing began to gain ground. In 1864 Ainsworth R. Spofford became the Librarian of Congress. He devoted his career to putting the library on a more solid professional footing, lobbying for a building and professional staff. Spofford succeeded in convincing Congress to make the Library of Congress "the foremost library in the world."²⁷ In 1893 the Library of Congress moved into the newly completed Jefferson Building and began its modern history as an omnium-gatherum of world knowledge.

Within this notion of collecting books and manuscripts related to all the world's knowledge, there was room for everyone, even for African Americans. In 1871 a young Black man, Daniel Alexander Payne Murray, was hired to serve as a clerk and personal servant to Spofford, the new Librarian of Congress. Over the next decade, as Spofford sought to professionalize the library, Murray was gathering experience and expertise. In 1881 Murray became an assistant librarian. From then until his death in 1925, Murray built up the Library of Congress collections on African Americans, collecting books, documents, published articles, manuscripts, and letters from educated African Americans.²⁸ In addition to collecting for the library,

Murray spent many years working on an encyclopedia that would document African and African American contributions to world history and culture. Intending to sell it by subscription, Murray could never sell enough subscriptions; his notes for the encyclopedia now reside in the Wisconsin Historical Society's archives.

Murray established a collection of African American manuscript materials as soon as a manuscript section of the library opened in 1898. With some gaps, the Library of Congress continued to employ or contract with Black librarians and/or scholars, so that there has been nearly continuous input from Black professionals since then on acquiring African American manuscripts. (In fact, there has always been a sizeable minority of Black librarians, especially those active at Black college libraries and church archives.)²⁹ From about 1942 until about 1964, the noted Black sociologist E. Franklin Frazier was consulted in this capacity. He was responsible for the library's acquisition of the Booker T. Washington papers, and he set the stage for the acquisitions of the papers of the NAACP, National Urban League, and American Colonization Society as well. He continued to build the African American manuscript collection, adding the papers of many well-known Black Americans. Frazier's work in the manuscript division was ably continued by Sylvia Render from the 1970s through the early 1980s.³⁰ As a result of their efforts and those of many others, the manuscript division and the general collections of the Library of Congress are a major source of documentary and published materials on African American life and history.

By contrast, the Smithsonian had a similar opportunity to empower an African American longtime employee and establish an important collection, but it never did so. In 1857 Solomon Brown was hired as a clerk for the first secretary of the Smithsonian, Joseph Henry. Brown worked for the Smithsonian for over fifty years, overlapping Murray's tenure at the Library of Congress by thirty years. Brown became a leading preservationist in the Black community of Washington, D.C., especially in the Anacostia section of the city, where he lived. He was active in Afro-American literary and historical societies and was renowned in the 1880s and 1890s for organizing annual trips to Harpers Ferry on the anniversary of John Brown's 1859 raid. However, Solomon Brown was never appointed to a professional position at the Smithsonian and so could not function as the founder of a significant collection, as did Murray at the Library of Congress.³¹

The Library of Congress was not the only institution collecting

African American letters, books, and documents, though it was the largest. Some white Americans, often New Englanders, also became involved in the collecting of African American materials or supported that effort financially. White abolitionists before the Civil War, Northern missionaries to the freedmen during Reconstruction, and certain capitalist philanthropists, such as Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller, were active in the Colored educational world.

While popular and scientific racism dominated white Americans' discourse about African Americans in the nineteenth century, there did exist another body of thought about Black Americans. In this alternative history, African Americans were surely in need of education, civilization, and uplift, but they were also a people who had been wronged and deserved help. This version of African American life and history was somewhat softer. For example, some believed that slavery had been a tragic and oppressive situation with unanticipated negative outcomes for all, especially for the white people involved. For these people, slavery was bad mainly because it besmirched the American Eden with sin. As such, many white abolitionists—such as William Lloyd Garrison—and some Black abolitionists saw themselves on a holy crusade. They expressed their moral outrage at slavery and identified themselves with the prophets of the Old Testament. For others, Christian principles inspired a kind of Christian guilt for complicity with slavery (and a sense of the necessity to resist, as one resists temptation and sin). Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1858) might be read in this manner.³²

After the Civil War, philanthropy and the missionary spirit in education became as important as antislavery efforts had been in the antebellum years. In tandem with this push toward education, Christianity was seen as a necessary and positive force, essential for depaganizing Africans and making them into more worthwhile Americans. This same missionary zeal inspired some young men and women to migrate south after the Civil War to teach the freedmen, and resulted in the founding of schools and colleges by numerous white religious sects. In some ways, supporters of colleges "for the Colored people," church members who contributed to educational funds, and former antislavery activists all shared views about Black inferiority with mainstream American society. However, in a time of growing popular and scientific racism, people who supported schools and colleges for the freedmen constituted a white minority voice and a support system of some significance for emerging Colored institutions.

For example, as mentioned earlier, in 1868 the former Union

general Samuel Chapman Armstrong founded Hampton Institute, from which Booker T. Washington received his degree. General O. O. Howard, the former director of the Freedmen's Bureau, established Howard University in 1867. The Congregational Church founded Fisk University in 1867, and the United Church of Christ instituted Tougaloo College in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1869. In Atlanta, Spelman College, the elite women's college, was founded in memory of Laura Spelman Rockefeller in 1880, and Morehouse College was established by the Methodist Church. One of the most prolific philanthropists was Andrew Carnegie, whose foundation built libraries in dozens of Black colleges as well as in numerous American cities. While the philanthropically oriented whites who financially supported these institutions may have agreed with some of the then-current notions of Black inferiority, many of them had values similar (though not identical) to those of the Black Victorians mentioned earlier. Wealthy whites were more likely to see Black people as victims in need of general uplift, while Black Victorians were more likely to see progress and diversity within the Black community. In the view of most Black Victorians, only some Black people were in need of uplift; they saw themselves as having already achieved Anglo-American middle-class goals on a considerably smaller income.³³

Black schools and colleges such as those mentioned above became the primary repositories for African American books, documents, and art in the years before 1950. While funded by white Americans, Black colleges were institutions in which Black scholars and other professionals could wield an extraordinary degree of social and intellectual control. Academically trained African American intellectuals generally could not find employment in white institutions, so the Black college system sheltered and supported their work, helping to sustain a tradition of African American historiography. In addition, the works of African American artists were first collected by Black institutions of higher learning, which also provided commissions to artists and architects. Black college libraries became primary preservation entities, saving letters documenting personal memories as well as books and articles demonstrating a scholarly African American tradition. The existence of these educational institutions helped foster all sorts of religious, social, and artistic traditions within Black society and helped sustain scholarly interpretations of the Black experience. Black people within these institutions preserved elements of African American life, history, and culture that were important to them personally. Yet the diversity of viewpoints found within these institutions resulted

in the preservation of a wide range of African American documents, published works, and symbols of educational or "high" cultural achievement.

In summary, by 1880 scientific racism and the increasing power of Social Darwinist ideologies dictated that few African American objects, documents, or vernacular traditions were preserved in major American museums. The only sizeable collections that existed consisted of cranial measurements of African Americans; these were used, along with the results of other detailed examinations of living people and human remains, to determine the exact evolutionary distance between pure African types, in-between African American types, and superior European types.

This was only part of the story, however. The Library of Congress actively collected published materials, manuscripts, and documents written by African Americans as part of its mission to gather together knowledge of the world. With far different purposes in mind, Black bibliophiles and librarians in the emerging libraries and archives at Black colleges saved published materials, manuscripts, and other similar documents. These Black librarians and book collectors were most often "race men" and women, who were active in Black religious, political, and social organizations. They sought ways to document the achievements of African Americans who had been forgotten but whose contributions deserved celebration. In the case of university library collections, such as those at Fisk and Howard, these efforts were supported by the philanthropy of white Americans who believed in the improvement and uplift of Black people, often as part of their Christian duty. Believing that African American materials were most deserving of preservation when they reflected the education and Christian mores of bourgeois Victorian society generally, books, documents, and fine arts were most actively collected, whereas distinctive material culture and folk art were not.

A NEW NEGRO FOR A NEW ERA: 1895-1930

Between 1895 and 1930 a number of demographic and political changes began to alter many aspects of race relations. Perhaps the Great Migration north by thousands of rural Black people was the most dramatic development. These people were drawn northward to cities such as Chicago, New York, and Pittsburgh by the possibilities of greater personal freedom, greater access to public education for

their children, widening economic opportunities (especially in industrial jobs), and relief from the brutal activities of the Ku Klux Klan and other state-supported violence in the South. Although the North proved not to be the promised land many had sought, the increased presence of Black people changed the structure of Northern African American communities and enlarged the audience for African American public history.³⁴

In these thirty-five years a number of new institutions and organizations were established to collect, preserve, and educate the public about the African American past. A new generation, born after Reconstruction and augmented by rural migrants, changed the mix in urban Black neighborhoods. New styles of music were heard; new organizations were founded; and a different set of mythic interpretations, personal memories, and academic histories emerged about the African American past.

The new organizations are perhaps the best gauge of this new sense of movement and progress. In 1909 the National Urban League was founded, and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) was begun in 1910. Organized as interracial groups and headed by wealthy white men, these organizations epitomized a new spirit of racial concern among some white progressives. Both organizations eventually published important journals, which served as forums for discussion of racial issues as well as outlets for the expressions of Negro writers, artists, and scholars. In November 1910 the NAACP started *The Crisis: A Record of the Darker Races*, which was edited for more than thirty years by the noted Black intellectual and activist W.E.B. Du Bois. In January 1923 the Urban League founded *Opportunity: A Journal of Negro Life*, which was initially edited by Charles Johnson, another Black scholar, who later became president of Fisk University. These organizations and journals involved an interracial membership in working together to solve the race problem of the United States. The Urban League was oriented toward social-work solutions, and the NAACP focused on political and legal efforts to attack segregation and lynching. The editorial staffs of both journals helped market the artists and intellectuals of the new African American cultural movement to a much wider interracial audience than had ever existed before.

These links between activist organizations and cultural preservation were most evident during the Harlem Renaissance. Though not strictly a rebirth, nor limited to Harlem, this artistic movement was an extraordinary moment in African American culture in which the ideas,

memories, hopes, and cultural strategies of a younger generation began to be articulated. Perhaps the single most famous publication of this period was a book edited by the Harvard-trained philosopher Alain Locke entitled *The New Negro*. Published in 1925 as an edition of *Survey Graphic*, a social-reform journal of the progressive era, *The New Negro* displayed the new spirit felt by younger artists, writers, and intellectuals. In producing the book and subsequent art exhibitions, poetry readings, and other literary events, Locke and the people he promoted gained prominence in New York art circles. As a result, some of these young Negro artists were able to claim private white patronage. While the writers Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston eventually had some difficulties with their white patron, Locke was certainly important in ushering in a new era of appreciation for the work of Negro artists.³⁵

In terms of collecting, the Harlem Renaissance in general and Alain Locke in particular can be credited with building up the first real market for African American art. Well connected with a number of wealthy and influential white patrons, Locke was instrumental in securing private and foundation support for a number of working artists and in establishing a market for their output, especially for older African American artists such as Henry O. Tanner. In 1926 the Harmon Foundation began giving prizes to young African American artists. Counseled through the years by Alain Locke, the Harmon Foundation also acquired probably the largest collection of art produced by professional Negro artists such as Archibald Motley, Jr., and William H. Johnson. The foundation did not collect only newly produced art; it also began to collect some of the works of nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century African American artists whose work had not found an audience in the United States, such as Edmonia Lewis and Robert Duncanson. When the foundation was dismantled in the 1960s, these works were distributed among Fisk University, the Howard University Fine Arts Department Collection, and the National Collection of Fine Arts (now the National Museum of American Art, Smithsonian Institution).

In supporting and promoting Negro art and artists, Alain Locke became the primary philosopher of the Harlem Renaissance. Through his writings, public lectures, and personal sponsorship of exhibitions, Locke developed a notion of Negro culture that might be called romanticist. Locke promoted the idea that Negro artists had something special to communicate. He felt that African American culture contained a distinctive set of aesthetic and spiritual values that could be

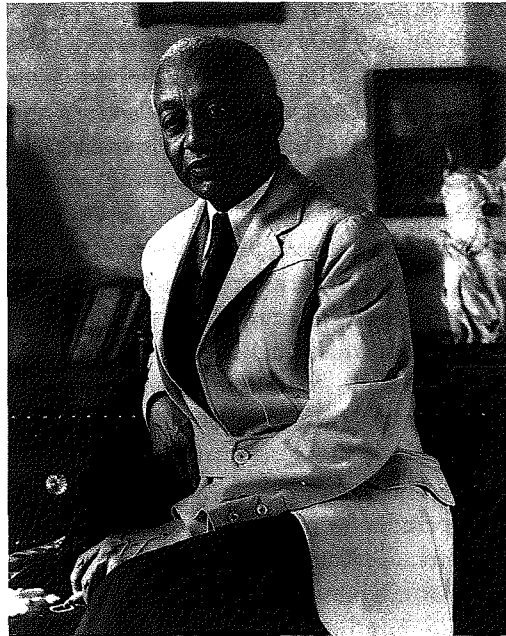


Fig. 17-3. Alain L. Locke. Photo courtesy the Locke Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

expressed through art. While it should be on a par technically with European art, Negro art was at the same time different. In Locke's view, that difference reflected a closer connection of the art to the Negro folk, who through their spirituals, blues, autobiographies, and life experiences expressed a more honest, perhaps even purer worldview than others could. Locke also emphasized that this purity and spiritual content were in some important way linked to the African past, to an Africa of the imagination. Expressed most clearly in Countee Cullen's poem "Heritage," published in *The New Negro* ("What is Africa to me? / Sunlit sky and star-lit sea"), this view of Africa contrasted sharply with nineteenth-century African Americans' sense that Africa was a place largely in need of missionary work. Going beyond the ambivalences of an earlier generation, Africa began to be incorporated into a new mythos of the African American past.³⁶

Locke visited only one country in Africa: Egypt. During these same years a number of Egyptian tombs were first discovered and opened up to the public. The image of Egypt had been orientalized, and most Europeans considered Egypt to be part of the East rather than Africa.³⁷ Locke's visit there can be seen at least as much as being part of the grandest of Grand Tours than as an affirmation on Locke's

part of an African heritage. The Africa imagined by most Harlem Renaissance figures was more akin to the Caribbean islands, with which some were very familiar, having migrated to New York from Jamaica, the Virgin Islands, and other locations. While uninformed about contemporary African life, many Harlem Renaissance artists and writers were able to conjure up a positive image of African artistic impulses that they could draw upon to produce new expressive forms. Their sense of the specialness and spirituality of the African part of African Americans contrasts sharply with the predominant nineteenth-century view, the view of their parents' generations.

Further, Locke's beliefs and those of other Harlem Renaissance artists paired quite well with complementary views held by certain white bohemians and avant-gardists. The novelist, photographer, and man-about-town Carl Van Vechten was a good example of white supporters of the Harlem Renaissance whose views of Negro Americans might best be described as celebrationist. These people saw Negro Americans as a distinctive source of cultural innovation, vibrancy, and creativity in American life. For Van Vechten and his café society friends, "primitive" and "exotic" meant many things. They felt that African Americans were spiritually purer, yet more able to indulge in the profane aspects of life such as sexual expression because they were socially removed from the mores of bourgeois society, and more artistic (though perhaps unconsciously so) than whites. While elements of these same beliefs may have motivated some conservatives to ban jazz as "jungle music" and the Charleston as a "nigger dance," people such as Van Vechten and his friends saw all these cultural forms as enormously positive and worthy of celebration. This celebrationist sensibility constituted a radically new mythos about African Americans. For the first time, a group of white Americans was inspired by the alternative aesthetic embodied in African American culture.

In his controversial 1926 book *Nigger Heaven*, Van Vechten celebrated the Harlem lifestyle in precisely this way. Many Negro intellectuals and writers, such as W.E.B. Du Bois and Alain Locke, roundly criticized this book for elevating to a high status the Harlem ladies and men of the "sporting life," as well as for using a fair bit of profane dialogue allegedly taken from life. However, this book in fact reflected the white romanticist's view of what was important about Harlem. Though Van Vechten was a financial supporter of the Harlem Renaissance, collecting the work of Negro artists, helping to sponsor exhibitions, and assisting Negro writers in getting published, the Harlem of his imagination was not filled with these intellectual and aesthetic

types. Rather, his vision of Harlem was one that celebrated jazz musicians, singers, numbers runners, ladies of the night, and other members of a Negro cabaret society who seemed to him "primitive" in a spiritual yet profane way. In this enthusiasm, Van Vechten was typical of the white purchasers of "race records," recordings of Negro music, especially the blues and hot jazz. These people proved that there was a white market for musical recordings and concerts by other than elite Black artists. These white celebrationists of Negro life were few in the 1920s, though influential. They prefigured the collecting of African American folklore in the 1930s and 1940s. As the field of professional folklorists grew larger, a growing number of white people became interested in recording the stories, jokes, songs, and speech of rural and urban low-income Negroes.³⁸

Van Vechten, Mabel Dodge Luhan, and other enthusiasts of the Jazz Age saw African American artists as America's primitives. Influenced by bohemian circles in Europe, these celebrationists of primitivism saw Negro jazz musicians and blues singers as the creators of a more authentic culture. The celebrationists often saw American society as overly civilized, as having lost some kind of primordial "juice," and consequently in danger of decay or calcification. Negro artists could tap into a premodern, more sexually explicit, more directly critical set of vernacular traditions. In these popular traditions the celebrationists saw the future of modern art.³⁹

Both the African American romanticists, such as Locke, and the European American celebrationists, such as Van Vechten, shared in the emergence of a radically new mythos about African Americans. In the nineteenth century, many Blacks and some whites considered the positive aspect of African American culture to be its emphasis on suffering and salvation, which was modeled after the life of Christ. In this new generation, there was much less concern for religious example and much more of a sense that African Americans had created a unique and highly expressive culture. Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, Jacob Lawrence, and other Harlem Renaissance artists believed that their art could tap into this rich African American vernacular tradition. The art itself would have to transcend vernacular styles in form to achieve artistic respectability, but these popular traditions in music, dance, and folklore formed a deep wellspring from which to create new art.⁴⁰

This positive sense of the importance of African American vernacular traditions was completely new. The nineteenth-century Black abolitionists and Reconstructionists had been absorbed by a set of

issues involving slavery, freedom, and civil rights. The mythos they had created out of their personal memories emphasized the religious, political, and literary traditions of African Americans. This new generation of Negro artists and critics was excited by work in the expressive realm of culture. The mythos they created out of their individual desires to function as artists in American society placed a high value on the unique aspects of African American culture. For the first time, African American vernacular traditions began to be seen positively, at least within certain Northern artistic circles.

Yet this aesthetic enthusiasm for Negro folk culture was not shared by all educated African Americans of the time. In virtually complete contradiction to the interior romanticist and exterior celebrationist versions of Negro American life was the work of Carter G. Woodson. Born in the rural South, Woodson was educated in the North, eventually receiving a Ph.D. from Harvard University. Woodson made the preservation and celebration of Negro history his life's work, in 1915 founding the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History and in 1916 the *Journal of Negro History*. Woodson saw the association as the cultural analogue of the NAACP and the Urban



Fig. 17-4. Carter G. Woodson. Photo from *The Crisis* magazine, August 1926, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University. Reprinted courtesy *The Crisis* magazine, NAACP.

League. In his view, racial prejudice was in large measure the result of ignorance; therefore, education must be part of the solution. Woodson wrote *The MisEducation of the Negro* (1933) to argue that internal feelings of racial inferiority could be addressed by having greater knowledge of a positive African American and African past. Woodson stated that since Negro Americans did not know enough about their "true history," they were susceptible to the negative stereotypes pervading American society. Quite directly, Woodson became the twentieth-century inheritor of the nineteenth-century sentiment that history was about truth and that African American history constituted a special form of truth-telling. Woodson followed in these ideological footsteps, building on this most deeply held mythos about the special role of African Americans and the unique voice of critical truth they embodied.

Woodson, however, introduced significant innovations to the earlier tradition as a result of the fact that he worked on several levels simultaneously. As an academically trained historian, Woodson researched and published works meant to challenge prevailing interpretations of African American history; the journal he published was an effort to appeal to professional historians. At the same time, he wanted to create a preservation institution that would stand apart from traditional African American institutions such as churches and colleges. Woodson was enormously sensitive to the question of who his audience was, and he successfully identified and organized a wider range of African Americans who supported preservationist goals.⁴¹

The Association for the Study of Negro Life and History was the first national-scale African American preservation organization. Woodson established it in Chicago but soon moved it to Washington, D.C., where the national headquarters remains to this day. The members of the association were self-trained historians, elementary and secondary school teachers, collectors, ministers and their congregations. This wide array of people formed local chapters of a national organization devoted solely to the preservation, analysis, and celebration of African American "life, history, and culture," as the association's motto proclaimed. The members of the association have been responsible nationally for the placing of markers at historic sites and for assisting people with the preservation of church records and objects. Through the association's conferences and publishing efforts, they have encouraged the building of private libraries on African American topics. Well into the 1960s, the association served as a primary arena for Negro cultural affairs, in addition to being one of

the few large scholarly organizations that encouraged, welcomed, and supported the participation of African American scholars such as Lorenzo Greene, Rayford Logan, and Benjamin Quarles.

