



Smithsonian Institution Archives

John Kinard Oral History Interview, 1987

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Table of Contents

Collection Overview	1
Administrative Information	1
Historical Note.....	1
Introduction.....	2
Descriptive Entry.....	2
Names and Subjects	2
Container Listing	4

Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	John Kinard Oral History Interview
Identifier:	Record Unit 9538
Date:	1987
Extent:	2 audiotapes (Reference copies).
Creator::	Kinard, John, 1936-1989, interviewee
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9538, John Kinard Oral History Interview

Historical Note

John Robert Edward 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.

Began 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.

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.

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.

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.)
- Interviews
- Museum directors -- Interviews
- Oral history

Types of Materials:

- Audiotapes
- Transcripts

Names:

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

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

Container Listing

Interviews

Interviews

Interview 1: July 30, 1987

Interviews

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 tenth" 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.

[Digital Content: Two boys sweep the entrance sidewalk in preparation for the opening of the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum located in the renovated Carver Theater on Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue in Anacostia, 1967. \[Image no. 91-517\]](#)

[Digital Content: Fighter plane exhibited outside the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum at its opening, September 15, 1967. \[Image no. 91-520\]](#)

[Digital Content: Attending the opening of the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum \(now known as Anacostia Community Museum\), are \(left to right\): Director John R. Kinard; Mayor of Washington, D.C. Walter Washington; an unidentified man; and Assistant Secretary Charles Blitzer; September 15, 1967. \[Image no. 91-518\]](#)

[Digital Content: Secretary S. Dillon Ripley and unidentified children with "Uncle Beazley," the dinosaur \(Triceratops\) used in the film "The Enormous Egg," at the opening of the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum on September 15, 1967. \[Image no. 91-521 or 68-2589\]](#)

Interviews

Transcript, pages 1-40, of audiotape recording, 1.5 hours.

Interviews

Recording of Interview: Total Recording Time: 1.5 hours

Note:

- Original Masters: 2 5" reel-to-reel analog audiotapes

- Reference Copies: 2 cassette audiotapes