



Smithsonian Institution Archives

## Oral history interview with John Kinard, 1987

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Smithsonian Institution Archives  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., <a href="mailto:osiaref@si.edu">osiaref@si.edu</a>
<b>Title:</b>	Oral history interview with John Kinard
<b>Identifier:</b>	Record Unit 9538
<b>Date:</b>	1987
<b>Extent:</b>	2 audiotapes (Reference copies).
<b>Creator::</b>	Kinard, John, 1936-1989 interviewee
<b>Language:</b>	English

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## Administrative Information

### Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9538, Kinard, John, 1936-1989 interviewee, Oral history interview with John Kinard

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## Historical Note

John R. E. Kinard (1936-1989), was the Director of the Anacostia Community Museum (ACM) in Washington, D. C., from its founding in 1967 until his death in 1989. Kinard was born and raised in the Washington, D. C., area and attended Howard University briefly before receiving degrees from Livingstone College in 1960 and the Hood Theological Seminary in 1963 in Salisbury, North Carolina.

An ordained minister, Kinard was an Assistant Pastor at John Wesley African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, Washington, D. C., for 22 years. He also participated in Operation Crossroads Africa in 1962 and the Poverty Program at the Southeast Neighborhood House in Washington, D. C., where he established close ties with the African government and private agencies.

While working as an interpreter and escort for the U. S. State Department, he was introduced to Mrs. Marion Conover Hope, an active member of the Greater Anacostia People's Corporation. Through Mrs. Hope's influence, he found himself the first Director of the Smithsonian Institution's new Anacostia Neighborhood Museum (ANM) in July, 1967, a position which he retained until his death in 1989.

Begun as the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, an experimental bureau of the Smithsonian Institution, ANM was the first community-based institution founded under the aegis of a major institution and became the prototype for other small neighborhood museums. It was developed as part of a broader plan to encourage museum access to a diverse cultural and socioeconomic group of museum goers. As a community-based museum, ANM sought to address issues of importance to its local constituency, as reflected in early exhibits. With the expansion of its mission, the museum's research and exhibits programs came to reflect its commitment to African American history and culture. In 1987, its name was changed to the Anacostia Museum to reflect more correctly its growth and development from a neighborhood museum to a pioneer in producing both in-house and traveling exhibits that link the African

American experience in this country with that of the dominant culture. In 2006, it was renamed the Anacostia Community Museum to reflect its role as a model community museum.

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## Introduction

The Smithsonian Institution Archives began its Oral History Program in 1973. The purpose of the program is to supplement the written documentation of the Archives' record and manuscript collections with an Oral History Collection, focusing on the history of the Institution, research by its scholars, and contributions of its staff. Program staff conducts interviews with current and retired Smithsonian staff and others who have made significant contributions to the Institution. There are also interviews conducted by researchers or students on topics related to the history of the Smithsonian or the holdings of the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

Kinard was interviewed for the Oral History Collection because of his pivotal role in the creation and development of the Anacostia Community Museum. He came to the Smithsonian with a long background of service to his community, both locally and internationally, and he shaped the programs and mission of the Anacostia Community Museum.

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## Descriptive Entry

The interview took place on July 30, 1987, at Kinard's office in the Anacostia Museum. Anne M. Rogers, a graduate student in history at the University of Maryland, conducted the interview for the Smithsonian Institution Archives. In the interview, Kinard discusses his education, early work in community service, the founding of the ANM and his directorship. Topics include early exhibits, staff, and Kinard's vision for the Museum.

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## Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- African Americans -- Exhibitions
- African Americans -- History
- African Americans -- Washington (D.C.)
- History
- Museum directors -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

- Audiotapes
- Interviews
- Oral history

Names:

- Anacostia Community Museum
- Anacostia Museum
- Anacostia Museum. Office of the Director

Anacostia Neighborhood Museum  
Kinard, John, 1936-1989  
Rogers, Anne M. interviewer

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## Container Listing

### Box 1

#### Transcript of Interview

Box 1 of 1

Interview 1: 30 July 1987

[Digital Content: Opening Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, 1967 \(Image no. 91-517\)](#)

[Digital Content: Fighter Plane on Exhibit at Opening of Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, 1967 \(Image no. 91-520\)](#)

[Digital Content: Opening of Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, September 15, 1967 \(Image no. 91-518\)](#)

[Digital Content: S. Dillon Ripley and "Uncle Beazley," September 15, 1967 \(Image no. 91-521 or 68-2589\)](#)

#### Note:

- Covers his early life and career, the founding and development of the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, and his experiences as its director within both the neighborhood and museum community, c. 1936-1987, including:
  - early life, education, and arrival in Anacostia;
  - college education and seminary;
  - involvement in Operation Crossroads Africa;
  - involvement in the Poverty Program at Southeast Neighborhood House;
  - employment with the Office of Economic Opportunity and State Department;
  - introduction to Mrs. Marion Conover Hope;
  - appointment as Director of the Smithsonian's new Anacostia Neighborhood Museum;
  - establishing the museum and early problems encountered;
  - attracting African Americans to the museum;
  - attempts to integrate the black and white experiences within the museum environment;
  - combating racism;
  - early exhibits;
  - gearing the museum to children;
  - relationship between the museum and the community;
  - staff, especially Zora Martin Felton, Lawrence Erskine Thomas, and James E. Mayo;
  - exhibit, *The Rat: Man's Invited Affliction*;
  - the new museology;
  - increasing concern with urban problems and African American history;
  - later concerns with integration and staff;
  - explanation of "June teenth" celebration;

- additional reminiscences about the founding of the museum, especially the neighborhood's involvement and concerns;
- relationship to the Smithsonian and place within the museum bureaucracy.
- Appendix to interview contains partial list of exhibits at the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum during John Kinard's tenure as director.
- Transcript, pages 1-40, of audiotape recording, 1.5 hours.

#### Audio Recordings of Interview

Box 1 of 1

Interview 1: 30 July 1987

Note:

- Total Recording Time: 1.5 hours
- Original Masters: 2 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotapes
- Reference Copies: 2 cassette audiotapes