Woodson also continued the nineteenth-century tradition of emphasizing the contributions of educated and heroic African Americans. Free Negro property owners, educated African Americans who became lawyers, doctors, and teachers, others who established successful businesses—these people became the general focus of his historical concerns. Woodson believed that if, for example, European Americans were aware of all the contributions African American men had made in American wars, then prejudice would begin to erode. Furthermore, Woodson believed that Negro Americans needed to have a true sense of their own history to counteract the stereotypes about them that abounded in white America. This dual sense represented a more modern view of the same issues articulated by nineteenth-century preservationists.

Woodson went beyond nineteenth-century mainstream African American thinking in one very important way: he argued for the importance of understanding the true history of Africa as well. To him, one of the greatest lies put forth was that Africans were uncivilized. In fact, Woodson was a leader in making African Americans aware of the numerous West and Central African societies, some complex, from which unfortunate people had been kidnapped or coerced into slavery. Though Woodson himself primarily published on American topics, through the association he provided support for articles and books that linked Negro Americans to a more glorious African past.⁴² Woodson's concern with locating the beginning of African American history in Africa, rather than at the moment of enslavement, has become a key rhetorical point for many Black preservationists and is a cornerstone of contemporary arguments for Afrocentric curricula and historical interpretations. In this sense, Woodson made a key contribution to African American scholarly historical thought as well as to a wider public understanding of Africa.

Woodson was sometimes referred to as the "Father of Black History" because his efforts to preserve many aspects of African American culture reverberated throughout Negro communities and later into wider American society in the form of Black History Month celebrations. His scholarly publications prefigured the social-history revolution of the 1960s in terms of his reinterpretation of traditional literary sources and his use of census and other publicly available data. By creating the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History,

Woodson provided support for the wide diversity of interior (that is, developed by African Americans) interpretations of their past. Academically trained African American historians could publish papers and debate each other during association meetings, expanding the horizons of formal scholarship on the African American past. The local and regional work of the association's chapters helped reinforce and preserve personal memories and local histories. The association's Negro History Week celebrations and other activities provided a platform for the reinvigoration of the mythos about the special role and destiny of African Americans. Appeals to that mythos were part of the organizing techniques of the association and helped Negro schoolteachers, librarians, and ministers in their crusade against ignorance of self in Negro society. Woodson's association, his published work, and the programs he sponsored were absolutely pivotal in the history of African American preservation.

Woodson was not himself interested in building a collection. He did develop an extensive personal library, which was given to Howard University upon his death, but beyond that he was not oriented toward acquiring objects. Working at the same time as Woodson, however, was a small group of Black bibliophiles who were deeply committed to collection building. Throughout the 1910s and 1920s, a growing number of these Black Victorians were motivated to establish private libraries and societies such as the American Negro Academy (founded in 1897 in Washington, D.C.) and the Negro Society for Historical Research (founded in 1902 in New York). These Black bibliophiles collected both American and, where possible, European editions of works by African Americans, especially autobiographies. In addition, they often had collections of the signatures and letters of famous persons. These bibliophiles were among the elite of Northern Negro communities. Their involvement in fraternal organizations, churches, and professional life gave them a distinct perspective on the African American past. In a sense, these bibliophiles were doing the same work as Daniel Alexander Payne Murray at the Library of Congress, but with their own resources. A generation later than Murray, men such as Arthur Alonzo Schomburg and Jesse B. Moorland began amassing the private libraries that later became the bases of the two most important public archives on African American culture.

Moorland was a minister and an early graduate of Howard University. He became very actively involved in the YMCA as a source of strength and uplift for African American men and boys. Moorland came from a light-skinned, middle-class family and was able through

real estate speculation and other activities to increase his wealth. From the 1890s on, Moorland amassed a private collection of books, letters, and manuscripts that documented the history of literary achievement among African Americans and Africans, especially in Europe. In 1914, Moorland donated his private collection of over three thousand books, manuscripts, engravings, paintings, and other objects to the library and archives of Howard University; he also provided the university with funds from the Moorland Foundation. With a proper Victorian upbringing and lifestyle, Moorland was the perfect image of the active "race man." He epitomized the bibliophilic collecting common to the members of the American Negro Academy, an elite group of forty men in Washington, D.C.⁴³

Howard University already had an important archive in the papers of the abolitionist Louis Tappan. A New England blueblood, Tappan's antislavery efforts involved correspondence with many of the important African Americans and radical European Americans of his day. The donation of his papers constituted a significant resource for understanding the antislavery crusade and contained a number of African American autobiographies. Thirty years after the Moorland donation, Howard University also acquired the collections of Arthur and Joel Spingarn, who were wealthy New Yorkers of a progressivist bent and founding members of the NAACP. Arthur was the first vice president of the NAACP and later became president, and Joel was the original treasurer of the organization. Arthur was a lawyer who successfully argued several early civil rights cases before the Supreme Court. Joel established the prestigious Spingarn Medal for the NAACP. Over time, both became collectors of African American-related material; Arthur specialized in literature, amassing an important collection of African American writers of both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1947, the Howard library acquired the Spingarns' collections.⁴⁴

Taken together, Tappan's papers, Moorland's library, and the Spingarns' collections made Howard a tremendous resource for the study of African American history. Now known as the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, the collection was supervised from the 1930s through the early 1970s by Dorothy Porter (now Dorothy Porter Wesley). With a degree in library science from Columbia University, Porter greatly expanded upon the original collections of the institution. She widened the collecting areas to include more literature, early manuscripts, and documents, including publications relating to the history of Africans and African Americans in Europe; family docu-

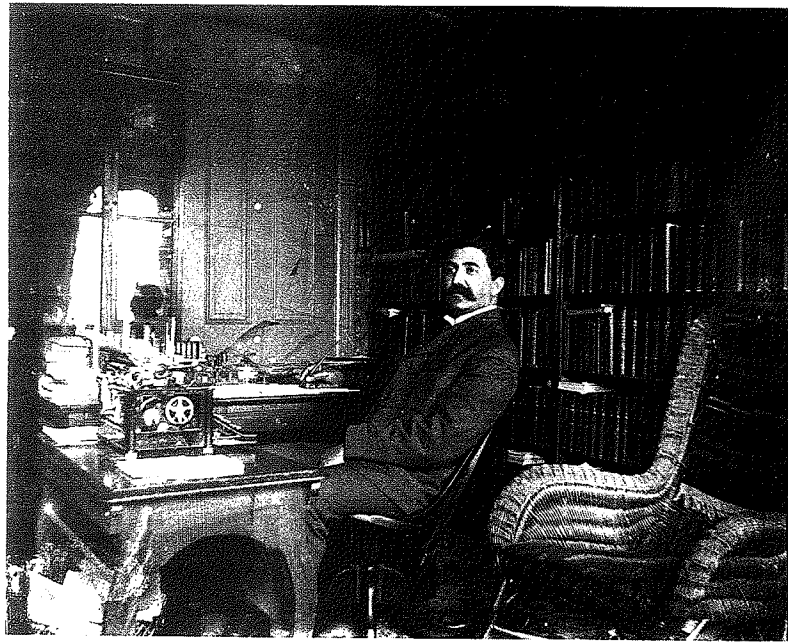


Fig. 17-5. Jesse Moorland in his library. Photo courtesy the Moorland Papers, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

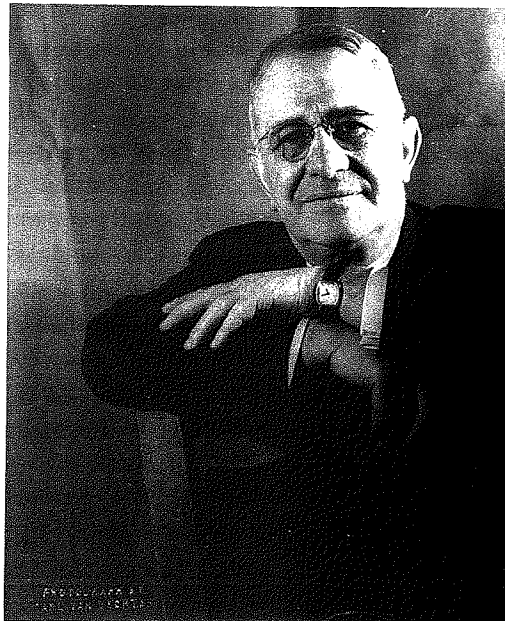


Fig. 17-6. Arthur Spingarn, first president of the NAACP. Photo by Carl Van Vechten, courtesy Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

ments and archives; archives on African American artists, writers, and persons of note; and early publications on Africa.⁴⁵ Today, the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center is a major center for research on African American life and culture. It includes a rare-book library, a manuscript division, and a small material culture collection.

Starting in about 1896, a somewhat younger man, Arthur Alonso Schomburg, collected roughly the same sorts of published works and unpublished letters and manuscripts as Jesse Moorland. A native of Puerto Rico who migrated to New York City as a young adult, Schomburg worked as a bank clerk for most of his life. With de facto segregation in full force in Northern cities, Colored men could rarely get these sorts of office jobs. To acquire and maintain such a job, a Negro person was expected to embody propriety, stable family life, and other elements of Victorian morality. Schomburg did so and also was an archetype of the Black bibliophile.⁴⁶ In part because Schomburg spoke Spanish and came from a Caribbean heritage, he was more interested in what is now called the African diaspora than were Moorland and virtually all of the other collectors of his acquaintance. His collection contained the works of many Caribbean writers, and he had an early interest in African history and the history of Africans in Europe,



Fig. 17-7. Dorothy Porter. Photo by Addison Scurlock, courtesy Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.



Fig. 17-8. Arthur A. Schomburg. Photo courtesy the Locke Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

especially diasporic communities in Spain prior to the Renaissance. In 1926, his collection was purchased by the Carnegie Corporation for the New York Public Library. Housed in a sizeable building called the Harlem Public Library, this institution became a center of cultural activity from the 1920s onward.⁴⁷ Today, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture stands as a primary public institution within the New York community and as an internationally known center for research.

After selling the bulk of his private collection and struggling to stay on as curator of his own collection (he eventually succeeded), Schomburg began working with Fisk University. Invited by Charles Johnson, formerly of the Urban League and at that time head of the Research Department of Fisk, Schomburg was affiliated with Fisk for less than three years, during which time he built their collection from some five hundred or fewer volumes to over 4,500 volumes. Since then Fisk has continuously employed a number of professionally trained librarians, who have augmented Schomburg's work with additional manuscripts, books related to the history of African Americans in the southeastern United States, and important collections of African American art.⁴⁸ Schomburg's and Moorland's contributions stand as

extraordinary personal efforts to preserve a distinctive vision of the African American past, a vision that was rooted in the nineteenth-century sense that civilized contributions to society were of the utmost importance. Neither Moorland nor Schomburg articulated a new mythos or historical interpretation, but their preservation efforts were extremely important in that they created organic collections that stand today as the finest sources for the study of African American history, particularly the published and painted record of the culture.

During the 1920s, perhaps the most vital movement with mythopoetic overtones was the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA), whose charismatic founder and leader was Marcus Garvey. Born in Jamaica, later migrating to England and then the United States, Garvey was the first important African American nationalist figure in the twentieth century. Arriving in the United States in 1916, within a few years Garvey had built possibly the largest international Negro organization that had ever existed. Garvey's Pan-Africanist vision was of a collective unconscious, a race pride, that could connect all African peoples, whether in the diaspora or in Africa. Garvey saw the enslavement of Black people in America and the rising tide of European imperialism in Africa as two halves of the same oppressive whole. Viewing European and American society as rotten to the core, Garvey encouraged Negroes to think of "Africa first" and to consider seriously emigration to Africa, which he saw as the solution to the race problems of the Americas.⁴⁹ Interestingly, Garvey's location of choice was Ethiopia. As the only truly independent sub-Saharan African country in the 1920s (Liberia was technically independent but was completely tied economically to the United States), and as the inheritor of a long Judeo-Christian tradition, Ethiopia was considered by Garvey to be the essential or true home of African Americans. Even though Garvey's hope that sizeable numbers of people would emigrate was never fulfilled, he succeeded in shifting African American cultural discourse away from its nineteenth-century concentration on America as a kind of holy land in which the Old Testament prophecies would be fulfilled and toward the distinctive African history of Ethiopia, thereby making an indelible impact on the symbols and rhetoric of African American cultural discourse. Garveyites and later a wide range of Blacks in the United States and the Caribbean came to see Ethiopia as their true homeland.

In speaking of African peoples in the plural, in linking the conditions of oppression of all people of African descent, in articulating a vision of a glorious African past, and in treating the retaking of Africa

by Africans as a millennialist vision, Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association restructured the discourse of African American nationalism. Unlike the ambivalence with which it was viewed by nineteenth-century intellectuals and activists, Africa was absolutely central to Garvey. Further, he emphasized an explicitly African version of the Judeo-Christian tradition, focusing on Ethiopia's Jews and the Ethiopian church. Although Garvey himself was not actively involved in preservation efforts, his vision of the African past and the African future was emotionally transforming for many people, especially the newer rural migrants to urban areas. Building on millennialism, the mythos of truth-telling, and the sense of special destiny that many African Americans felt, Garvey added to this a fervor about Africa's past and present. Appropriately, Garvey's main contribution was to enlarge the interior mythos of African Americans.

Garvey transformed Black nationalism in the African diaspora and created some of its enduring symbols. Perhaps the most important of these symbols was the red, black, and green UNIA flag. To paraphrase Garvey, red was for the blood of African people, shed under oppressive conditions; black was the unifying symbolic skin color; and green was for the African land, to which they would one day return. Later, gold was added to stand for the wealth in Africa that all would inherit. This flag remains an important symbol of cultural unity and consciousness. Displayed in many forms—on bumper stickers, hats, and T-shirts—during the 1960s and 1970s, this flag continues in use. Present-day T-shirts worn by African American young people include many versions of this flag, sometimes shaped like the African continent. Sometimes these colors are subtly used as the color scheme in the fabric of a dress, shirt, or background image on music videos. While Garvey's vision has been amended and updated by succeeding nationalist movements, his notion of an African-based unity and consciousness reverberates through to the present. Garvey became a legendary figure and the UNIA a legendary movement. Garvey's flag, his slogans, his international goals, and even his imprisonment and suffering at the hands of the American government—all these elements entered the mythopoetic interpretation of the African American past.

In summary, the New Negro era was a period of enormous vitality in the collection and preservation of elements of African American life, history, and culture. Within Negro communities, important national organizations were formed, such as the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History as well as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the Urban League. The

migration north and the resulting diversity of Negro communities provided new audiences for a wide range of political opinions and cultural activities. Many artists, writers, and musicians orchestrated a major outpouring of exhibitions, publications, and performances. Harlem Renaissance artists not only articulated a new discourse on aesthetic values but also pioneered access to a previously unavailable level of white philanthropic support from wealthy Americans of bohemian or progressivist bent. These people agreed on many elements of a romanticist and celebrationist view of African American culture and history. For many of the white enthusiasts, this celebration of the "exotic" provided an aesthetic aphrodisiac. To many of the Negroes involved, this romanticism provided a positive feeling about the African past and the African American present, which began to encompass elements of vernacular culture in addition to elite traditions.

Marcus Garvey was seen by some as a charismatic rabble-rouser, but he viewed himself as the general in a righteous nationalistic army. Garvey may have been the personal opposite of Alain Locke, the Philadelphia Black Victorian who evoked all of the dandyism of an Edwardian patrician. However, these two men shared a dramatically similar sense of the importance and primacy of an African American aesthetic. While Locke was a romanticist who emphasized the essentialist aesthetics of African American life, Garvey's nationalism likewise invoked the spiritual and innate qualities of being African. Garvey's sense of the importance of the African past, his vision of African peoples around the world united in struggle, and his prediction that emigration and landholding would result in the ultimate liberation from racial oppression—all of these elements reflected dramatic new additions to the African American mythos. Garvey's style of organization and his rhetoric changed the landscape of African American cultural discourse. After Garvey, Black nationalism—that is, a full-scale rejection of American society—seemed possible on a pragmatic level. Some of Garvey's slogans, such as "Africa First," and his red, black, green, and gold flag have come to symbolize Black liberation, not only in the United States but around the world. Today Garvey's flag can be seen on the streets of Washington, D.C.; Kingston, Jamaica; and Soweto, South Africa.

African Americans carrying on in the general tradition of nineteenth-century preservationism made significant contributions during this era. Carter G. Woodson founded the first national African American cultural organization and published works of scholarly importance as well as numerous books and pamphlets directed toward a

general audience. Woodson was also critical in developing a well-documented, academic approach to the inclusion of African history in African American studies. Woodson believed that cultural preservation functioned to reinforce positive images of self and community inside Negro communities and to combat ignorant prejudice in white America.

In 1926, Woodson celebrated the first Negro History Week. This annual event, held between Frederick Douglass's birthday and Abraham Lincoln's birthday in February, was an opportunity for people to celebrate formally African American life, history, and culture. This kind of public celebration was based on church-related social functions with deep roots in Negro communities. Negro History Week became Black History Week in the late 1960s, and is now celebrated as Black History Month throughout most of the United States, especially in schools and museums. At present, Black History Month may be the largest public ritual celebrating African American culture in the United States. Months of effort at all Black and many historically white museums and schools precede this yearly celebration. Some Black museums on shoestring budgets even obtain the bulk of their annual income from the tours they book during this month, gift-shop sales during this period, and funding they receive for Black History Month programming. Incorporating and probably outstripping Woodson's dream of an integrated American history celebration, contemporary Black History Month programming reflects a major infusion of new historical information and provides the occasion for rhetoric about the preservation of the Black past. Woodson's founding of this event and his ability to develop and maintain a completely African American-based national organization devoted to preservation was perhaps the single most significant achievement of these years.

Collections built by Arthur Schomburg, Jesse B. Moorland, and others are the third major achievement of this era. All of the major research collections that are publicly available today are based on the private collections of a small group who saved materials circulating during the pivotal turn-of-the-century years. Schomburg, among others, struggled along on funds far smaller than those of comparable white collectors of the era; he believed in saving books and magazines, searching for documents, records, and letters, and in other ways helping to preserve the written evidence of African American life, history, and culture. Schomburg in particular was a visionary in seeing the Americas as part of an African diaspora.

Taken together, the efforts of Garvey, Locke, Woodson, Schom-

burg, Moorland, and others of their generation constituted a critical moment in the history of African American preservation. Many of the collections that remain today were shaped by their particular concerns, goals, and values. And much of the language we use to argue today about issues of African American cultural preservation derive from debates and differences among the members of this seminal generation.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND ORAL HISTORY, 1930-1950

Before 1930 African American efforts at preservation far exceeded those of people outside Negro communities, even including the impressive holdings of the Library of Congress. But during the Depression and World War II, key collections were established in federally funded repositories. These new collections represented a new group of white collectors who had a set of priorities different from the African American mainstream's concern for documents and books. These new collectors tended to come with more populist or radical notions of the importance of understanding history from the bottom up. In the emerging discipline of folklore, general interest was growing in the oral testimony and musical traditions of rural people as the exemplars of an original, authentic American culture.

During the 1930s two major governmental efforts began to record the memories, folklore, and folklife of rural Afro-Americans: the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress and the Federal Writers' Project. These were the first attempts to record the oral history of African Americans, especially that of poor and rural Black folk, on a large scale and in a systematic manner. By focusing on vernacular African American culture, these folklore collections made central what had previously been preserved only marginally. In the 1920s and 1930s a number of Americans perceived that certain styles of life were either dying out or being completely transformed; as more and more people were forced off the land due to the financial and natural disasters that occurred after World War I, their community life and folkways were disrupted. Some Americans were nostalgic for the antebellum era and the "Lost Cause" (the name former Confederates used to describe the Civil War and Reconstruction); others saw the last generation of formerly enslaved African Americans passing into history. Finally, some Americans of a populist or radical bent perceived that poor people and rural people had critiques of American main-

stream culture and distinctive traditions that were not being heard in intellectual or academic circles.

In 1928 the Archive of American Folk Song was established as part of the music division of the Library of Congress. The concern of the archive was to collect, duplicate, and preserve data or evidence of American culture gained through field expeditions. The director of the music division, Carl Engel, had already established connections with collectors such as Phillips Barry, Paul Bowles, and Charles Seeger. However, his most important connection was with John Lomax.⁵⁰ Lomax, a white Texan, had spent years traveling through the West and recording songs of the vanishing frontier, which were first published in 1910 as *Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads*. Over the next fifty years, Lomax traveled around the country, recording songs, stories, and jokes, publishing books, staging performances in urban centers, and aiding people in getting their music released commercially. Lomax was one of the most important of the early collectors of American folklore and folk music generally, and African American materials in particular. The discoverer of Huddie Ledbetter, better known as Leadbelly, and other rural blues and gospel singers, John Lomax essentially founded the collection of the Archive of American Folk Song (now known as the Archive of Folk Culture). Although never actually in residence as a staff member, Lomax formed a special relationship to the Library of Congress, which paid him one dollar a month as an honorary curator, loaned him expensive, state-of-the-art recording equipment, served as the repository for materials he brought in, and in some cases partly financed his travels. Something of an impresario, Lomax made his money from selling his songbooks, setting up concerts, and in some cases working as an agent for artists, including Ledbetter, who recorded commercially. Lomax also was a leading figure in the Modern Language Association, which supported his work and gave him a scholarly audience for his findings as well.

Alan Lomax, John Lomax's son, began traveling with his father at an early age. As the younger Lomax grew up, he too became an active folklorist and received academic training as well. By 1936, the two Lomaxes had contributed about seven hundred disks with two to twelve songs each. Upon becoming the first full-time staff person of the archive in 1938, Alan, both independently and in conjunction with his father, greatly expanded the collection of the archive. Although the Lomaxes were interested in a wide variety of cultures and forms, including the songs of Mexicans in Texas, the songs and stories of the Okies in California, and various Native American materials, three-

quarters of the recordings they made were of African American material.⁵¹

John Lomax pioneered, and Alan Lomax extended, the notion that recording the viewpoints of rural, working-class, and poor people is essential for understanding American history and culture. They elaborated on this basically populist view by making field recordings in a variety of unconventional settings, such as prisons, bars, and work camps. Earlier American folklorists had mostly been concerned with the origins of Anglo-American songs, then mostly present in revival meetings and among seamen and rural New England folk. The Lomaxes' focus was on recording the cultural forms of segments of American society in which musical and oral traditions remained strongly linked to earlier styles and concerns. Early on, the Lomaxes concentrated on African Americans and others who were downtrodden or at the margins of American life, such as hillbillies, prostitutes, and criminals.

The notion that folklore and folk songs were the central cultural contributions that African Americans had made to American culture was markedly different from the attitudes of most Harlem Renaissance artists and their European American celebrators. Some Negro scholars, artists, and writers, such as Sterling Brown, Paul Robeson, Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes, were interested in this material. For example, Hurston, who today is better known as a novelist, studied with the anthropologist Franz Boas at Columbia University and was an active collector of folklore materials for more than twenty years.⁵² Hurston took Alan Lomax on several collecting trips to parts of Florida and the Sea Islands of South Carolina, Georgia, and north Florida. Still, Hurston was a maverick during the Harlem Renaissance and lampooned the "niggerati," whom she saw as uninterested in the expressive forms of Afro-American vernacular culture.

Other notable figures include Sterling Brown and Paul Robeson. Brown served as editor of *Negro Affairs* for the Federal Writers' Project in the 1930s and taught English at Howard University for many years; nevertheless, he is probably better remembered as a poet and literary critic who incorporated African American folk tales, legends, and figures of speech into his works (such as the 1942 book *Negro Caravan*, which he coedited). Robeson was an international star and probably the most prominent Negro actor and concert artist of the 1930s and 1940s. Robeson was the first person to perform Negro spirituals on the concert stages of Europe and America, mixing them

with German lieder, classical arias, and folk songs. Robeson's proud performances of this music, both live and for a number of record labels, including Folkways, helped fuel wider public interest in it and created a larger market for other recordings of it. Through his lifelong involvement with pacifist and other progressive causes, Robeson forged an expressive link between the Negro music of the Americas and the music of other social and political movements around the world. Although Robeson was persecuted by the American government in the 1950s and denied a passport for some years because of his leftist political beliefs, he held firm as a beacon of courage for many younger African American cultural activists.⁵³

While the work of people such as Brown and Robeson was widely popular, many of the Harlem Renaissance intellectuals were embarrassed by more vernacular forms of culture and their performers. Frankly, John and Alan Lomax were recording people who might appear in a folk music program and in jail within the same week. Many of these rural Colored people told stories about ghosts and supernatural events and sang frank songs about sex, love, and crime. Though blues songs about these subjects are the most familiar, there were also working songs, religious blues, and blues that carefully and poignantly critiqued the Southern social oppression under which these rural Colored people struggled. Although W.E.B. Du Bois lamented the passing of a Black folk culture in 1903 in his essay entitled "Sorrow Songs" (in *The Souls of Black Folk*), one cannot imagine him inviting Huddie Ledbetter to his home. Twice imprisoned on murder charges and twice released because of his extraordinary musicianship and singing, Ledbetter became John Lomax's driver and traveling companion in the early and mid-1930s.⁵⁴ Ledbetter was the sort of person the Urban League had been set up to lift up, clean off, and get a regular job. Only a few Negro scholars, such as Hurston, Harold Courlander, and those in Charles Johnson's Research Department at Fisk University, were involved in making field recordings, and they were hard-pressed to find sufficient financing to continue their work, in part because they themselves had little money and in part because it was more difficult for them to obtain sponsorship and funding than it was for white individuals.⁵⁵ It was in fact the Lomaxes (and a few other white collectors) who were most instrumental in preserving this material. The equipment they required was expensive: at first they used bulky cylinders, then 315-pound "portable" disk machines, and eventually magnetic tape. For the most part financing was provided by either foundation or government sources.

Admittedly, the commercial market among whites for such talent was limited, but a highly politicized, radicalized, avant-garde market did exist. Moses Asch noted this and in 1947 founded Folkways Records. Asch was the Polish-born son of a famous playwright in the Yiddish theater. After immigrating to the United States, he returned to Germany in the 1920s to study sound-engineering technologies. Although his two previous record labels failed (perhaps because their catalogues did not cover as wide a range of recordings), Folkways Records lasted as a private label for forty years, until Asch's death in 1987. This commercial outlet for the kinds of singers and storytellers the Lomaxes recorded was also an extraordinary archive of world sound and American culture.⁵⁶

Asch had enormous ambitions; he wanted to record as much as possible of the "world in sound." Furthermore, a progressive, secular Jewish background gave him an interest in recording the points of view of oppressed people, of political radicals, and of musical and vocal experimenters whose music critiqued the prevailing social order or musical mainstream.

Although his children's catalogue was Asch's best-selling division, he recorded ethnic songs and stories from around the world, jazz artists such as Mary Lou Williams, the early work of the experimental composer John Cage, and a wide range of sounds such as the album *New York Streets in Summer*. Folkways contributed to the financial and commercial survival of folk music (of all sorts) throughout the McCarthy era, during which the music industry blackballed well-known people such as Paul Robeson, Pete Seeger, and Woody Guthrie. Continuing to record during the era of the modern civil rights movement, Asch recorded the speeches of Martin Luther King, Jr., Huey Newton (a founding member of the Black Panther Party), the radical activist Angela Davis, and others, and included them in the Folkways catalogue. After years of complex negotiation, Asch's collection was purchased by the Smithsonian Institution in 1987 and is now open to researchers.⁵⁷ Asch's work stands as a private collection of commercial recordings parallel to the scope of what the Archive of American Folk Song at the Library of Congress amassed during the years Asch was active.

Music was not the only cultural form preserved during the 1930s. After 1933, government money became available to record the oral testimony of former slaves. Through the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the National Relief Administration, a number of programs emerged that focused on recording oral testimony and other

aspects of American vernacular culture: the Index of American Design; the Folksong and Folklore Department of the National Service Bureau; the Federal Music Project, under Charles Seeger; and the Folklore Studies of the Federal Writers' Project, under Benjamin Botkin. The WPA used many amateur (that is, self-trained) collectors of material. While this produced some unevenness in the recordings, it did allow for the participation of Negro scholars without graduate degrees, such as Zora Neale Hurston, who would have been excluded if an emphasis on purely professional credentials had determined participation. Readings of the oral testimonies strongly give the sense that the race of the interviewer made a critical difference in many cases, so greater use of African Americans might have resulted in a somewhat different record. Still, the unparalleled achievement of these programs was the recording of the testimony of elderly African Americans, some of them the last living generation of former slaves.⁵⁸

Not all of the people whose stories were collected were poor, of course. Some were property owners or tradespeople, and some had successful businesses. The interviews were mostly conducted in the South and the border states, and most of those interviewed did live in rural areas or small towns. Although later criticized by professional folklorists as too random and uneven a sample, the thirty-plus volumes of material collected during the 1930s are absolutely priceless. With this material, Benjamin Botkin was able to publish *Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery* in 1945. Because of these collections, in the 1960s and 1970s Eugene Genovese, Lawrence Levine, and others were able to begin discovering and reinterpreting elements of slave culture.⁵⁹ These pioneering histories of slavery would not have been possible without this collection. Together, the Archive of American Folk Song and the Works Progress Administration collection (now also housed at the Library of Congress) constituted the earliest systematic group of recordings of late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century African American vernacular culture.

While the most innovative collecting may have been of oral testimony, important new collections of traditional documents were also created during this period. In 1935, the National Archives opened to the public. The archives were established to preserve "documents of American Formation," such as the Constitution, and all the noncurrent records of permanent value produced by the federal government.⁶⁰ In gathering together the records of the American government, the archivists included African American materials wherever they appeared. From the debates about slavery during the Constitu-

tional era, to abolitionist agitation, to the Civil War and Reconstruction with its Freedmen's Bureau, to legislation and court rulings regarding segregation, to labor regulation and social service directives, there were numerous government agencies with records of special pertinence to the history of Black people. Records of a more personal nature, such as census forms and military pension folders, contained volumes of fairly detailed information, some statistical, about Black people. Since World War I, government surveillance of African American activists and their movements has also created fascinating and disturbing records, some of which are now available under the Freedom of Information Act.

In preserving the records of the federal government, the National Archives maintained a unique mass of materials documenting the history of African Americans. This collecting, however, did not reflect social progress on the part of the administration. Even though such a rich collection of African American materials existed, the archives were well known as a difficult place for a Black professional to get a job. Unlike the Smithsonian Institution, however, the National Archives did employ a few African American men and women in professional and paraprofessional capacities. Roland McConnell, Sara Jackson, James Dent Walker, and Harold Pinkett all worked there at various times after World War II. They developed extensive expertise in the records that related to Afro-American history, helping to make accessible much information lying buried in federal records. These archivists and historians were also active in national organizations such as the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, and a couple of them later became founding members of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society (established in 1978).⁶¹

At the same time, most major American museums continued their informal policy of exclusion of African American materials. Several important museums were established during these years: Colonial Williamsburg, the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village, and Mystic Seaport. The restoration of Williamsburg, initiated by members of the Rockefeller family, was intended to give contemporary Americans a holistic view of the lifestyles and values of the founding fathers. Although the city of Williamsburg was more than fifty percent African American in the 1770s, no hint of slavery nor of African American culture entered into the restoration's collections or interpretive programming until the 1980s.⁶² The Ford Museum and Mystic Seaport each had technological rationales. Ford wanted to show the history of European and American progress; from that record, African

Americans were routinely presumed to be absent. The seafaring enthusiasts in Connecticut wanted to preserve the history of technological change in boats and ships. Although nearly a third of American seamen in the nineteenth century were Black, and some African Americans invented new devices improving upon older techniques such as the harpoon, this participation was not directly preserved in this museum.⁶³ None of the major museums of the era directly acted to preserve African American culture; however, one private collector did. In 1935 Miriam Bellangee Wilson, a member of the Charleston, South Carolina, elite, began traveling to the plantations of friends and relatives to collect slave-made artifacts. Wilson's collection later became the basis of the Old Slave Mart Museum, founded by Judith Wragg Chase and her sister in the early 1960s.⁶⁴ The objects collected by Wilson remain one of the very few Southern-based African American material culture collections.

In the academic world, Melville Herskovits and his wife, Frances, emerged as the only major white collectors of African and diasporic materials. Herskovits was an anthropologist who began writing on questions of Black ethnicity and culture in the 1920s. In fact, Herskovits was one of the few white contributors to the 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic* that was published in book form as *The New Negro*. In his essay there, Herskovits argued that African Americans had achieved a high degree of cultural assimilation to Anglo-Saxon social mores and behavior. However, over the course of his long and distinguished career, Herskovits would move away from those ideas to become the primary American scholar researching American cultural survivals of African elements. For example, Herskovits was the first American scholar to discover the maroon communities of the present-day countries of Surinam and Colombia. Still intact, these "Bush Negro" communities had been established in the 1770s, after their founders successfully defeated Dutch forces. Herskovits was certainly the first professional scholar to conduct research in West Africa, the Caribbean, and South America, searching for connections among diasporic communities.⁶⁵

The Herskovitses were also avid collectors. When Melville Herskovits began teaching at Northwestern University in 1927 and found that there were few references in the university libraries touching on subjects of interest to him, he began collecting books, photographs, documents, and unpublished manuscripts as well as art and artifacts to support his teaching and to assist the research of his graduate students. Over a period of thirty-five years, Herskovits built one of

the most important collections of African and diasporic materials in the United States. The Herskovitses' Africana collection is still at Northwestern University, where it is a major resource for students and scholars of Africa. After Melville Herskovits's death, the art and artifact collections were transferred to the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture in New York City.

In summary, during the 1930s and 1940s, key collections were established that documented African American vernacular culture. At the same time, important records from the federal government began to be organized and systematically made available to researchers. Though the fruit of this work did not begin to affect mainstream historical work until the 1960s, these collections formed the basis for the reinterpretation of American history. Although a few African American scholars were involved with each collection, in large measure, populist or otherwise radicalized white Americans helped create publicly available collections, especially of oral testimony. The Archive of American Folk Song and the Works Progress Administration collected material that had never before been collected in such large amounts or with the same level of integrity regarding the social and cultural contexts of the material. The National Archives organized materials that had languished for years in the file cabinets and storerooms of government offices. Taken together, these agencies preserved massive amounts of new material that provided the evidentiary basis for the social-history revolution of the 1960s and 1970s.

THE BLACK MUSEUM MOVEMENT, 1950-1980

During the years following World War II, a dramatic modern civil rights movement erupted from Negro communities across America, but especially in the South. Though initially focused on citizenship rights in Southern cities, movement activism eventually addressed political, economic, social, and cultural questions. While full desegregation may not have been accomplished even today, the movement profoundly changed American life. The Brown vs. Board of Education decision in 1954 was the result of two generations of activism by the NAACP and others concerned with the legal questions of segregation. Yet the direct-action strategy of demonstrations, sit-ins, and marches galvanized people across class, race, and generational divisions. While "Freedom Now" may not yet have come, the United States in 1992 is a profoundly different place in which to live than it was in 1950.

The modern civil rights movement affected many aspects of cultural process, both within Black communities and in the wider society. It is impossible to overstate the importance of the movement in the sociocultural arena; it affected the terms of cultural discourse and modes of social process, and helped generate an outpouring of artistic expression far larger and more diverse than the Harlem Renaissance.

Within the movement, debates about goals, strategies, and resources were constant. Every leader, including Martin Luther King, Jr., was subject to intense criticism, either from within civil rights organizations or from others not associated with major civil rights organizations. Just the list of the "Big Six" national organizations of the era—the NAACP, the Urban League, the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW), the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)—gives some sense of the complexity of the activist landscape. This intense cauldron of debate and (sometimes life-threatening) direct action was the crucible in which a critical generation of Americans was formed. Within Black communities, young critics emerged to challenge the integrationist ideology and goals articulated by the majority of the early supporters of the movement. People such as Stokely Carmichael (now Kwame Touré) and H. Rap Brown inside SNCC questioned the interpretations and the power of more integrationist figures such as John Lewis and Martin Luther King, Jr. This critique, perhaps most easily summarized by the slogan "Black Power," was the battle cry in the rebirth of a younger Black nationalism.⁶⁶ Yet among the younger members of the civil rights movement, criticism itself was an important new value. Learning from the practices of numerous progressive leftist organizations and African socialist parties then emerging, these younger activists came to see intraorganizational criticism and personal self-criticism as one of the crucial elements of the struggle toward freedom and justice. Within many traditional Black institutions, such as churches and colleges, criticism was taken as a form of deep-seated rebellion, a challenge to patriarchal authority that could not be borne. Yet younger people did resist in different ways: through student rebellions at Black colleges in the 1920s, and by leaving college in the 1960s to work full-time for SNCC. In the early 1960s, a new and ultimately successful direct-action movement emerged from college NAACP groups and church junior choir meetings but evolved beyond those institutions into the activist groups listed above. Ultimately that critical quality, so crucial for the early phase of sit-ins, demonstrations,

and marches, helped blow these organizations apart. By 1966 and 1967, movement activists began wrestling with questions of gender equality and vehement ideological argument within the context of rising political violence, often government-induced. Between 1969 and the early 1970s, government suppression, burnout on the part of longtime activists, and ideological divisions within the movement itself worked to cripple and ultimately to kill SNCC and most of the other groups that had emerged in the early 1960s.

Still, one legacy of this cultural shift from an integrationist ideology to a Black Power ideology was the sense that criticism had a value, that it could help both organizations and individuals grow. Criticism was to be encouraged, not feared. As former political activists moved into cultural centers and museums in the 1970s and 1980s, they brought these values of criticism to their new world. Together with all their inherent differences, the years of the modern civil rights movement (1950–1965) and the years of the Black Power movement (1965–1975) might be called the Black Consciousness Era.

The Black museum movement was born out of this enormously complex welter of cultural expression, debate, and critique. The number of Black museums formed during this thirty-year period is absolutely extraordinary. Between 1950 and 1980, well over ninety African American museums were founded in the United States and Canada. By contrast, between 1885 and 1930, though there were scores of Negro cultural societies and a few private collections, the number of Negro museums was relatively small, probably thirty or fewer. Most of these museums or cultural centers were part of the Negro college system and tended to focus either on library or fine-arts collections. Yet after 1950 scores of museums were founded in urban Black communities, mostly as freestanding entities not part of a church, school, or any preexisting Black institution. Often these new museums were founded by community activists who had worked in the civil rights movement at some level and now wanted to use that expertise for a cultural agenda. This volume of museum building was unprecedented within the Black community.⁶⁷

Understanding the complexity of cultural influences is essential for interpreting the meaning and function of these newly established Black museums. During the Black Consciousness Era, many African American artists, political and religious leaders, and everyday people struggled with questions of personal and ethnic identity, which were informed by a new language of cultural and political discourse.⁶⁸ Activists within all wings of the movement were influenced by think-

ing, writing, and activism in other parts of the world. CORE was organized by an interracial group of pacifists in 1941. King began reading Gandhi in graduate school in the late 1940s.⁶⁹ Early in the history of SNCC, pacifists who believed in nonviolent practice reigned. But by 1964 some within the organization had begun reading African anticolonialist writers such as Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, and Léopold Senghor. Through these writers, they discovered the theories of Marx, Lenin, and Mao. Soon these young people had begun to create a literature of their own: James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (1964); Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power* (1965); Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (1968); and George Jackson, *Soledad Brother* (1970) and *Blood in My Eye* (1972).⁷⁰ These are only a few of hundreds of works published after 1960 that take up questions of personal and cultural identity. One example of an individual who mixed cultural expression and personal identity with political and social concerns was Harry Belafonte, who was among the most popular Negro singers and movie stars of the 1950s and 1960s. Born in New York City of Caribbean parents, Belafonte lived in Jamaica from 1935 to 1940 and brought back African-Jamaican songs, singing them in a manner accessible to many Americans. Belafonte was an active supporter of and fundraiser for various progressive African American organizations of the 1960s, especially SNCC. Belafonte served as a crucial link between younger African American activists and a wider world of sociopolitical struggle; through his efforts, SNCC leaders were able to travel to Africa to meet activists such as Miriam Makeba of South Africa and Sekou Touré of Guinea.

In duration, social impact, and the vitality of cultural expression, the Black Consciousness Era is roughly parallel to the Harlem Renaissance. In fact, in virtually every way, the Black Consciousness Era *was* a true renaissance, stimulating nearly every area of African American life. New Black theater companies and dance troupes explored the African American sensibility in performance. Black jazz musicians invented bebop; Black popular singers created rhythm and blues, rock and roll, and soul music. New literary schools of poets, essayists, and critics established new magazines, created anthologies, discovered forgotten classics, and worked at defining a Black aesthetic.⁷¹ New Black visual artists began to paint definitions of the African in African American life. Between 1950 and 1980 more Black cultural institutions were founded than at any other time in American history. During the Black Consciousness Era, many people were literally at work creating a new mythos.

This new mythos of Black consciousness contained a number of

earlier elements and had no single contemporary interpretation. There were various versions of what Black consciousness meant, but they all shared a sense of the special destiny of African American people and the idea that they were the truth-tellers of American society. As in the abolitionist generation, this mythopoetic notion was borne out in the lives of many people engaged in direct action. Putting one's life on the line for justice and equality aligned personal memory and local history with that mythic destiny, as it had for Frederick Douglass and Sojourner Truth in the 1850s.

During the 1960s, some people called the movement a "second Reconstruction."⁷² For some, the word *reconstruction* provided a sense of the crusading spirit and the power of morally redemptive action. For others, mostly white Southerners, the term conjured up images of federal intervention, Negroes wild in the streets, and violence. Taken together, these mutually constructed metaphors give some insight into the language of crusade or holy war that movement people used to describe their experiences. The African American millennialist rhetoric of antislavery agitation was updated and reinvigorated. During the early years of the movement, the widely used slogan "Freedom Now!" appeared on handwritten signs at demonstrations and in big bold letters at large marches. This slogan was an updated version of the same cries for freedom and justice made by abolitionists more than a century earlier.

The nonviolent approach enjoyed great legislative victories, yet suffered great losses through the violent deaths of rank-and-file members as well as leaders. The disappointments of political compromise, inner-city riots, and escalating government surveillance and violence supported the position of people within the movement who favored the concept of Black Power over the concept of an integrated society. Eventually separatism became a convincing option, in part because this option echoed the independence struggles of nations in Africa and the Caribbean.⁷³ In those conflicts, colonized peoples worked to separate themselves from the European colonial powers.

Separatism was a rather new element in African American political thought. Before 1930 emigrationists had journeyed to Liberia and Garvey had planned to go to Ethiopia, but no significant leader before World War II had suggested a separate Black nation within the United States. Between 1968 and 1975 Black nationalism strongly resurfaced. This nationalism had many roots, but the most culturally symbolic organization was the Nation of Islam, whose founder was Elijah Muhammed and whose chief spokesperson was Malcolm X.

Begun in the 1930s as one of a number of Islamic-inspired African

American religious sects, the Nation of Islam had survived into the 1950s. Though not a fiery orator, Elijah Muhammed was a brilliant organizer. A pacifist during World War II, he served time in prison as a draft resister. There he discovered a pool of people waiting to be converted. Muhammed was not the only religious-political organizer of the Negro masses in the 1930s. Father Divine of New York City, Prophet Jones of Detroit, and Daddy Grace of Washington, D.C., were all active in this era. However large some of these organizations became during the 1930s, though, only the Nation of Islam appealed to Black nationalists of the 1950s and 1960s.

In the early 1950s a charismatic former convict, Malcolm Little (who later changed his name to Malcolm X), became a minister in the Nation of Islam. Malcolm X was an extraordinary example of the criminal who discovered salvation in this movement. Malcolm X's life of crime and his later renunciation of it was as emblematic for Black nationalists, converts to Islam, and other alternative groups as Frederick Douglass's life as the archetypal freed slave was for an abolitionist audience. In 1959 Malcolm X became the official spokesperson for the Nation of Islam. He was roundly vilified by the white American media, the integration-oriented African American press, and—needless to say—conservative political leaders and scholars. People in most of these areas of American life condemned his rejection of nonviolence as a strategy and his embrace of separatism as a goal. In 1964 he made a mind-bending pilgrimage to Mecca that changed his views on many issues, especially race; he discovered a new world of interracial brotherhood inside a more orthodox Islam. Killed in 1965, Malcolm X may have had more influence in death than in life. For many people, his writings and the stories of his life have come to symbolize African American resistance during the 1960s. Malcolm X's birthday is celebrated in cities in the United States that have a significant African American population. In some places, Black History Month extends from King's birthday, 17 January, to Malcolm X's birthday, usually celebrated on or around 19 May. These national African American events span the sociopolitical spectrum that emerged from the activism and ideological combat of the sixties.⁷⁴

Malcolm X and "The Nation" changed the landscape of African American cultural discourse. Dramatically shifting the interest in the ancient past from the Israelites and even Ethiopia to Egypt, the Nation of Islam helped stimulate a wide range of Black Americans already hungry for positive information about Africa. Symbols such as pyramids, all-seeing eyes, busts of Nefertiti, and other Egyptiana pervaded

the growing number of African clothing shops, bookstores, and head shops of the time. Servicing a new market for Garvey flags, slogans, and literature, these shops made African and African-influenced artifacts quite saleable for the first time in African American history. This embrace of things African was the antithesis of the nineteenth-century ambivalence about African origins.

Muhammed's version of world history was based on the writings of J. A. Rogers, Drusilla Houston, and several other self-taught historians of the 1930s, who saw all world civilization as emanating from Africa, especially Ethiopia and Egypt.⁷⁵ Muhammed enlarged this notion with his white-man-as-beast theory of African racial superiority. Turning nineteenth-century physical anthropology completely on its head, Muhammed described a separate genesis for Black people, who then created all the other peoples of the world. Because of this primordial role as world-creators, the melanin content of their skin, and other physico-spiritual attributes, Africans were considered the only truly civilized and spiritual people.

While many Black intellectuals and collectors may not have accepted all of Muhammed's tenets, his focus on Egypt and early African civilization spawned a generation of both academically trained and lay historians and archaeologists. These crosscurrents of popular and scholarly thought made Egypt the central symbol of Black self-respect. Again turning nineteenth-century mythopoetic narratives on their heads, many twentieth-century nationalists saw the Egyptians, the slaveholders of the Old Testament, as the archetype for Africa and, beyond that, the genitors of human knowledge, both spiritual and scientific.

Movement activists and intellectuals also read historical and contemporary Pan-Africanist thought. The writings of Marcus Garvey and W.E.B. Du Bois, as well as contemporary African political thinking, reinforced a sense of the connection among all African peoples. Africa and Africans had moved from being an ambivalent concern to being a central element in the African American mythos. Dashikis, Afro hairstyles, jewelry, poster art, and many other cultural forms became infused with color schemes, design motifs, and symbolic elements loosely inspired by Africa. This new mythos embraced the African past and portrayed Africans around the world as linked in a united destiny. Though articulated in elaborate and often contradictory ways, this African destiny involved struggling against the forces of colonialism and white racism as well as honoring traditional values seen as under attack in the West, such as respect for the elderly, family

stability, and achievements within the arts. Increasingly, in the late 1970s and 1980s, such values have come to be called African or Afrocentric.

The Afrocentricity movement is the newest significantly different cultural analysis emerging from an interior view of the African American past. This new view incorporates not only African American history within a diasporic context, both American and Asian in scope, but also scientific interpretations of human evolution in Africa and archaeological, Biblical, and linguistic analyses focusing on the African origins of civilization. As such, the Afrocentricity movement is the heir to previous Black constructions of the special role of African Americans.

Originally articulated within the context of Biblical history by nineteenth-century African American emigrationists, the present-day Afrocentricity movement takes that view to a world-historical level. Claiming that all humans were originally Black and that all culture originated in Africa, especially Kemet (Egypt) and Nubia (Ethiopia), leading Afrocentrists also see Malcolm X as a principal modern-day spokesperson for an Afrocentric praxis (though the term *Afrocentric* was not in use during his lifetime).

What can now be grouped together as a spectrum of Afrocentric organizations, institutions, and intellectuals emerged from the various threads of the movement toward Black consciousness during the late 1960s and early 1970s. After the disintegration of important radical organizations such as SNCC and the Black Panther Party, and the breakup of the Nation of Islam into various splinter groups, many on the Black left who had moved in cultural nationalist or separatist circles began a reassessment of cultural and religious life that built on yet critiqued earlier nationalist organizations.

In the introduction to *African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity*, Molefi Kete Asante and Kariamuwelsh Asante defined the concept of Afrocentricity as "an ideological statement of the unity of African culture and the need for a new consciousness. *Afrocentricity* contends that there are two types of consciousness, a consciousness of oppression and a consciousness of victory to create liberating motifs and messages." More briefly, Molefi Kete Asante has defined Afrocentricity as "the belief in the centrality of Africans in postmodern history."⁷⁶

The Afrocentricity movement represents a new phase in African American cultural discourse. Turning Black abolitionist imagery on its head, Afrocentrists identify not with the enslaved Hebrews of the Old

Testament but with the Egyptians, who were the slaveowners. In seeing both Nubia and Kemet as the foundation of all human culture, Afrocentrists have incorporated the thinking of Rastafarianism and that of Marcus Garvey, Elijah Muhammed, and other lesser-known Black nationalist leaders. Still, in important ways, Afrocentricity has gone beyond these earlier movements. By citing new Afrocentric translations of Kemetic texts, referring to anthropological evidence of early humans in Africa, and pointing to cultural evidence of African contacts around the world, the Afrocentrists have created a new cultural discourse in which Africans (and by extension, African Americans) are unique within the context of world culture and were the spiritual leaders in all early human social life. In many Black museums and cultural organizations, Afrocentricity has become the predominant ideology. Especially in current debates about how to reform public-school curricula, Afrocentrist scholars and activists have maintained highly vocal and visible positions. Many African Americans believe that the works of Cheikh Anta Diop, Ivan Van Sertima, and others contain claims that are proven and uncontested. In fact, many of these works are not generally accepted by academically based scholars within their respective disciplines. However, such difference between cultural mythos and historical scholarship has always energized American debates about the African American past. In terms of preservation, the Afrocentricity movement has already produced an enormous number of books, stores that sell African and Afrocentric clothing, jewelry, T-shirts with slogans, and other ephemera suggesting the power of this new view of the African American past. In the early 1990s, most Black museums are in the process of coming to terms with the implications of this new ideology for their collections, research, and outreach programs.

Though *Afrocentric* is a relatively new term for these sentiments, the founders of the new Black museums were motivated by similar feelings, even though they represented different segments of a broad ideological spectrum of political strategies and goals. In the 1950s and early 1960s, most of the individuals who founded museums were artists and/or teachers, such as Elma Lewis, who founded a dance school in Roxbury, Massachusetts, in 1950 and eighteen years later the National Center of Afro-American Artists, or Margaret Burchoughs, who organized the Ebony Museum of Negro Culture in Chicago in 1961 (now the Du Sable Museum). Some of these new museums were founded by people involved in progressive politics, such as the group of trade unionists who established the San Francisco Afro-

American Historical Society in 1956. Other founders emerged from the politically active wings of liberal Christian churches, such as Sue Bailey Thurman (wife of the noted Afro-American theologian Howard Thurman), who in 1959 founded the Afro-American Historical Society of Boston (now the Museum of Afro-American History in the African Meeting House on Beacon Hill). Their concern was often to create settings where people could gather and debate issues deriving from the Afro-American experience. For example, the San Francisco society's main activities in the early years were focused around discussion groups, which studied a topic for a year and then presented their findings to the larger group during Negro History Week. Only in the mid-1960s did the San Francisco group begin to collect objects. As another example, Elma Lewis was concerned that Black children should have the early opportunities for training in dance, music, and other performance arts that can be so critical to a successful professional career; she did not establish her museum until many years later. These founders were influenced by the political rhetoric and cultural concerns of the 1930s and 1940s, often expressed in the labor movement and in leftist organizations. Many of them had had prior experience of African American preservationist activities through their work with Carter G. Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History. As artists, their focus was more on the process of positive cultural identification. They energized their students' artistic talents or expressed their own views in art. During the oppressive years of the McCarthy era, the politics of culture may have become a haven for radicals of an earlier generation.⁷⁷

After 1964, the founders of Black museums tended to be younger people whose political rhetoric and cultural goals were informed by the demonstrations, sit-ins, and freedom schools of the Southern civil rights movement. These younger people, such as Charles Wright, who established the Museum of Afro-American History in Detroit in 1965, Edmund Barry Gaither, brought in by Elma Lewis in 1968 to be the director of the National Center of Afro-American Artists in Boston, Byron Rushing, the first director of the Museum of Afro-American History (founded in 1969), and John Kinard, first director of the Anacostia Museum (established in 1967), tended to share the older founders' sense of the absolute importance of preserving African American life, history, and culture.

In the freedom schools and within SNCC and CORE themselves, the dominant ideology hinged on the notion that people with more-than-average amounts of education and training should become facili-

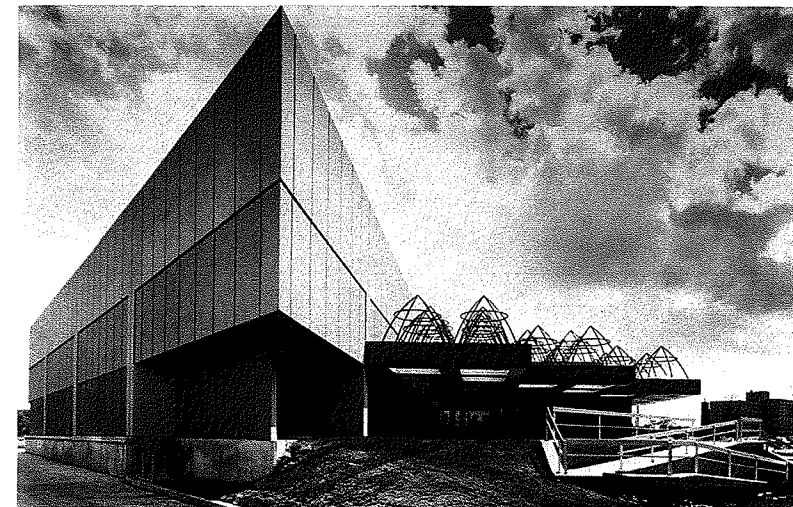


Fig. 17-9. Museum of African American History, Detroit. Photo courtesy the Museum of African American History.

tators for the community. Influenced by a number of Third World revolutionaries, this idea was more democratic than the older Marxist idea of an elite revolutionary vanguard. Rather than standing “objectively” apart from the community and making analyses, as had been true of an earlier generation of leftist intellectuals and activists, the SNCC generation saw themselves as standing inside the community and helping to give voice to community desires. These people felt that museums could be instruments of empowerment for the Black community. This idea of empowerment through cultural institutions also originated with the movement. Early on, Martin Luther King, Jr., had articulated the notion that Black people needed to develop a sense of their own entitlement as citizens and as human beings, and that direct positive action was a path toward this. The younger generation of museum founders saw museums as cultural centers that supported a constructive pathway toward the development of ethnic and personal pride.

Influenced by the SNCC and CORE emphasis on students (and teachers) as facilitators in their communities, as people who would get the news of freedom out to their communities, this group of museum founders emphasized communication. The most successful of these museums, in terms of size and longevity, became centers for alterna-

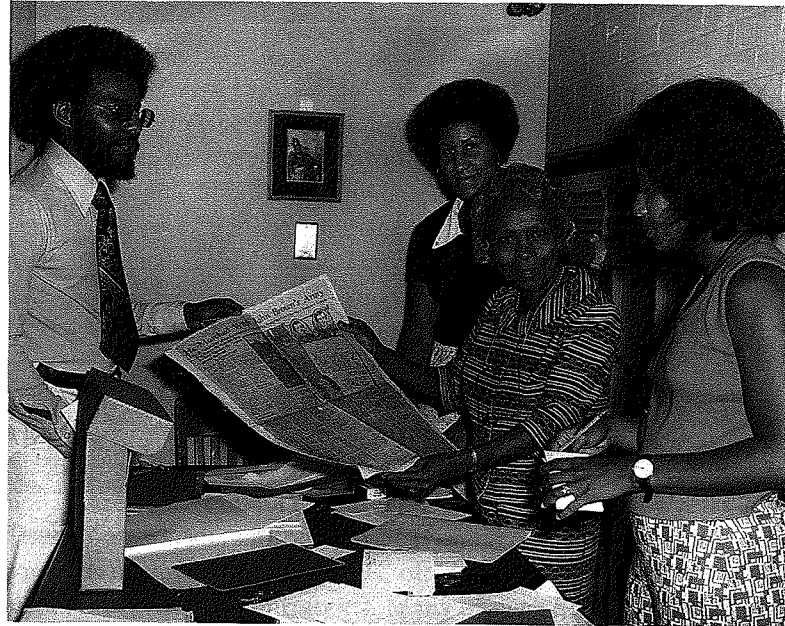


Fig. 17-10. Staff members of the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center in the early 1970s. From left to right: Thomas Battle, curator of manuscripts; Evelyn Brooks; Dorothy Porter Wesley, chief librarian; unidentified staff person. Photo courtesy Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.

tive culture within their local and regional Black communities. One little-studied aspect of the civil rights movement was the way in which people within it helped create a new civil religion of sorts within the African American community. Though based originally on coalitions inside churches and historically Black schools, the movement went beyond those institutions: conferences, meetings, and debates were held in hotel rooms, offices, and private homes, which became new locations for social and political activity for this younger generation. New, hybrid political-cultural forms emerged: demonstrations, sit-ins, and marches always had singing and dancing along with political talk. The people who founded museums did so in part to make some of this political debate, progressive performance style, and Pan-Africanist rhetoric available to the community at a grass-roots level. Their museums were vehicles for social change, often speaking to the wider African American community through well-established expressive cul-

tural forms such as performances of song cycles. Black museums founded in the last thirty years are places where alternative versions of the African American and African past can be debated and disseminated to a wider public.

Black museums functioned as the keepers of the African American mythos in all its diversity and complexity. For example, across the country today, Black museums generally sponsor Kwanzaa festivals during the December holiday season. Originated by Ron Karenga in 1966, Kwanzaa is an amalgamation of numerous harvest festivals held in various West African societies. Characterized by the celebration of seven principles of unity, the Kwanzaa festival has become the most widely celebrated holiday with a Black nationalist or separatist origin.⁷⁸ Another example of the singular agreement among these museums about their shared mission is the fact that most of the new Black museums have similar names, quite often incorporating along with a city or state name the phrase "Museum of African American History and Art" or perhaps "History and Culture."

The collections of these newer museums reflected the diversity of Black views of the African American past. In the early days, many of these newer museums functioned as cultural centers and were housed in old schools, churches, and theaters that had some performance spaces. The Minneapolis Afro-American History and Art Museum was a typical example. Founded by a group of artists in the early 1970s, the museum originally held exhibitions of contemporary art and gave art classes to elementary and secondary school students. Eventually the museum added a community-based board of directors and a collection of some miscellaneous African artifacts, several hundred pieces of contemporary art, a sizeable number of books, and a few documents and photographs. Such a history is rather different from the typical story of museum development in elite European American communities. Most historically white local societies and museums began with a collection and usually some resources, such as a building or a group of donors willing to raise the money to erect a building. Within African American communities, these newer museums usually began with a mandate from the community for positive education, a group of politically linked activists, and a desire to communicate. Performances, art exhibitions, tours, and classes for students, rather than financially valuable art or material culture collections, have been their focus. Resources have typically been quite slim, and not produced by a wealthy board of trustees. Often support from

private foundations and the government have kept these museums afloat, albeit on a shoestring budget.

The growth of Black political power in both the electorates of major urban areas and in state legislatures and other elective offices has finally given African Americans significant control of governmental resources, which could then be made available to African American communities. The growth of Black museums was fueled in part by new sources of governmental funds being made available to cultural institutions as a result of the Great Society initiatives of the late 1960s and early 1970s. During the Nixon presidency, more federal funds became available to be dispensed on the local level. Preparations for the bicentennial of the Declaration of Independence in 1976 boosted spending for historical projects to an unprecedented level. The development of political environments newly favorable to African Americans and increased levels of governmental support made it possible, for example, for groups of politicians in Philadelphia to found the Afro-American Historical and Cultural Museum, and helped Rowena Stewart, a former social worker and teacher, to establish the Rhode Island Black Heritage Society in 1975. These are but two examples of a trend that was seen in areas with significant Black political power at the local or state level. Black museums were authorized and funded in Los Angeles, Chicago, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C., at a rate never before seen. These particular circumstances—of comparatively large-scale government support of African American and other community programming, and African American political clout—significantly affected the structure of these new Black museums. For example, many of these museums had large boards of trustees—boards of thirty to fifty members were not uncommon. As numerous and diverse as these board members were, they rarely had much experience at raising funds and often contributed only small sums themselves, commensurate with their middle-class salaries. The staff of the museum was expected to raise funds for the operation of the museum, while the board members were expected to serve the community as cultural leaders. In successful museums, the staff was often able to raise funds from a variety of state, local, and sometimes federal agencies. As these funds shrank during the Reagan years and now threaten to dry up altogether or enmesh their recipients in public controversy, the significant role these governmental funds had in the growth of Black museums (and community museums more generally) has been made considerably more apparent.

By 1969, there were enough Black museums in existence for some of their leaders to begin to think about forming an organization. Meetings were held throughout the 1970s at several of the newer Black museums. In 1978, the African American Museums Association (AAMA) was established. Operating initially out of the National Center of Afro-American Artists in Boston and later out of the Bethune Archives of the National Council of Negro Women in Washington, D.C., AAMA has become the only direct collective voice of the Black museum movement. AAMA has functioned as a lobby on behalf of Black museums within the all-important government funding community; it has sponsored various training sessions and workshops for the often isolated and small staffs of their member museums; and its annual meetings have served as reunions or assemblies of the Black museum movement.⁷⁹

There are other organizations with a history of African American preservationist activities, such as Carter G. Woodson's Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, founded in 1915 and still headquartered in Washington, D.C., and the National Conference of Artists, a Black arts organization founded in the late 1950s by Elma Lewis and other cultural activists. Also, newer preservationist groups exist, such as the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society and the Black Museum Educators Roundtable. Each of these organizations has annual meetings and a national network of members who work in both historically white and Black museums.

Throughout this entire period, but especially after the 1976 broadcast of the *Roots* miniseries, African American preservationists concentrating on particular locales and regions appeared throughout the country. As well, a number of Black people were moved to begin tracing their families' histories, erect a local memorial or monument, or become active in a national preservationist organization. For some, this has included involvement in historically white groups such as the Daughters and Sons of the American Revolution. In any event, the surge of interest in understanding the past through family memory or ethnic history is often mentioned anecdotally in relation to the *Roots* series by people in these new preservationist groups (and sometimes those in older ones). The last fifteen years have witnessed a surge of interest, both nationally and at the community level, in defining ethnicity.⁸⁰

The creation of Black museums was one of the most important institution-building outcomes of the Black Consciousness Era. These

museums sheltered alternative Black cultural activists as well as serving as repositories for more confrontational art and cultural expressions. Their influence was not limited to African Americans. One of the culturally significant outcomes of the civil rights movement was the way in which radicalism within segregated Negro communities widened into a critique of American society more generally during the Vietnam War and its aftermath. As in other areas of American life, Black people have innovated in ways that have inspired other groups dedicated to empowerment. Many succeeding movements, such as the antiwar effort, modern feminism, and rising ethnic pride and civil rights movements among Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Native Americans, and other groups, arose directly from or within the discursive context of the political rhetoric, strategies, tactics, and social aims of the civil rights movement.

These new Black museums were in the early vanguard of the community museum movement. Many issues currently being discussed in large mainstream cultural institutions in the 1990s—audiences, communication, documenting oral histories, involving the community in cultural institutions—were dealt with by Black museums in the 1960s and 1970s. With few resources, initially small collections, and tiny staffs, Black museums generally have had deep-rooted ties to their local communities, producing exhibitions, performances, and training activities that have had great meaning for their neighborhoods and cities. Supported by an enviable network of volunteers and supporters, they served as repositories for various kinds of personal and family memory. Today, the collections of these museums are filled with objects, photographs, books, and documents that were saved by Black families over generations.⁸¹

Black museums have inherited all of the complex ideologies, cultural symbols, and practices that have characterized all parts of African American cultural discourse over the last 170 years. As central cultural institutions within their respective communities, these museums include people of all generations as well as radical, moderate, and conservative African Americans with a wide range of opinions, goals, and ideas about how best to preserve the African American past and reinvigorate the culture in the present. Yet they are also affected by contemporary debates among African Americans about the “correct” interpretations of Black history. They have served as the principal repositories of the memory of individuals, families, and communities. Black museums continue to be an outlet for the mythopoetic narratives of the special destiny of African Americans.

HISTORICALLY WHITE INSTITUTIONS IN THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS ERA, 1965–1985

Before 1950 the Library of Congress and the National Archives contained the largest collections of African American materials. Most of the major public and private museums, including the Smithsonian Institution, made no effort to collect, preserve, or analyze any aspect of the culture of African Americans. While desegregation may not yet have been fully accomplished (and in many museums is only beginning at the present time), the civil rights movement and the Black Consciousness Era had a profound effect on historically white museums.

In 1984 the American Association of Museums issued its report on the status of museums in America, *Museums for a New Century*. Included in the report was a chapter on multiculturalism and diversifying the audiences, staffs, and exhibitions of American museums. The report clearly indicated that diversity within the museums had not yet been achieved, but the report was a clarion call for change.

Greater pluralism in historically white cultural institutions has been slow to come and hard to assess. Several studies have recently been published that survey some part of the universe of American museums: James Horton and Spencer Crew have examined history museums; Howardena Pindall sampled minority art museum professionals on the East Coast; Joan Sandler interviewed minority history and art professionals east of the Mississippi. Horton and Crew found that it was hard to measure just how much of an impact the new scholarship on African American history has had on historically white cultural institutions. They cited several examples, such as Monticello and Ash Lawn, where the changes had been uneven—new exhibitions had been installed but the docents continued to hand out the same old information. Pindall and Sandler each documented the difficult environment minority museum professionals find themselves in—few opportunities to conduct research or pursue advanced degrees, the lack of mentors, and great obstacles to the collecting and exhibiting of African American art and artifacts.⁸²

While change may have been slow to come and unevenly achieved, there have been significant changes at many American museums. Perhaps the most important change to date in historically white museums has been the increasing diversity of audiences served. Horton and Crew found that nearly seventy-five percent of the museums in their survey reported that they had been influenced by recent interpretations of African American history. As well, most museums

reported that minorities constituted a substantial portion (on average, about thirty percent) of their audiences. Almost half of those minority visitors were African American.⁸³ These newer audiences have often come to participate in public programs or sometimes to see exhibitions related to the history and culture of their own ethnic group. But a few historically white museums have also made crucial changes in the hiring of professional staff, interpretation, and collections that may have a lasting impact.

Colonial Williamsburg is a good example of such a shift. As mentioned earlier, throughout most of its existence, this living history museum made no mention of the nearly fifty percent of the city's 1770s population that was Black. However, in the late 1970s, Dennis O'Toole and Shomer Zwelling came to Williamsburg as deputy director of museum operations and research historian, respectively. Energetically pressing for the inclusion of African Americans in a more historically accurate interpretive framework, O'Toole and Zwelling began to make changes in interpretive practices. Eventually, through their efforts, the hiring of Rex Ellis, and the securing of foundation funding to promote the inclusion of African Americans in interpretation, Williamsburg began to make visible the previously invisible Black population. Ellis was the principal architect and creator of the Program in African American Interpretation. Incorporating Black interpreters into the texture of the Williamsburg experience was not easy. Stereotypes held by visitors and some staff clouded the initial experiences; in at least one instance, visitors did not realize that the "slaves" they met were really costumed interpreters who were not actually enslaved! Yet after a complex process of experimentation with their form, historical content, social context, and dramatic elements, the various programs at Williamsburg have grown into an entire department of the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation. Special interpretive emphasis on African American culture at Carter's Grove (a plantation site a few miles from the city of Williamsburg) and an ongoing series of events and seminars, as well as the mainstreaming of Black interpreters into various phases of the Colonial Williamsburg experience, have changed the face of this venerable, previously homogeneous institution. The true heterogeneity of colonial Virginia life is now beginning to be visible.⁸⁴

Nowhere have the conflicts and changes within historically white institutions have been more visible than at the Smithsonian Institution. The Smithsonian is the preeminent national public museum in the United States. Made up of a group of museums and other research

entities, the Smithsonian was established by Congress to collect and preserve, conduct research, and interpret science and culture for Americans. Not limited to the history and cultures of the United States, the Smithsonian is perhaps the world's largest attempt to be a universal or comprehensive museum. As a most venerable cultural institution, the Smithsonian has several important functions: it validates new cultural trends and arguments; it serves as a mediator between the academy and the wider public by presenting to a broad audience exhibitions and programming informed by scholarly research; and it collects materials of presumed national historical or cultural value. Because of the scope of its concerns and the tax dollars that support it, the Smithsonian is a public institution in the widest sense of the word.

At the same time, the Smithsonian is an excellent example of a mainstream cultural institution that has been historically white—that is to say, governed and staffed by middle- and upper-class European Americans, many of Anglo-American descent. The public services and programs have been traditionally (though perhaps inadvertently) designed with a WASP, middle-class visitor in mind. Although legally a public institution, during its long history the Smithsonian (and many similar institutions) has not reflected the true diversity of the American heritage. For example, in the nineteenth century, the scholars and curators at the U.S. National Museum were among the primary purveyors of scientific racism. And before 1965 the Smithsonian had only a few random objects reflective of African American culture (or indeed any ethnic American culture) on view. Ralph Rinzler, originator of the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife, recalled his first visit to the then-new Museum of History and Technology in 1966: "Within the large Growth of the United States exhibit, which detailed the history of all America, the only objects there to detail the richness of Afro-American culture were a single coiled grass basket, an instrument, and Asante gold weights. I was appalled."⁸⁵

Yet the Smithsonian and other similar institutions also experienced the tumult of the 1960s—when the cities were aflame with Black anger—and the growth of Black consciousness. Between 1963 and 1972 hundreds of thousands of Americans came to Washington to protest governmental policies or to lobby for various political goals, including civil rights and an end to the Vietnam War. In 1968 the Poor People's Campaign brought many tens of thousands of Black and activist people to the Mall. Erecting masses of tents—nicknamed Resurrection City—between the Capitol and the White House, in the

shadow of five governmental museums, these people almost certainly included many who had never visited the Smithsonian. But the simple presence of masses of Black people created pressure on the institution. In the 1970s Black cultural activists, many of them involved in the Black museum movement, began to critique the Smithsonian on substantive grounds. By the mid-1980s Black elected officials with seniority in Congress (and representatives of other minority groups, such as Japanese Americans) subjected the Smithsonian's budget to greater scrutiny on the questions of cultural diversity and inclusion. In short, over the last twenty-five years, the Smithsonian specifically and the historically white cultural bureaucracy generally came under increasing criticism from Black cultural activists and their allies. As a result, the institution has made changes in some aspects, particularly in its public programming and in the exhibitions at the National Museum of American History.

Over the last twenty-five years the Smithsonian has experienced an enormous growth in the number of its museums and research centers, which parallels the surge nationally of new museums and cultural institutions. The principal architect of this institutional growth was S. Dillon Ripley, secretary of the Smithsonian from 1964 through 1984. A New England blueblood and previously a professor of ornithology at Yale University and head of its natural-history museum, Ripley proved to be an innovator in Washington. While not challenging the preexisting interpretive framework at the Smithsonian, Ripley was gifted with a wider, more democratic sense of inclusion than previous secretaries. Becoming secretary in 1964, Ripley may have been influenced by the American-dream rhetoric of Martin Luther King, Jr., who was a master at combining the language of national mythos with the demand for equal justice that was a special concern of African Americans. At certain moments of potential crisis, this wider vision of the museum aided Ripley in asserting a statesmanlike leadership.

For example, as mentioned above, the Poor People's Campaign arrived in Washington in the summer of 1968. With folks walking and riding from the Deep South to the capital, the Smithsonian had time to prepare for the arrival of these new visitors to the Mall. A crisis-management meeting was called so that the Smithsonian's administrators could determine the appropriate response to this challenge to the security of the collections. Ripley took a completely different view. Rather than battenning down the hatches, he suggested that the doors be flung wide open to this new and quite visible part of the American

public. Vividly recalled by many participants in that meeting, this was a triumphal moment in Ripley's stewardship of the Smithsonian.⁸⁶

Not simply concerned with grand gestures, Ripley also offered a new kind of activity inside the venerable Smithsonian. In his book *Beyond the Sacred Grove*, Ripley wrote of a desire to make museums more inclusive, to encourage all Americans to visit and enjoy the nation's museums, and his wish that museums should be lively places.⁸⁷ These ideas appear to have been the theoretical foundation for two new programs that emerged in the early years of Ripley's secretaryship; the Festival of American Folklife and the Anacostia Museum. Ripley appointed two extraordinary individuals to be the founding directors of these enterprises: Ralph Rinzler and John Kinard.

Ralph Rinzler, who was involved in the Newport Folk Festival for some years, was first brought to Washington in 1966 to discuss whether something similar to Newport could be produced at the Smithsonian. While the Newport festival had been very influential by introducing traditional folk musicians and newer folk-style groups (such as the Freedom Singers of SNCC) to a wider audience, from Rinzler's perspective the festival had some important flaws. A cultural radical at heart, Rinzler wanted the Smithsonian festival to be quite different in process and content from the Newport festival. He wanted this new festival to be a place where the performers could have meaningful interactions with one another, and he wanted their empowering critiques of the American power structures to be shared by the audience. While criticized by some university-based folklorists for creating a festival abstracted from any specific locale and context, Rinzler's exciting, distinctive, diverse festivals were praised in the *Washington Post*, on Capitol Hill, and by the general public.⁸⁸

The Festival of American Folklife is typically held each year during the two weeks prior to July fourth. Under Rinzler the festival often went to great lengths to provide context for the participants' performances and activities; for example, traditional house-builders could actually build houses, and rice paddies could be created to demonstrate the work of a traditional farmer. Rinzler also brought in singers from the civil rights movement, labor movements, and various ethnic groups (some of which were newly emergent, such as Chicanos). However, the American components of the program in its earliest years featured different aspects of the African American and Native American experiences. The festival provided a stage for many different kinds of African American music and dance, including gospel,

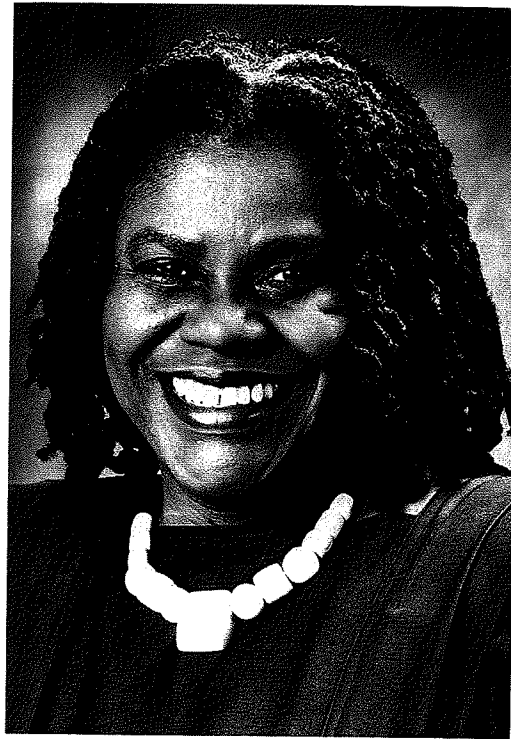


Fig. 17-11. Bernice Johnson Reagon. Photo courtesy Smithsonian Institution.

jazz, blues, rhythm and blues, spirituals, and freedom songs. In addition, the festival presented music and dance from the African diaspora, such as reggae and steel-drum music from Jamaica, calypso music from Trinidad, and capoeira and various drumming traditions from Brazil. Over the years, the Festival of American Folklife brought together performances with demonstrations of material culture and living history. For example, they brought basketmakers from the Sea Islands and wrought-iron artisans such as Philip Simmons (who later won a Living Heritage Award from the National Endowment for the Arts).

The activists, scholars, and artists whom Rinzler hired to coordinate these programs helped create the first critical mass of minority professionals at the Smithsonian. Early on, Rinzler brought in Bernice Johnson Reagon, one of the earliest members of SNCC and one of the four original Freedom Singers. While finishing a B.A. at Spelman College that had been interrupted by the activities of the civil rights movement and after working on a master's degree and doctorate from

Howard University, Reagon originally was a consultant, suggesting how to incorporate community people into the presentation of African American music or a new interpretive voice; she sometimes produced one of the festival's programs. But in 1973 Rinzler hired her to produce an African diaspora program for the three-month-long bicentennial-year festival.

After contracting with a talented group of young people to do fieldwork in the United States, the Caribbean, South America, and West Africa, Reagon produced an absolutely incandescent summer-long program.⁸⁹ The innovation of this festival may not seem extraordinary today, but it was groundbreaking at the time. Reagon invited musicians, weavers, dancers, instrument makers, master chefs, painters, and others from Africa and all over the diasporic world, including Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Brazil, Jamaica, Trinidad, Haiti, and the southern United States. Alex Haley's book *Roots* had just been published, and many Black Americans were deeply interested in learning more about Africa and their African roots. Scholars of history and culture were just beginning to use the term *diaspora* to describe the experience of Black people in the Americas. While many people were curious about the notion of a connection among all African peoples, Reagon made those connections manifest by juxtaposing Africans and Americans (in the widest sense). People could then judge for themselves how jollof rice from West Africa was like rice pilau from Barbados, and how the sounds of drumming in Haiti and Brazil were related to the sound of drumming from Nigeria. These were new—and for some people, heady—ideas.

The 1976 African Diaspora Festival (the title of which is believed to be the first government use of the term *diaspora* to name this version of Pan-African connection) deeply affected the Black people who attended it. By some accounts, lives were changed—careers revised, plans for travel to Africa put in place—by some of the experiences that Black people had during that summer. Pan-Africanist writers have long posited a direct relationship among peoples of African descent; however, this perspective was generally unfamiliar to the public. The Smithsonian festival provided an American audience with firsthand experience of some of those powerful diasporic links, especially in music and other performance traditions. Perhaps for the first time ever in American public history, a Black American mythos—the notion of the unity of African peoples across time and space—was presented by a preeminent cultural institution.

During the production of the African Diaspora Festival, conflicts

arose from the interaction of young, radical American activists with a conservative, hoary institution. One original theme for the summerlong 1976 festival was *Old Ways in the New World*, and the programming would detail the connections between Americans of European descent and their origins in Europe. Initially, not much thought was given to how Black Americans would fit into such a conceptual scheme.

An interdisciplinary advisory panel, the African Diaspora Advisory Group, was organized to help determine what the relevant programming should be. From almost the first meeting, the panel agreed that the scholarly literature had not adequately dealt with the cultural aspects of the African diaspora, and it recommended an extensive program of fieldwork on three continents and in the Caribbean. Bernice Reagon and James Early (who each later became acting director of the project) implemented the advisory panel's suggestions. The outcome of several years of fieldwork and research was the spectacular festival, in which musicians and artists from Brazil, Jamaica, Senegal, Louisiana, and many other places met for the first time and vividly demonstrated the links among different parts of the African diaspora, which were then only beginning to be widely investigated by scholars.

Those involved in the planning process for the festival remember some heady moments at the thought that even a small portion of the extensive resources of the Smithsonian were to be put to such a culturally radical use. At the same time, participants remember the number of pitched battles they had to fight with the Smithsonian bureaucracy to put on the African Diaspora Festival in the manner they thought appropriate. There were arguments about the name of the festival and its placement on the Mall, problems with the fire regulations in the African-village section, and a thousand other large and small details. The festival staff felt that many people resisted this effort to make the Smithsonian more truly diverse. Let one example suffice. The artists and performers in that year's festival were housed in inexpensive lodgings in Georgetown. Many musicians wanted to have jam sessions in the evenings, sometimes culminating in drumming by African and Native American musicians. When the word came down from higher up that the drumming had to stop, a confrontation occurred. For the Black people involved, this seemed to be a crucial moment of resistance and resolve. When someone said, "This isn't the first time someone has tried to prevent us from talking with our drums," or words to that effect, the high symbolism ended the confrontation and the

bureaucrats capitulated.⁹⁰ While such moments of high drama were rare, the experience of struggling within an institution to make a new place for minority peoples was long remembered. Bernice Reagon, James Early, and others involved saw in the African Diaspora Festival project yet another way to fulfill the SNCC ideal of using resources and scholarship to facilitate community empowerment.

Ultimately, Ralph Rinzler's innovations in the Smithsonian's Festival of American Folklife were twofold: first, he presented a wide range of American and world folk cultures to a diverse audience of Americans; second, he continually hired extraordinary groups of mostly younger, activist people to produce these distinctive programs. In the first instance, Rinzler succeeded in going beyond the traditional activities of university-based folklorists in a variety of ways. By presenting a wide range of musicians, storytellers, and other performers, he widened the scope of what was defined as folk culture. By bringing performers, instrument makers, and house builders to the Mall, he went beyond previous folk festivals in including material culture and the socio-material context in which folk music or other folk arts flourished. Furthermore, Rinzler's Mall audience was far larger and more diverse than those at previous festivals because he presented programs that spoke to the concerns, history, and traditions of diverse American ethnic groups. Finally, by providing transportation, equipment, contracts, and other resources, Rinzler was able to help support artists whose contributions to American culture had often been relatively financially unrewarding. To be a participant in the Smithsonian's festival gave an individual or group some funds and potentially a great deal of recognition. Rinzler's success spawned other governmental programs (such as those run by the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities) of support for American folk artists.⁹¹

Rinzler's second contribution—bringing in people of color to run these programs—had an impact on the Smithsonian that extended beyond the Festival of American Folklife. In 1977 Bernice Reagon established the Program in Black American Culture as an independent entity within the Division of Performing Arts.⁹² Though originating organizationally from the festival, this was a year-round program of research, public presentations, and performances that allowed her to delve more deeply into particular topics. Reagon's next big project was the *Songs of the Civil Rights Movement* project (cosponsored by Howard University), in which people gathered from around the country to record and notate their songs, to make a series of records, and to

attend a conference sing-in at the Smithsonian in the fall of 1980. Eventually, the Songs of the Civil Rights Movement project produced not only the records and the conference but also a traveling photo exhibition (entitled *We Won't Turn Back Again*) and regional conferences in twelve states designed to collect the songs and reminiscences of veterans of the civil rights movement.

The extraordinary result of the Program in Black American Culture was that one of the nation's most conservative cultural institutions served as the host to some of the nation's most radical voices. During Reagan's years as director of the program, its multiyear efforts were supported by extensive research and produced public programs that allowed scholars and artists in various genres to reach out to a wide public audience.⁹³

While radically shifting some of the public programs and thus part of the public face of the Smithsonian, the Festival of American Folklife and the Program in Black American Culture did not change the internal functioning of the Smithsonian's museums. Yet a museum experiment was evolving in Anacostia, a predominantly Black section in the southeastern part of the District of Columbia. Born out of Dillon Ripley's interest in trying out the community museum concept and the efforts of a well-organized group of community activists, the Anacostia Museum (originally called the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum) opened its doors in 1967. Renting space in the former Carver Theater, the museum looked and felt completely different from the rest of the Smithsonian. At its helm was its founding director, John Kinard, who was a young minister and a native of Washington. A community activist who had recently returned from an African sojourn, Kinard was picked by the community advisory board to head this new museum. After some pressure, Smithsonian higher-ups agreed.⁹⁴

Along with an unusual staff that included Balcha Fellows (head of the International Affairs Program), Zora Martin Felton (head of the Education Department), and Larry Thomas and James Mayo (both designers), Kinard created a thoroughly unique Smithsonian museum. The Anacostia Museum may well have been the first federally funded African American museum to be established through a government agency. In its first ten years, it sponsored a remarkable series of exhibitions and educational programs, premiering a new or borrowed exhibition nearly every month.⁹⁵

The museum staff pioneered and innovated in a number of ways. For example, the museum opened in September 1967 with an exhibi-

tion that had been thought out by Smithsonian staff before the hiring of John Kinard. The original exhibition included a small space capsule, an art section, a small petting zoo, a section of touchable objects, and a dance and performance area. This collection of objects reflected a central Smithsonian view that the purpose of the Anacostia Museum was to serve as a neighborhood outpost of the Smithsonian Institution. But Kinard and his staff did not intend simply to run an outpost. Their first independently produced exhibition opened on 22 November of that year. Called *Doodles in Dimensions*, this exhibition was a set of sculptures produced by a local Black designer, Ralph Tate, based on the well-known doodles of John F. Kennedy. The kernel of the idea for the exhibition came from a suggestion box that the staff had located prominently in the museum and which was quickly filled to overflowing with suggestions and comments. One young person had put forth the idea of an exhibition on the slain president.

Though most famous for the exhibition *Rats: Man's Invited Affliction* (1969), the Anacostia staff produced other imaginative efforts such as *Out of Africa* (1979) and the Anna J. Cooper exhibition (1981). Both of these exhibitions reflected the ways in which Black versions of the African American past were beginning to appear in national, publicly supported institutions. *Out of Africa* presented a diasporic view of Black Americans and the slavery experience. The exhibition *Anna J. Cooper: A Voice from the South* uncovered the life of a Black educator and clubwoman of national significance who had lived and worked in Washington. Curated by Louise Hutchinson, this exhibition was among the best examples of local history in which a smaller narrative is used to tell a story of national importance. As such, the Cooper exhibition fell well within the Carter G. Woodson school of African American historiography: careful research that results in the adding of another undeservedly obscure Black name to the roster of successful Americans.

The Anacostia Museum staff also pioneered new ways of involving the community in the museum. Long before most other Smithsonian museums hired education department staff, the Anacostia staff had developed unusual programs for children, teenagers, and adults. For example, Zora Martin Felton worked actively with groups of neighborhood teenagers, involving them in nearly every aspect of the museum. The teenagers helped to prepare exhibitions, developed programs, served as docents, and planned trips to countries such as Senegal. In a variety of ways these young people became an integral volunteer force for the museum. Over the years, some of these students

became adult museum volunteers and others went on to college majors and professional careers that were spurred by their work at the Anacostia Museum. Serving as a training ground, the museum also provided some new Black museum professionals to the field, particularly in the area of design and production. Drawing on both older and newer versions of the African American past, the Anacostia Museum became another center of innovative activity within the Smithsonian. The Anacostia Museum's location away from the Mall, its exclusive concern with African American history and culture, and its focus on programming rather than collecting all served to set it apart from the Smithsonian mainstream. Initially the Anacostia Museum was organized as a program-producing entity, not a collection-producing one. While not expressly forbidden to collect objects, the museum was consistently hampered by a lack of adequate storage space and the complete lack of registrarial and collections-management staff. Also, like others in the Black museum movement, the Anacostia staff emphasized the communication of new perspectives about the African diaspora, slavery, and contemporary Black issues to the public in general and to students in particular.

By 1980 the Smithsonian had a range of African American activities: a thriving Program in Black American Culture, a continued presence in the Festival of American Folklife, and a prominent and innovative neighborhood museum. New audiences had been attracted to these rather unusual, if not unique, programs. But the exhibitions and staffs of the Mall museums remained remarkably unchanged even throughout the tremendous period of museum expansion that began in 1964. While quite visible changes had occurred at the Smithsonian, they occurred only at the margins of the institution. Central bureaus such as the National Museum of Natural History and the Museum of History and Technology (now the National Museum of American History) remained much the same, with ethnically homogeneous professional staffs, traditional collecting practices, and exhibitions about the American past that reflected an ideology of consensus and homogeneity. However, in the late 1960s greater public pressure emerged to include Black history in the Smithsonian's public face. Some efforts toward greater inclusion did occur in the 1970s.

In 1972 the National Portrait Gallery sponsored two exhibitions curated by Letitia Woods-Brown, a well-known African American historian of Washington, D.C. Her exhibitions were the first investigation by a Smithsonian museum into the rich local Black tradition. In 1973 the gallery sponsored an exhibition curated by Sidney Kaplan

entitled *The Black Presence in the Revolutionary Era*. Stimulated by the upcoming bicentennial, Kaplan brought together for the exhibition numerous little-known portraits of some famous and some unknown eighteenth-century African Americans. In 1975 the exhibition *We the People* opened in the Museum of History and Technology. This exhibition included sections on suffrage movements and on modern-day civil rights and protest activities. In 1976 the exhibition *A Nation of Nations* opened at the same museum. Though it had a weak conceptual framework, this exhibition practiced the politics of inclusion by indicating the presence of both African Americans and Native Americans as part of the peoples from many parts of the world who make up the American nation. This consensus-oriented view of American history made invisible the tremendous racial conflicts in American history and completely obscured the distinctive aspects of the Black part of the American story. Still, these last two exhibitions helped stimulate the first systematic collecting at the Smithsonian on the African American experience.

Curators Keith Melder and Edith Mayo in what is now the Division of Political History began a systematic collection effort that focused on the civil rights movement and on the women's movement. The collection now includes numerous materials documenting the local and national aspects of both movements, such as printed signs, songbooks, buttons, clothes, and pamphlets. In what is now the Division of Community Life, curator Carl Scheele and his assistant, Ellen Roney Hughes, began documenting the history of African Americans in entertainment and sports. An extensive photo archive on baseball's Negro Leagues was one result of their efforts.⁹⁶

While these large, comprehensive exhibitions broke new ground by including African Americans within the overall storylines, these perspectives on Black history came from an exterior point of view. The *We the People* and *A Nation of Nations* exhibitions explored how Black people had affected the larger polity through the civil rights movement and how Black people had contributed to wider American culture through sports and entertainment, but no sense of the interior historical dynamics nor any of the unique elements of African American life came through. The need for a history derived from voices inside the African American community was expressed not only by Black cultural activists but also by a new generation of university-based scholars of the Black experience.

It is clear that the civil rights movement and some of its successors, such as the antiwar and modern feminist movements, had also

had an impact on American universities, though it is beyond the scope of this essay to detail that impact fully. Beginning in the 1960s, a new generation of historians developed a new social history. This was a history that told about the everyday lives of ordinary people in order to determine the large statistical patterns and dominant metaphors (or *mentalité*) that characterize an era. As part of this general movement, the work of Herbert Gutman, Lawrence Levine, John Blassingame, Eugene Genovese, Sidney Mintz, Nell Irwin Painter, and others began to redefine the landscape of African American history and culture. Evidence mounted of a series of complex patterns within the African diaspora of cultural survivals and transmissions, innovation and transmittal of religious beliefs, foodways, family structure, and material culture. In short, while the civil rights movement had stimulated a revolution in scholarly work on African American life, history, and culture, virtually none of this new research was reflected in Smithsonian exhibitions, opening the institution's exhibitions to questions about their historical accuracy and clarity.

In 1979, when Roger Kennedy became the director of the Museum of History and Technology, he helped set in motion a series of exhibitions that for the first time included some of the interior African American versions of history. After the Revolution: Everyday Life in America, 1780–1800 and the even more successful exhibition Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration, 1910–1940 created a new look on the Mall. Exhibitions in other museums began to contribute to the growing diversity. In 1985 the National Museum of American Art sponsored the exhibition Hidden Heritage, which presented the work of five nineteenth-century African American artists. In 1987 the National Museum of African Art moved from its original small Capitol Hill home to a large, beautifully appointed space in the new underground museum complex on the Mall. While this museum does not strictly deal with African American culture, many Black museum visitors and activists counted this as a further presence on the Mall for peoples of African descent. Within the last few years, important new collections have also been added. In 1987 the Duke Ellington collection was purchased from his son by special Congressional appropriation (it is now in the Archives Center at the National Museum of American History). Through the assiduous efforts of Ralph Rinzler, the Folkways Records collection came to the Folklife Program of the Smithsonian that same year. Together, these new exhibitions, new collections, and new members of the curatorial staff have begun to change some key aspects of the Smithsonian.

The Smithsonian is the largest museum complex in the world, and while some parts of it have diversified their staffs, exhibitions, collections, and audiences, other parts remain largely the same as they were twenty years earlier. The science museums—the National Museum of Natural History and the National Air and Space Museum—have been particularly resistant to change. In recent years, the various art museums of the Smithsonian have become a highly contested ground precisely because of these questions of the inclusion of minority artists' work in their collections, the hiring of minority professionals, the diversification of audiences and programming, and the widening of the frameworks within which art is presented. Broadly construed, there are five art museums at the Smithsonian: the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Gallery, the National Museum of American Art, the National Museum of African Art, the Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (concentrating on Asian art), and the Cooper-Hewitt Museum (in New York). Of these, the National Museum of American Art has a sizeable collection of work by Black artists, including many important pieces by the small number of well-known nineteenth-century African American artists, such as Robert Duncanson and Henry O. Tanner. Early on NMAA did not actively collect African American artists. However, in the late 1980s, energetic collecting and exhibiting began under director Elizabeth Broun.⁹⁷ In the late 1980s, intense debates within the Smithsonian art community centered around the question of inclusion and the issue of multiculturalism versus universalism. Pressure on the art museums to diversify has come from centrally constituted advisory groups at the Smithsonian such as the Committee for a Wider Audience and the Cultural Education Committee.

These debates inside the Smithsonian have taken place within the wider context of discussions in the national museum community. Several sessions at the June 1990 American Association of Museums conference in Chicago were devoted to formal debates about inclusion, diversity, and multiculturalism. Overall, the large art-museum and science-museum communities have changed much less than the history-museum community.

While many areas of the Smithsonian, particularly the science and art bureaus, reflect little change in exhibitions, collections, or staffs, other parts of the institution have been near the forefront of change, addressing questions of inclusion, cultural diversity, collections policy, and staff hiring. During the late 1980s a continuing struggle for inclusion and cultural diversity was elaborated in letters to the secretary

and directors from concerned scholars, in Congressional hearings, in advisory committee reports, and in the news media. While there is continuing resistance to these new ideas, at the same time there is a far greater recognition of the historical truth of American diversity and the need to represent it in our museums. Such a profound change reflects the extent to which the civil rights movement was able to shift the Smithsonian and other central American cultural institutions away from their long-held ethnocentric views of history.

CONCLUSIONS: THE MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR., HOLIDAY AND BEYOND

Perhaps the most symbolically significant preservation effort of the 1980s was the adoption of the holiday honoring Martin Luther King, Jr. After fifteen years of campaigning in support of the holiday by his widow, Coretta Scott King, singer-songwriter Stevie Wonder, Congressman John Conyers, and others, the bill was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in November 1983. Reagan did not want to sign the bill because he shared the reactionary sentiment that King was not an American hero and did not merit a tax-supported holiday. But the bill passed with such a large majority in the House and Senate that he realized a veto would have been overridden. Americans were witness to an extraordinary event: the first formal declaration of an African American national hero.

It is clear that King led an exemplary, essentially heroic life. Much as Frederick Douglass was emblematic of the abolitionist generation, so King was emblematic of the civil rights movement and its positive goals to many, perhaps most, Americans. Though plagued with certain human failings that have surfaced publicly in recent years, King seemed uniquely able to embody and articulate a distinctive blend of African American millennialism and European American rhetoric about justice and democratic rights articulated in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and other basic documents of American society. King's life, sermons, essays, and public speeches all reflected his belief in the transforming power of truth and truth-tellers. His rolling sermons and speeches illustrated his deep roots in the Black Baptist Church and confirmed African Americans' sense of their special role in American society. At the same time—and this is unusual for someone of his generation—King's oral and written works also conveyed the idea that the nation had a special destiny as well: to work

out the American experiment in democratic rights for all. King's "I Have a Dream" speech is simply the best known of his numerous efforts to weave together the African American mythos with that of the American mainstream. Perhaps not even during the Civil War did these mostly separate mythopoetic traditions come together as forcefully as they did during the civil rights era, in which many people willingly risked their lives to secure freedom. King's birthday became the first federal holiday to celebrate the life of a Black person in part because King's ideals, activist life, and martyrdom for the cause of freedom evoked not only African American but wider American sensibilities and values.

The King holiday represents a unique intersection between the interior African American and the exterior European American notions of the American past. From an American historical perspective, King's role in articulating the rationale for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and in embodying the freedom movement made him a leader in several of the key issues in American democratic history. The notion that all people were created free and equal is inscribed in the Declaration of Independence, yet the reality of the Revolutionary era included slaveholding, restrictions on women, and other elements that are today considered inequities. Two hundred years later, King catalyzed the struggle for freedom and justice that the founding fathers articulated but did not fully resolve. By referring to the founding fathers frequently in his sermons and speeches, King clearly aligned the modern civil rights movement with a wider notion of the American creed. Eventually King became a saint in the American civil religion; the holiday in his honor fully demonstrates that.

While King's life was meaningful for many European Americans, King and the freedom movement in general also had a galvanizing effect on other nonwhite Americans. Before the Black Consciousness Era, *ethnicity* as a term was considered colloquially to refer only to European immigrant groups. Nonwhite minority groups were defined only by their color or race, not by their distinctive cultural processes and products. But the movements of the Black Consciousness Era enlarged the understanding of the cultural significance of Black Americans. By the early 1970s, ethnic-heritage movements had emerged in Native American, Puerto Rican, Chicano, Chinese, and Japanese communities in the United States, among others. After the 1976 airing of the *Roots* miniseries, genealogical groups sprang up across America: many Americans had become more interested in learning about their family histories. King posited the concept of "somebodiness"—

the idea that people everywhere, whoever they are, can stand tall and be proud of their community. The Black Consciousness Era energized similar movements in other American communities. The culturally diverse universe we perceive today is a direct outcome of the force of that movement toward Black consciousness. Scholar-activists such as Frank Bonilla (the longtime head of *Aspira*, a national Puerto Rican organization) and John Kuo Wei Tchen (the co-founder of the Chinatown History Museum in New York) have written of the influence of Black activists on their own work.

King was also a major contributor to the African American mythos of a special role and destiny in America. King believed that truth and truth-telling supplied the force behind a nonviolent revolution that could change all societies. King often said: "The arc of the universe is long, but it bends towards justice."⁹⁸ King's statements reflect a mature African American millennialism in its assertion that freedom may be a long time coming, but eventually it will come, and that Black Americans will play a key role as catalysts toward that new and better future. In a sense the King holiday could be seen as the fulfillment of Carter G. Woodson's dream that, if rightly educated, Americans could come to see individual African Americans for the heroes and heroines they were.

All in all, the King holiday reflects how much the United States has changed in terms of symbolic race relations since 1955. In a fitting tribute to King's heroic life, his holiday represents a philosophy of American life that recognizes diversity but demands equal rights for all; it brings together a wide range of Americans who can unite under this symbolic umbrella to affirm progressive and positive values within American society. But while King's holiday evokes overlapping interior and exterior views about African Americans, it also brings out evidence of the continuing existence of separate views about the past. For example, celebrations of the King holiday in African American cultural institutions and those in state or federally funded public institutions are rather different. In Black schools and museums, the specific details of the modern civil rights movement and of King's participation in it are remembered. Civil rights activists often participate by talking about their memories of King as a man and a leader. Other activists may talk about the contributions of other leaders and foot soldiers, some of whom also paid the ultimate price. Among Black audiences, the fact of King's martyrdom is an important element in what makes his life heroic. For churchgoing Black audiences, King's death forms an explicit parallel with the sacrifice of Christ on the

cross. Even Black separatists who might disagree with King's goals view him as a heroic Black man who died resisting.

During the 1980s a critique of King's life has also come to play a role in Black cultural institutions. As King's memory has come to be celebrated by many non-Black Americans, some Black Americans have needed to continue to have a hero who is fully appreciated only by African Americans. Although Malcolm X was not seen as a leader of King's stature during his lifetime, in death he has loomed increasingly large as an interior hero of the civil rights era. By advocating self-defense, racial pride, and resistance as forms of manhood, Malcolm X symbolizes a continuing interior critique of American commitments to social justice. Black college students now wear T-shirts with Malcolm X's photo and quotes screen-printed on them. In many colleges and independent Black schools, Malcolm X celebrations are the culmination of extended Black History Month programming. However, the King holiday is celebrated in a wider range of Black institutions. For example, few Black churches have specific programming for Malcolm X's birthday, in part because he was not a Christian. Although Malcolm X is increasingly a hero to the young, the King holiday remains the most inclusive banner for the widest range of Black institutions.

In public institutions such as the Smithsonian, the celebration of the King holiday takes on an appropriately different tone. James Early, assistant secretary for public service, explained that the Smithsonian celebration sought "to utilize King's ecumenical and social-change philosophy to shed light on contemporary issues." Language such as this speaks directly to the wide array of Americans who felt themselves and their communities to have been influenced by the strategies and goals of the African American movement for civil rights and integration.⁹⁹ In the years since the holiday was instituted, the Smithsonian's celebrations have brought in speakers such as Smithsonian regent Jeannine Smith Clark, who spoke in 1987 (that year's celebration also featured a performance by Sweet Honey in the Rock), Frank Bonilla from the New York City Center for Puerto Rican Studies (1988), John Kuo Wei Tchen from the Chinatown History Museum (1989), Vine Deloria, author of various books on Native American history (1990), and Johnetta Cole, president of Spelman College (1991).¹⁰⁰ The views these speakers offered of King's importance emphasized an active sense of struggle and a sense that King's mission can be fulfilled today in encountering the problems of our present. The variety of speakers underscores the cultural diversity beyond the Black-white dichotomy that many African Americans see as primary.

Such public celebrations accentuate the universal aspects of King's life and his dedication to the larger ideals of truth and justice.

This kind of ecumenical public response is rather different from celebrations in Black-controlled institutions. There King's distinctiveness as an African American is decisively important, especially as a role model to hard-pressed Black youth. Some African Americans attending the Smithsonian celebrations have expressed dismay that this distinctively Black King was missing from such culturally diverse presentations. In a sense, the variations on the King holiday embody the issues facing historically Black private cultural institutions, historically white private ones, and all public cultural institutions in the 1990s. How to be culturally diverse while recognizing the uniqueness of distinctive sociocultural experiences is the issue. Can the African American mythos of a unique role and special destiny be praised appropriately at the same time as a wider group of Americans observes only those aspects of the African American story that intertwine with the history of the larger society?

In 1989 Representatives John Lewis and Mickey Leland introduced separate bills to found a national African American museum at the Smithsonian. This was not the first time a congressionally approved national institution for African Americans had been proposed. Through the efforts of Louis Stokes in the House and Howard Metzenbaum in the Senate, the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center in Wilberforce, Ohio, was authorized and opened in 1987. Built on the old campus of Wilberforce College, a historically Black Methodist institution, and near Central State University, also a historically Black college, this museum was at the heart of a key, longstanding Northern Black community. The Lewis and Leland bills touched off a spirited and ongoing debate about the rationale for such a museum, the role of the Smithsonian in such an institution, and the relationship of such a museum to the older Black preservationist institutions. Such questions are primary in the ongoing debate about the placement of a federally funded African American museum on the Mall. As the King holiday demonstrates, there are overlapping interior and exterior views of the African American past, yet these viewpoints contain a number of somewhat contradictory interpretations. Questions about a new museum's governance, funding, location, collections, and relations to preexisting Black cultural organizations devolve back to these central differences between interior and exterior views of the African American past. There is little agreement about how best to preserve, analyze, and interpret the mythos, memory, and history of

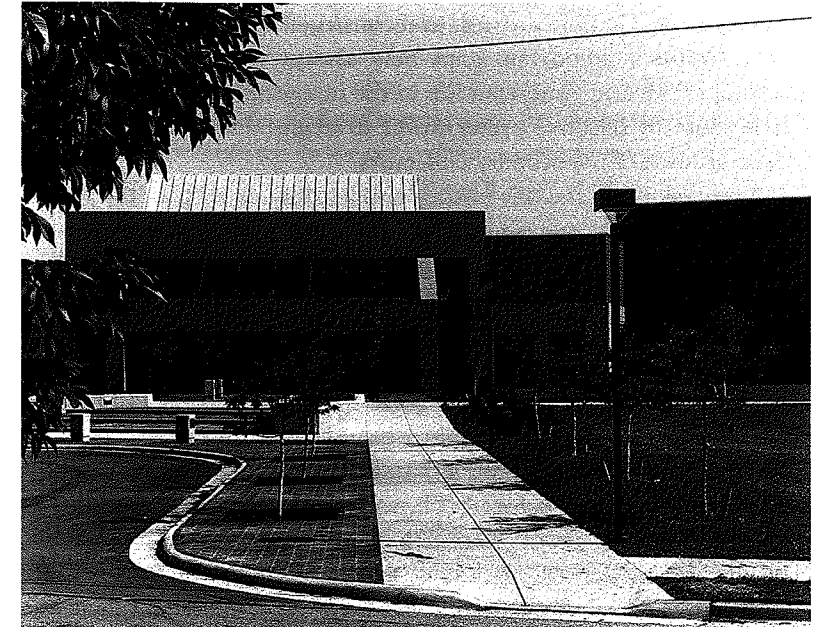


Fig. 17-12. National Afro-American Museum, Wilberforce, Ohio. Photo courtesy National Afro-American Museum.

African Americans and the distinctive historical role they have played in American society.¹⁰¹

As this essay demonstrates, various interpretations of the African American past have resulted in numerous kinds of collections and a complex preservation history. Some preservationists focused on collecting documents, books, fine arts, and artifacts. Others concentrated on preserving a record of performance styles, musical traditions, and oral forms. While African Americans have been at the forefront of most preservation activities, European Americans have also contributed important points of view and amassed significant collections. Those who have contributed to the development of these interpretations or who have controlled certain institutions have played decisive roles in the documentation of that past. Our generation inherits the large collections of documents and books, small collections of fine arts, a sizeable number of recordings from the past one hundred years, and a smaller number of material culture artifacts. In every sense, these collections are the resources upon which we build our own interpretations of the past. This long and tangled history of pres-

ervation has resulted in the foregrounding of certain views and made other views much more difficult to reconstruct. While there are significant collections, important gaps may always remain in our understanding of African American life in the nineteenth and earlier centuries because of selective preservation strategies and limited financial means of some of the primary collectors.

Our task is to take this history into account as we plan the preservation strategies of our time. While the history of African American preservation efforts is quite long, and while there are important collections of nineteenth-century origin in both large and small institutions, we have a strong mandate to preserve twentieth-century African American culture. As we prepare to move into the twenty-first century, now is the time to build the great collections of oral and musical culture, art, and artifacts that future generations of scholars will use to understand our own era. While we should save all that we can now identify as being from before 1900, we have a special responsibility to create collections about twentieth-century African American life. These materials are still abundant, and numerous earlier generations are still alive to be interviewed about their experiences and their particular visions of what being Black meant in their time. We cannot but lament what was not saved earlier. Knowing that history, we are accountable to future generations for what we do today. Learning from the strategies of the past, it is critical to see that varying and sometimes conflicting strategies of interpretation and collection are necessary in order to preserve as wide a range of cultural memory as possible. Being unable to predict the interpretations future scholars will develop does not relieve us of the responsibility of collecting in our present anything that has resonance for us. In this way, the lives, history, and culture of African Americans of our own era will be richly documented, while our collections will still be reflective of our generation's notions of the African American past.

NOTES

The author wishes to thank Paul Ruffins for his commentary and his unfailing support.

1. Over time, people of African descent within the United States have changed how they wished to be referred to. In the 1700s and earlier, *sons and daughters of Africa* was a common appellation. Consequently, independent churches formed during that era often have a name such as the African Meth-

odist Episcopal Church. By the 1830s, another designation became common: *Colored Americans* and *People of Color*. For example, Frederick Douglass often referred to "peoples of color" in his speeches. However, during these same years, *Afro-American* was often used in newspapers and other published work. By the late 1800s, *Colored* was the most frequent name used, in both oral and written language. In the early 1900s, a younger generation of people felt that *Negro* was a term that connoted a new sense of dignity and pride. For years, African American activists campaigned for white publishers to capitalize the word *Negro*. This was symbolically achieved in the 1940s, when the *New York Times* officially changed its style sheet. During the 1960s, another younger generation felt that *Black* or *Black Americans* was a term that connoted greater racial pride and identification. In the 1990s, *African American* has become more popular, coming almost full circle to the 1700s.

Because these name changes reflect significant shifts in the cultural discourse among African Americans, in this article I have used all ethnic self-designations, all capitalized, at the appropriate historical period.

2. For more information about the enslavement of American Indians and the use of slavery as punishment for whites in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, see Peter Wood, *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 Through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: Knopf, 1974), and Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes Toward the Negro, 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968).

3. For the work of earlier African American scholars, see the many works of W.E.B. Du Bois, including *Black Reconstruction in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1935); *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study, Together with a Special Report on Domestic Service*, by Isabel Eaton (Philadelphia: Publications of the University of Pennsylvania, Series in Political Economy and Public Law no. 14, 1899); *The Suppression of the African Slave-Trade to the United States of America, 1638-1870*, Harvard Historical Series, vol. 1 (New York: Longmans, Green, 1896); *The World and Africa: An Inquiry into the Part Which Africa Has Played in World History* (New York: Viking, 1947). Other works include Lorenzo Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1942); Rayford W. Logan, *The Negro in American Life and Thought: The Nadir, 1877-1901* (New York: Dial, 1954); Roland McConnell, *The Negro in North Carolina Since Reconstruction* (New York: New York University Press, 1949); Roland McConnell, *Negro Troops in Antebellum Louisiana: A History of the Battalion of Free Men of Color* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968); Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1961); Letitia Woods-Brown, *Free Negroes in the District of Columbia, 1790-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972); Letitia Woods-Brown and Elsie M. Lewis, *Washington from Banneker to Douglass, 1791-1970* (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1971); Letitia Woods-Brown and Elsie M. Lewis, *Washington in the New Era,*

1870–1970 (Washington, D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, 1972); George Washington Williams, *History of the Negro Race, 1619–1880*, 2 vols. (New York: Arno Press, 1968 [1883]); George Washington Williams, *A History of Negro Troops in the War of the Rebellion, 1861–1865, Preceded by a Review of the Military Service of Negroes in Ancient and Modern Times* (New York: Harper, 1888). See also the many works of Carter G. Woodson, including *A Century of Negro Migration* (Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1918); *The Education of the Negro Prior to 1861* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1915); *Free Negro Heads of Families in the United States in 1830* (Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1925); *The MisEducation of the Negro*, ed. Charles H. Wesley and Thelma D. Perry (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1969); and *The Negro in Our History*, 4th ed. (Washington, D.C.: Associated Publishers, 1927).

4. For bibliographies of more recent research on Afro-American history, see Janet Woods, *Research Facilities and Afro-American Documents* (Washington, D.C.: AHGGS, 1987); Janet Simms, comp., *The Progress of Afro-American Women: A Selected Bibliography and Resource Guide* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1980); and National Museum of American History, *Race and Revolution: African-Americans, 1770-1830* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1987).

5. In this article, the phrase “historically white” is used to refer to institutions or organizations that have throughout their history been largely or wholly staffed by, funded by, and/or provided services to Americans of European descent. Such usage is patterned on the designation of colleges and universities as “historically Black.”

6. Institutions that have important collections of African American materials include the Pennsylvania Historical Society (Philadelphia), the New York Historical Society, the Massachusetts Historical Society (Boston), the New Haven (Conn.) Historical Society, the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (Boston), Colonial Williamsburg, the Houghton Collection and Widener Library of Harvard University, the John Brown Library of Brown University (Providence), and the Beinecke Library of Yale University.

7. John Kinard, “Preserving the Black Patrimony,” speech delivered at the African American Museums Association conference, Boston, Massachusetts, September 1988. Kinard was a leading spokesperson of the Black museum movement. His statements in Boston directly related to the notion of an African American museum on the Mall in Washington, D.C. Though his position later shifted on the question of a new museum, in September 1988 Kinard was opposed to such an idea and proposed in this speech that a \$50 million trust fund be set up to support the “Black patrimony.”

8. *Webster's Third New International Dictionary* (Chicago: Merriam, 1966). For more on the distinction between the past and interpretations of it, see Fath

Davis Ruffins, “The Exhibition as Form,” *Museum News* 64, no. 1 (1985), 54–59.

9. Dorothy Porter, “Organized Educational Activities of Negro Literary Societies, 1828–1846,” *Journal of Negro Education* 5 (1936), 555–76; Dorothy Porter, comp., *Early Negro Writing, 1760–1837* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971).

10. See Jeffrey C. Stewart, “Introduction,” in *Narrative of Sojourner Truth* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), and Deborah Gray White, *Ar'n't I a Woman? Female Slaves in the Plantation South* (New York: Norton, 1985).

11. New work analyzing Black autobiographies includes William L. Andrews, *To Tell a Free Story: The First Century of Afro-American Autobiography, 1769–1865* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1986); *Sisters of the Spirit: Three Black Women's Autobiographies of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. William L. Andrews (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984); *The Slave's Narrative*, ed. Charles T. Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); the multivolume *Schomburg Library of Nineteenth Century Black Women Writers* (New York: Oxford University Press); and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., *The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988).

12. See Andrew L. Williams, “A Monumental Effort,” *Upstate Magazine, Rochester Sunday Democrat and Chronicle*, 3 June 1990. For more information on the preservation of the Douglass home, see Jacqueline A. Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson and the Movement to Promote Black History* (Ph.D. diss., University of Rochester, 1983). Additional information was collected in the author's 1984 interviews in Washington with staff of the National Park Service, including Tyra Walker, curator of the Frederick Douglass Home, and Marilyn Nickels, historian for Capitol Parks East. See also Fath Davis Ruffins, “The Historic House Museum as History Text: The Frederick Douglass Home at Cedar Hill,” paper delivered to the Museum Education Program, George Washington University, Washington, D.C., 9 Oct. 1984. For general works on Frederick Douglass, see Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Boston: De Wolfe Fiske, 1892), and his *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Miller, Orton, and Mulligan, 1855). See also Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Slave and Citizen: The Life of Frederick Douglass* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980); Dickson J. Preston, *Young Frederick Douglass: The Maryland Years* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); and Waldo E. Martin, Jr., *The Mind of Frederick Douglass* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

13. Byron Rushing, “Black Schools in White Boston, 1800–1860,” in James W. Fraser, Henry L. Allen, and Nancy Barnes, eds., *From Common School to*

Magnet School: Selected Essays in the History of Boston Schools (Boston: Trustees of the Public Library of the City of Boston, 1979). For more information on William C. Nell, see his works: "Colored American Patriots," *The Anglo-African* 1 (1860), 30–31; *The Colored Patriots of the American Revolution, with Sketches of Several Distinguished Colored Persons* (Boston: R. F. Wallcut, 1855); and "Triumph of the Equal School Rights in Boston" (Boston: R. F. Wallcut, 1856). This last is a pamphlet containing the proceedings of the Presentation Meeting held in Boston on 17 December 1855, and is available at the Moorland-Spangarn Research Center, Howard University.

14. The international slave trade was banned in the United States in 1808, by an act of Congress. While a number of Africans continued to be brought into the United States illegally until the eve of the Civil War, the vast majority of Africans were brought to the United States before 1808. For more information on the importation of Africans, see Robert Anstey, "The Volume of the North American Slave Carrying Trade from Africa, 1761–1810," *Revue française d'histoire d'outre-mer* 12, nos. 226–27 (1975), 47–66; Philip Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969); J. E. Inikori, "Measuring the Atlantic Slave Trade: An Assessment of Curtin and Anstey," *Journal of African History* 17, no. 4 (1976), 607–27; James Rawley, *The Transatlantic Slave Trade: A History* (New York: Norton, 1981).

15. Sylvia M. Jacobs, *The African Nexus: Black American Perspectives on the European Partitioning of Africa, 1880–1920* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1981); Lillie M. Johnson, "Black American Missionaries in Colonial Africa, 1900–1940" (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1981).

16. For more information on William Sheppard, see Harold G. Cureau, "William H. Sheppard, Missionary to the Congo and Collector of African Art," *Journal of Negro History* 67, no. 4 (1982), 340–52; Larryetta L. Schall, "William H. Sheppard: Fighter for African Rights," in Keith L. Schall, ed., *Stony the Road: Chapters in the History of Hampton Institute* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1977); and William H. Sheppard, *Presbyterian Pioneers in Congo* (Richmond: Presbyterian Committee of Publication, 1917).

17. Jeanne Zeidler, director of the University Museum, Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia, telephone interview with author, 14 Dec. 1984.

18. The term "Black Victorians" was originated by Jeffrey Stewart. For more information on this group, see Jeffrey C. Stewart, "Alain Locke and Georgia Douglas Johnson: Washington Patrons of Afro-American Modernism," in David McAleavey, ed., *Washington and Washington Writing* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Washington Area Studies, George Washington University, 1986).

19. George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817–1914* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971); Jordan, *White Over Black*; Guy C. McElroy, *Facing*

History: The Black Image in American Art, 1710–1940 (San Francisco: Bedford Arts, 1990).

20. For more on theories of race, see Thomas F. Gossett, *Race: The History of an Idea in America* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1963); George W. Stocking, *Race, Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1968); and George W. Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1987).

21. For more on Social Darwinism, see John Higham, *Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860–1925* (New York: Atheneum, 1973), and his *Send These to Me: Jews and Other Immigrants in Urban America* (New York: Atheneum, 1975).

22. The Smithsonian is the earliest American museum still in operation. Charles Willson Peale's museum was founded somewhat earlier, but eventually failed; his son Raphaelle Peale founded a successor museum in Baltimore.

23. In recent years, the study of re-presentation in museums has been energized by a number of new analyses, especially from scholars trained in anthropology, archaeology, folklore, art, and history. Some relevant works on this subject include: Susan Porter Benson, Steven Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *Presenting the Past: Critical Perspectives on History and the Public* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); James Clifford, "On Ethnographic Surrealism," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 23, no. 4 (1981), 539–64; Daniel Defert, "The Collection of the World: Accounts of Voyages from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries," *Dialectical Anthropology* 7, no. 1 (1982), 11–20; Peter Gathercole and David Lowenthal, eds., *The Politics of the Past* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990); Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936," *Social Text* 11 (1984–85); Neil Harris, "Museums, Merchandising, and Popular Taste: The Struggle for Influence," in Ian M. G. Quimby, ed., *Material Culture and the Study of American Life* (New York: Norton, 1978); Curtis T. Hinsley, "The World as Marketplace: Commodification of the Exotic at the World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, 1893," in Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine, eds., *Exhibiting Cultures* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); André Malraux, *Museum Without Walls*, trans. Stuart Gilbert and Francis Price (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967); Roderick Nash, "The Exporting and Importing of Nature: Nature-Appreciation as a Commodity, 1850–1980," *Perspectives in American History* 12 (1979), 517–60; Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3d ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982); and Ruffins, "The Exhibition as Form."

24. The Bureau of American Ethnology tilted against the general activities of the United States National Museum, but ultimately was unsuccessful in changing the collecting trends of the Smithsonian.

25. The collection of Louis Agassiz eventually became part of the Peabody Museum at Harvard University. The National Museum's collections are now part of the Department of Anthropology in the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. For more information on this, see Michael L. Blakely, "American Nationality and Ethnicity in the Depicted Past," in Peter Gathercole and David Lowenthal, eds., *The Politics of the Past* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), and Michael L. Blakely, "Skull Doctors: Intrinsic Social and Political Bias in the History of American Physical Anthropology," *Critique of Anthropology* 7, no. 2 (1987), 7-35.
26. Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, "The Universal Survey Museum," *Art History* 3, no. 4 (1980).
27. This phrase is used by the Library of Congress in most of its official guides. For more information on Ainsworth C. Spofford, see *Librarians of Congress, 1802-1974* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1977).
28. For more information on Daniel Alexander Payne Murray and other early African American librarians, see E. J. Josey and Ann Allen Shockley, eds., *Handbook of Black Librarianship* (Littleton, Co.: Libraries Unlimited, 1977). See also E. J. Josey, ed., *The Black Librarian in America* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1970).
29. Deborah Newman Ham, curator of the Afro-American Collection, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, interview with author, 7 Mar. 1990.
30. Annette L. Phinazee, ed., *The Black Librarian in the Southeast* (Durham: School of Library Science, North Carolina Central University, 1980).
31. Brown served under the first three secretaries of the Smithsonian: Joseph Henry, 1846-1878; Spencer F. Baird, 1878-1887; and Samuel P. Langley, 1887-1906. There is material concerning Brown in the Smithsonian Archives and in the Washingtonia section of the Martin Luther King Library, Washington, D.C. For more information on Solomon Brown, see "Kind Regards of S. G. Brown": *Selected Poems of Solomon G. Brown*, comp. Louise Daniel Hutchinson and Gail Sylvia Lowe (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1983). Other material came from Louise Daniel Hutchinson, head of the Research Dept., Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, in an interview with Jeffrey Stewart and the author, 13 Nov. 1984.
32. For more information on the ideas that white abolitionists held about African Americans, see George Fredrickson, *The Inner Civil War: Northern Intellectuals and the Crisis of the Union* (New York: Harper and Row, 1965).
33. For more on the Black Victorians and examples of their lives, see Irving Bartlett, *From Slave to Citizen: The Story of the Negro in Rhode Island* (Providence: Urban League of Greater Providence, 1984); Stephen Birmingham, *Certain People: A Black Elite* (New York: Little, Brown, 1977); Du

- Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro*; James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Black Bostonians: Family Life and Community Struggle in the Antebellum North* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1979); Louise Daniel Hutchinson, *Anna J. Cooper: A Voice from the South* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1981); Gail Lumet Buckley, *The Hornes: An American Family* (New York: Knopf, 1986); Kenneth R. Manning, *Black Apollo of Science: The Life of Ernest Everett Just* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983); and Gilbert Ware, *William Hastie: Grace Under Pressure* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984). For more on the origins of Black Victorians, see William D. Piersen, *Black Yankees: The Development of an Afro-American Subculture in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988).
34. For more information on the Great Migration, see St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Life in a Northern City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1945); Florette Henry, *Black Migration: Movement North, 1900-1920* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1975); Claude McKay, *Harlem: Negro Metropolis* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1968); Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto: Negro New York, 1890-1930* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); Roi Ottley and William J. Weatherby, eds., *The Negro in New York: An Informal Social History, 1626-1940* (New York: Praeger, 1969); Allan H. Spear, *Black Chicago: The Making of a Negro Ghetto, 1890-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); William M. Tuttle, Jr., *Race Riot: Chicago in the Red Summer of 1919* (New York: Atheneum, 1970).
35. I am indebted to Jeffrey Stewart for many conversations over a number of years about Alain Locke and the circle of Black intellectuals, artists, and activists of the Harlem Renaissance. See Jeffrey C. Stewart, *A Biography of Alain Locke: Philosopher of the Harlem Renaissance* (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1979).
36. *The Critical Temper of Alain Locke: A Selection of His Essays on Art and Culture*, ed. Jeffrey C. Stewart (New York: Garland, 1983); Jeffrey C. Stewart, ed., *Race Context: A Study of the Theory and Practice of Race in Five Lectures* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1992).
37. Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon, 1978).
38. For more information on the Harlem Renaissance, see Jervis Anderson, *This Was Harlem: A Cultural Portrait, 1900-1950* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1981); Arna Bontemps, ed., *The Harlem Renaissance Remembered* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1972); Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: William Morrow, 1967); David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Knopf, 1981); Nathan Irvin Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971); and Nathan Irvin Huggins, ed., *Voices from the Harlem Renaissance* (New York:

Oxford University Press, 1976). On cultural strategies, see Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Modernism and the Harlem Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); David Levering Lewis, "Parallels and Divergences: Assimilationist Strategies of Black American and Jewish Elites, 1910-1930," *Journal of American History* 71, no. 3 (1984), 543-64; and Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, 2 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988). Histories touching on the recording of "race records" in the 1920s are numerous. A great introduction to this literature appears in Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans* (New York: Norton, 1971).

39. The discussion of the relationship of modern art in Europe and America to art forms created in Asia, Africa, and Oceania has a long and tangled history. For a detailed discussion of this, see William Rubin, ed., *"Primitivism" in 20th-Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1984).

40. The Studio Museum in Harlem, *Harlem Renaissance: Art of Black America* (New York: Studio Museum in Harlem, 1987); Gary A. Reynolds and Beryl J. Wright, *Against the Odds: African American Artists and the Harmon Foundation* (Newark, N.J.: Newark Museum, 1989).

41. Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson and the Movement to Promote Black History*; Jacqueline Goggin, "Banquet Address," Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society conference, Washington, D.C., May 1990. I am indebted to Jacqueline Goggin for numerous conversations about Woodson and his work.

42. See the works of Carter G. Woodson, including *The African Background Outlined* (Washington, D.C.: Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, 1936); *African Heroes and Heroines* (Washington, D.C.: Associated, 1939); and *African Myths Together with Proverbs* (Washington, D.C.: Associated, 1928).

43. Thomas Battle, director, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C., interview with author, 19 Dec. 1984; Thomas Battle, "Research Centers Document the Black Experience," *History News* 36, no. 2 (Feb. 1981), 10-11; Dorothy Burnett Porter, "A Library on the Negro," *American Scholar* 7 (1938), 115-16; Dorothy Burnett Porter, "Library Sources for the Study of Negro Life and History," *Journal of Negro Education* 5 (1936), 232-44; Michael Winston, "Moorland-Spingarn Research Center: A Past Revisited, A Present Reclaimed," *New Directions* (newsletter published by the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University), summer 1974. For more information on Jesse B. Moorland, see Jesse B. Moorland, *The Demand and the Supply of Increased Efficiency in the Negro Ministry* (New York: Arno, 1969). See also "The J. E. Moorland Foundation of the University Library," *Howard University Record* 10, no. 1 (1916), and Joseph H. Reason, "University Libraries," *Howard University Bulletin* 36 (15 Nov. 1957), 10-17.

44. Thomas Battle, director, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C., interview with author, 19 Dec. 1984

45. Harriet Jackson Scarupa, "The Energy-Charged Life of Dorothy Porter Wesley," *New Directions* 7, no. 1 (1990); Thomas Battle, director, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Washington, D.C., interview with author, 19 Dec. 1984.

46. Elinor Des Verney Sinnette, W. Paul Coates, and Thomas C. Battle, eds., *Black Bibliophiles and Collectors: Preservers of Black History* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1990); Elinor Des Verney Sinnette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg, Black Bibliophile and Collector: A Biography* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989). Sinnette's book on Schomburg contains a great deal of information about the circle of collectors, bibliophiles, and Masons who made up the nucleus of Black collectors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and about the various cultural institutions they founded. Another work focused on a single individual but with a wide range of general information is Goggin, *Carter G. Woodson and the Movement to Promote Black History*.

47. Sinnette, *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg*; Howard Dodson, chief of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox, and Tilden Foundations, telephone interview with author, 21 Dec. 1984.

48. Edmund Barry Gaither, "Survey of Afro-American Works in the Holdings of Historically Black Colleges and Universities" (Boston: National Center of Afro-American Artists, 1990).

49. For more information on Marcus Garvey, see Randall K. Burkett, *Garveyism as a Religious Movement: The Institutionalization of a Black Civil Religion* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1978); Randall K. Burkett, *Black Redemption: Churchmen Speak for the Garvey Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1978); E. David Cronon, *Black Moses: The Story of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1955); Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, 7 vols. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983-); Tony Martin, *Race First: The Ideological and Organizational Struggles of Marcus Garvey and the Universal Negro Improvement Association* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1976); Wilson J. Moses, *The Golden Age of Black Nationalism, 1850-1925* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1978); and Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986). For connections between Garvey and succeeding movements, see Horace Campbell, *Rasta and Resistance from Marcus Garvey to Walter Rodney* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1987); and Edwin S. Redkey, *Black Exodus: Black Nationalist and Back-to-Africa Movements, 1890-1910* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969).

50. Peter Thomas Bartis, *A History of the Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress: The First Fifty Years* (Ph.D. diss., University of Pennsylvania, 1982). All information about the history of the Archive at the Library of Congress and the work of the Lomaxes was gleaned from this dissertation.
51. Bartis, *A History of the Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress*.
52. See also Zora Neale Hurston, *I Love Myself When I Am Laughing*, ed. Alice Walker (Old Westbury, N.Y.: Feminist Press, 1979), and Zora Neale Hurston, *Mules and Men* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).
53. On "niggerati," see Robert Hemenway, *Zora Neale Hurston: A Literary Biography* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1977), 43-44, 56, 70, 121. On Sterling Brown, see Sterling A. Brown, Arthur P. Davis, and Ulysses Lee, *The Negro Caravan: Writings by American Negroes* (New York: Dryden, 1941), and Sterling A. Brown, *Southern Road* (Boston: Beacon, 1974 [1932]). For more information on Paul Robeson, see Rebecca Larsen, *Paul Robeson: Hero Before His Time* (New York: Franklin Watts, 1989); Martin Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: Knopf, 1988); Paul Robeson, *Here I Stand* (Boston: Beacon, 1971); and Susan Robeson, *The Whole World in His Hands: A Pictorial Biography of Paul Robeson* (Secaucus, N.J.: Citadel, 1981).
54. Huddie Ledbetter, a.k.a. Leadbelly, is a legendary figure in the history of the blues in America. For more information on Ledbetter's place in American musical history, see Southern, *Music of Black Americans*. See also Samuel B. Charters, *The Country Blues* (New York: Rinehart, 1959); David Evans, *Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in Folk Blues* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); William Ferris, *Blues from the Delta* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor/Doubleday, 1978); Albert Murray, *Stomping the Blues* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976); and Robert Palmer, *Deep Blues* (New York: Penguin, 1986).
55. Harold Courlander, *Negro Folk Music, U.S.A.* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963); Harold Courlander, *Negro Songs from Alabama*, 2d ed. (New York: Oak Publications, 1963).
56. Anthony Seeger, director, Folkways Records Archives, Smithsonian Institution, interview with author, May 1990; Ralph Rinzler, assistant secretary for public service emeritus, Smithsonian Institution, interview with author, 14 Sept. 1990. Rinzler, who had known Asch for years, was instrumental in securing the collection for the Smithsonian Institution.
57. Ralph Rinzler, assistant secretary for public service emeritus, Smithsonian Institution, interviews with author, 26 June 1990 and 14 Sept. 1990.
58. For more information on the Federal Writers' Project, see Bartis, *A History of the Archive of Folk Song at the Library of Congress*; *Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery*, ed. B. A. Botkin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1945); George P. Rawick, ed., *The American Slave: A*

- Composite Autobiography*, 19 vols. (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1972) and later supplements published under the same title in 1977 and 1979.
59. Historians who have used the Federal Writers' Project works include Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon, 1974); Herbert Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Vintage, 1976); and Lawrence W. Levine, *Black Culture and Black Consciousness: Afro-American Folk Thought from Slavery to Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).
60. National Archives of the United States, *General Information Leaflet*, no. 1 (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1986); Deborah Newman Ham, curator of the Afro-American Collection, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, interview with author, 7 Mar. 1990.
61. Deborah Newman Ham, curator of the Afro-American Collection, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, telephone interview with author, 22 June 1990. Newman Ham was formerly an archivist at the National Archives, working on Afro-American materials. She produced several important published collections guides, and was particularly interested in the history of Black participation in the federal government in the twentieth century.
62. Michael Wallace, "Visiting the Past: History Museums in the United States" and "Reflections on the History of Historic Preservation," in Susan Porter Benson, Steven Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *Presenting the Past: Critical Perspectives on History and the Public* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986); Rex Ellis, vice president for African American interpretation, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, telephone interview with author, 12 Oct. 1990.
63. Portia James, *The Real McCoy: African-American Invention and Innovation, 1619-1930* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989).
64. Judith Wragg Chase, *Afro-American Art and Craft* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1971). I am also indebted to Chase for a number of detailed conversations we had about the history of her collection when I was in the process of negotiating loans from the Old Slave Mart Museum to the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, for the exhibition *After the Revolution: Everyday Life in America, 1780-1800*. These conversations took place at the museum and in her home in Charleston and by phone during 1984 and 1985.
65. There is an extensive literature on what is African in African American life; it has grown dramatically in the last fifteen years. However, an early scholar interested in these questions was Melville Herskovits. For more information, see Walter Jackson, "Melville Herskovits and the Search for Afro-American Culture," in George W. Stocking, Jr., ed., *Malinowski, Rivers, Benedict and Others: Essays on Culture and Personality*, *History of Anthropology*, vol. 4 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), and James W.

Fernandez, "Tolerance in a Repugnant World and Other Dilemmas in the Cultural Relativism of Melville J. Herskovits," *Ethos* 18, no. 2 (1990). Herskovits's books include *Acculturation: A Study of Culture Contact* (Gloucester, Mass.: P. Smith, 1958); *The American Negro: A Study of Racial Crossing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964 [1928]); *Dahomey: An Ancient West African Kingdom*, 2 vols. (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1967 [1938]); *Life in a Haitian Valley* (New York: Knopf, 1937); *The Myth of the Negro Past* (New York: Harper, 1941); with Frances S. Herskovits, *Rebel Destiny: Among the Bush Negroes of Dutch Guiana* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1934); and with Frances S. Herskovits, *Suriname Folk-lore* (New York: AMS, 1969 [1936]). Important articles include his contribution to Alain Locke's special issue of *Survey Graphic* on "The New Negro" in 1925, and "What Has Africa Given America?" *New Republic* 84, no. 1083 (1935).

66. The history of the civil rights movement is voluminous. Some important volumes include: Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years, 1954-1963* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981); Septima Poinsette Clark with Le Gette Blythe, *Echo in My Soul* (Boston: E. P. Dutton, 1962); James Farmer, *Lay Bare the Heart: An Autobiography of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Arbor House, 1985); James Forman, *The Making of Black Revolutionaries: A Personal Account* (New York: Macmillan, 1972); David J. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference* (New York: William Morrow, 1986); Martin Luther King, Jr., *Stride Towards Freedom: A Leader of His People Tells the Montgomery Story* (New York: Harper, 1958); Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964); Mary King, *Freedom Song: A Personal Story of the 1960s Civil Rights Movement* (New York: William Morrow, 1987); Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown vs. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Knopf, 1976); Genna Rae MacNeil, *Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983); James Meredith, *Three Years in Mississippi* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966); Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: Free Press, 1984); Howell Raines, *My Soul is Rested: Movement Days in the Deep South Remembered* (New York: Putnam, 1977); Wyatt Tee Walker, "Somebody's Calling My Name": *Black Sacred Music and Social Change* (Valley Forge, Penn.: Judson, 1979); and Juan Williams, *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965* (New York: Viking, 1987). See also the 1987 six-part video series *Eyes on the Prize*, produced by Henry Hampton and distributed by Blackside.

67. *Profile of Black Museums* (Washington, D.C.: African American Museums Association, 1988).

68. For more information, see Bob Blauner, *Black Lives, White Lives: Three Decades of Race Relations in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

69. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*; see also David Garrow, "Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Spirit of Leadership" and Cornel West, "The Religious Foundations of the Thought of Martin Luther King," both in Peter J. Albert and Ronald Hoffman, eds., *We Shall Overcome: Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Black Freedom Struggle* (New York: Pantheon, 1990).

70. During the 1970s and 1980s, feminist and womanist critiques of the civil rights movement and the Black Power movement emerged. Key texts in this debate include Toni Cade Bambara, comp., *The Black Woman* (New York: New American Library, 1970); Toni Cade Bambara, *Gorilla, My Love* (New York: Random House, 1972); Toni Cade Bambara, *The Seabirds Are Still Alive* (New York: Random House, 1977); Toni Cade Bambara, *The Salt Eaters* (New York: Random House, 1980); Lorraine Bethel and Barbara Smith, "The Black Women's Issue," *Conditions* 5 (1978); Angela Y. Davis, *Women, Race, and Class* (New York: Random House, 1981); Bell Hooks, *Ain't I a Woman: Black Women and Feminism* (Boston: South End Press, 1981); Gloria T. Hall, Patricia Bell Scott, and Barbara Smith, eds., *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave* (Boston: Kitchen Table Press, 1982); Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (New York: Kitchen Table-Women of Color Press, 1983); Barbara Smith, *Toward a Black Feminist Criticism* (New York: Out and Out, 1980); Michele Wallace, *Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman* (New York: Dial, 1979).

71. For more on the Black aesthetic, see Conference of Negro Writers, *The American Negro Writer and His Roots, Selected Papers* (New York: American Society of African Culture, 1960); Baker, *Blues, Ideology and Afro-American Literature*; Houston A. Baker, Jr., *The Journey Back: Issues in Black Literature and Criticism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980); Dexter Fisher and Robert B. Stepto, eds., *Afro-American Literature: The Reconstruction of Instruction* (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1979); Addison Gayle, Jr., comp., *The Black Aesthetic* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971); Stephen Henderson, *Understanding the New Black Poetry: Black Speech and Black Music as Poetic References* (New York: William Morrow, 1973); Stephen Henderson, "Saturation: Progress Report on a Theory of Black Poetry," *Black World* (Oct. 1972); LeRoi Jones, *Blues People: Negro Music in White America* (New York: William Morrow, 1963); LeRoi Jones and Larry Neal, eds., *Black Fire: An Anthology of Afro-American Writing* (New York: William Morrow, 1968); Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Reading Black: Essays in the Criticism of African, Caribbean, and Black American Literature* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Africana Studies and Research Center, Cornell University, 1976); and National Conference of Afro-American Writers, *Theme:*

The Image of Black Folk in American Literature (Washington, D.C.: Howard University, 1974).

72. For more on Reconstruction and its rhetorical relationship to the modern civil rights movement, see Vincent Harding, *The Other American Revolution* (Los Angeles: Center for Afro-American Studies, University of California), and Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988).

73. Though there is not space in this article to detail it, the slogan "Black Power" had multiple expressions and meanings, particularly in relationship to the concepts of freedom and integration. In some instances, it may have meant absolute separation; in others, it spanned the spectrum from community-based control of schools to Black capitalism. Those who wanted to emigrate to Africa represented yet another interpretation. Another interpretation motivated a group of Yoruba-influenced African Americans to establish a village in Sheldon, South Carolina. Somewhat similar in rhetoric to other counter-cultural communes founded in the rural South in the 1960s and 1970s such as The Farm, the Oyotunji Village community is meant to be a separate Black nation in which there is strict adherence to an interpretation of a West African culture in the twentieth century. See Carl Monroe Hunt, *Oyotunji Village: The Yoruba Movement in America* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1979). These variations on the theme of separation and integration—each with its own literature and specific rhetoric—are critical in the history of Black cultural institutions in the Black Consciousness Era. These narratives and texts constitute the interior voices of recent African American culture. I am much indebted here to a series of discussions on these questions during 1990 with James Early, assistant secretary for public service at the Smithsonian Institution.

74. For more on Malcolm X, see *Malcolm X Speaks: Selected Speeches and Statements*, ed. George Breitman (New York: Grove, 1966); Malcolm X with the assistance of Alex Haley, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Doubleday, 1967); and Malcolm X, *The End of White World Supremacy: Four Speeches*, ed. Benjamin Goodman (New York: Merlin, 1971). For more on the Nation of Islam and similar groups, see Albert B. Cleage, Jr., *The Black Messiah* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1968); C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America* (Boston: Beacon, 1961); Wiley H. Ward, *Prophet of the Black Nation* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim, 1969); and Joseph R. Washington, Jr., *Black Sects and Cults* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor, 1973). On other spiritual leaders of the 1930s, see Robert Weisbrot, *Father Divine: The Utopian Evangelist of the Depression Era Who Became an American Legend* (Boston: Beacon, 1984).

75. Drusilla Dunjee Houston, *Wonderful Ethiopians of the Ancient Cushite Empire* (Oklahoma City: Universal, 1926). Some of Joel A. Rogers's best-

known works include *The Ku Klux Spirit* (New York: Messenger, 1923); *Nature Knows No Color-Line: Research into the Negro Ancestry in the White Race* (New York: H. M. Rogers, 1952); *100 Amazing Facts about the Negro: With Complete Proof; A Short Cut to the World History of the Negro* (New York: J.A. Rogers, 1934).

76. Molefi Kete Asante and Kariamum Welsh Asante, "Bibliographic Essay," in Molefi Kete Asante and Kariamum Welsh Asante, eds., *African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1985), 258; Molefi Kete Asante, *Afrocentricity* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1989), 6. Some seminal works on the subject of Afrocentricity are by Molefi Kete Asante. See, for example, Asante and Asante, eds., *African Culture: The Rhythms of Unity*; Asante, *Afrocentricity*; Molefi Kete Asante and Abdulai S. Vandi, eds., *Contemporary Black Thought: Alternative Analyses in Social and Behavioral Science* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1980); and Molefi Kete Asante, *Kemet, Afrocentricity, and Knowledge* (Trenton: Africa World Press, 1990). As Arthur Lee Smith, Asante also wrote *Rhetoric of Black Revolution* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1969) and numerous other works. See also Cheikh Anta Diop, *The African Origin of Civilization* (New York: Lawrence Hill, 1971); Yosef Ben Jochannon, *African Origins of the Major Western Religions* (New York: Alkebu-Lan, 1970); Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization: Volume 1, The Fabrication of Ancient Greece, 1785-1985* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987); Frances Cress Welsing, "The Cress Theory of Color-Confrontation and Racism (White Supremacy): A Psycho-Genetic Theory and World Outlook," in Frances Cress Welsing, *The Isis (Yssis) Papers* (Chicago: Third World, 1991), and Na'im Akbar, *Chains and Images of Psychological Slavery* (Jersey City, N.J.: New Mind Publications, 1984).

77. For more on the history of Black museums, see Jeffrey C. Stewart and Fath Davis Ruffins, "A Faithful Witness: Afro-American Public History in Historical Perspective, 1828-1984," in Susan Porter Benson, Steven Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *Presenting the Past: Critical Perspectives on History and the Public* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986).

78. See Maulana Ron Karenga, *The African American Holiday of Kwanzaa: A Celebration of Family, Community, and Culture* (Los Angeles: University of Sankore Press, 1988). Kwanzaa is a mixture of a large number of African elements. Within Black nationalist communities during the 1970s Swahili became the principal African language that was studied; however, the ethnic groups that they most often learned about were West African (especially the Yoruba, the Asante, and to a lesser extent the Fon). Karenga modeled Kwanzaa on West African first-fruits festivals, though in the 1988 revised edition of his book he mentions southern African festivals as well. This mingling of elements from across the continent provides a sense of the unity of African culture that is valued by many African Americans. Some Black femi-

nists have criticized the Kwanzaa rituals, though, because they provide no formal role for adult women.

79. On the history of the African American Museums Association: Joy Ford Austin, former executive director, African American Museums Association, telephone interview with author, 22 Dec. 1984; also a letter, conference brochure, and memoranda circulated to participants in the National Black History Museums Conference, Wayne State University, 27 Sept. 1969, furnished to me by James Mayo, acting co-director of the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, in December 1990.

80. See also the following essays in Susan Porter Benson, Steven Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *Presenting the Past: Critical Perspectives on History and the Public* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1986): Linda Shopes, "Oral History and Community Involvement: The Baltimore Neighborhood Heritage Project"; Jeremy Brecher, "A Report on Doing History from Below: The Brass Workers History Project"; Lisa Duggan, "History's Gay Ghetto: The Contradictions of Growth in Lesbian and Gay History"; Sonya Michel, "Feminism, Film and Public History"; and James Green, "Engaging in People's History: The Massachusetts History Workshop."

81. For more on the collections and circumstances of Black museums, see *Profile of Black Museums*.

82. James Oliver Horton and Spencer R. Crew, "Afro-American Museums: Toward a Policy of Inclusion," in Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 224. For more detailed information on the history of Black professionals and museums, see *Museums for a New Century* (Washington, D.C.: American Association of Museums, 1984); Joan Sandler, "Minority Art Museum Professionals in Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic States: An Exploratory Study of Their Problems and Needs" (New York: Division of Education Services, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1987); and Howardena Pindall's testimony delivered at the Agenda for Survival conference at Hunter College, New York, June 1987.

83. Horton and Crew, "Afro-American Museums."

84. Rex Ellis, vice president for African American interpretation, Colonial Williamsburg, telephone interview with author, 12 Oct. 1990. For more information on Colonial Williamsburg and its history of Black programming, see Rex Ellis, "A Decade of Change: Black History at Colonial Williamsburg," *Colonial Williamsburg*, spring 1990, 14–25; Harold Gill, "The Distress of Sam and Caty," *Colonial Williamsburg*, spring 1990, 26–29; Zora Martin, "Colonial Williamsburg—A Black Perspective," in Susan K. Nichols, ed., *Museum Education Roundtable, 1973–1983: Perspectives on Informal Learning—A Decade of Roundtable Reports* (Washington, D.C.: 1984); and Edgar A. Toppin, "Setting the Record Straight: African American History," *Colonial*

Williamsburg, spring 1990, 10–12. See also *On Myne Own Time*, a video produced by the Program in African American Interpretation detailing the complications of producing live interpretations at Colonial Williamsburg; this is available from the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation.

85. Ralph Rinzler, assistant secretary for public service emeritus, Smithsonian Institution, interviews with author 26 June 1990 and 14 Sept. 1990.

86. Various versions of this meeting were recounted to the author during interviews with John Kinard, Ralph Rinzler, James Mayo, James Early, Zora Martin Felton, and Bernice Johnson Reagon.

87. Dillon Ripley, *The Sacred Grove: Essays on Museums* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1969).

88. Ralph Rinzler, interview with author.

89. As many of my informants for this essay pointed out, Reagon was actually hired by Gerald Davis, who was then the assistant director of the overall festival. In this position, he was an early example of a high-level Black staff member at the Smithsonian. He originated the idea of bringing in non-Smithsonian scholars to work on the festival. After several internal disputes, however, he resigned, and Reagon took charge of the African Diaspora Festival Project. All descriptions of the growth and development of the Festival of American Folklife and the Program in Black American Culture have emerged from the author's interviews with Bernice Johnson Reagon, curator, Division of Community Life, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, 27 Aug. 1990 and 18 Sept. 1990; James Early, assistant secretary for public service, Smithsonian Institution, 28 Nov. 1990, 6 Dec. 1990, and 20 Dec. 1990; and Ralph Rinzler, 1990.

90. This event was described by Bernice Johnson Reagon in an interview with the author in 1990.

91. Rinzler, interviews with author, 1990.

92. The program's name was originally the Program in Black American Culture (PBAC). In 1990 it became the Program in African American Culture (PAAC). The audio and video tapes, transcripts, and papers of the PBAC have now been deposited in the Archives Center of the National Museum of American History, where they have been arranged and described for research purposes.

93. Bernice Johnson Reagon, interviews with author, 1990.

94. John Kinard, founding director, Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., interview with author, 11 Apr. 1985.

95. James Mayo, acting co-director, Anacostia Museum, interviews with author, 20 Nov. 1990, 7 Dec. 1990, 11 Dec. 1990; Louise Hutchinson, interview with Jeffrey C. Stewart and author, 1986; Zora Martin Felton, interview

with Jeffrey C. Stewart and author, 1986. For more information on the early history of the Anacostia Museum, see Ralph Tate, *Doodles and Dimensions* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1967); *Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, Smithsonian Institution, September 15, 1972* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1972) (this includes a profile of every staff member and some volunteers over the first five years, as well as a list of exhibitions held at the museum); and *The Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, 1967/1977* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1977) (this catalogue includes an almost complete record of exhibitions, held nearly every month for the first ten years of the museum's life).

96. Aspects of the internal history of collecting at the National Museum of American History were gleaned from numerous informal conversations between the author and key participants, such as Edith Mayo (one of the curators of the *We the People* exhibition) and Carl Scheele (principal curator for the exhibition *A Nation of Nations*), during the years in which the author was a historian and program manager in the Department of Social and Cultural History, NMAH (1981–1988). Additional information was developed by the Afro-American Index Project at the Smithsonian Institution. Principally directed by Theresa Singleton (who is now curator of historical anthropology at the National Museum of Natural History), this project has begun to document for the first time materials related to African Americans in the historical and anthropological bureaus of the Smithsonian. The exhibition *Field to Factory: Afro-American Migration 1910–1940* was curated by Spencer Crew, now head of the Department of Social and Cultural History at NMAH. The author had numerous informal conversations with him about changes in NMAH over the last ten years.

97. Linda Hartigan, curator, National Museum of American Art, interview with author, 1 Mar. 1990.

98. Garrow, *Bearing the Cross*.

99. For a theoretical perspective blending mythos, memory, and history, see Vincent Harding, *Hope and History: Why We Must Share the Story of the Movement* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1990).

100. James Early, interviews with author, 1990. People from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds have spoken at these annual celebrations. For a list see the pamphlet "Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday Celebration" (Washington, D.C.: Cultural Education Committee, Smithsonian Institution, 1989).

101. In April 1991, after extensive internal and external debates, the Regents of the Smithsonian approved the idea of an African American museum on the Mall. As this essay goes to press, the U.S. Congress has not yet passed a bill authorizing funds to support such a museum. However, revised legislation on the matter is pending before several Congressional committees. Information about the history of this museum came from Claudine Brown, deputy assis-

tant secretary for museums, Smithsonian Institution, interviews with author, 27 Dec. 1990 and 8 Jan. 1991, as well as numerous informal conversations since.

The author learned about the history of the National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center when she served as guest curator for that museum's inaugural exhibition, *From Victory to Freedom: Afro-American Life in the Fifties, 1945–1965*. From 1986 through 1988 the author had numerous informal conversations with longtime members of the staff, including John Fleming, founding director of NAAM; Juanita Moore, then head of the Education Department; Edna Harper, then head researcher at the museum; and Barbara Andrews, registrar.