



Smithsonian Institution Archives

**African-American Exhibits at the
Smithsonian Interviews, 1999, 2001**

Finding aid prepared by Smithsonian Institution Archives

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Smithsonian Institution Archives, Washington, D.C., osiaref@si.edu
Title:	African-American Exhibits at the Smithsonian Interviews
Identifier:	Record Unit 9603
Date:	1999, 2001
Extent:	10 audiotapes (Reference copies).
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Preferred Citation

Smithsonian Institution Archives, Record Unit 9603, African-American Exhibits at the Smithsonian Interviews

Use Restriction

Restricted.

Historical Note

Museum exhibits are the result of a complex interplay between curators, collections, social currents, and the public. In 1999 and 2001, Smithsonian predoctoral fellow Michèle Gates Moresi conducted oral history interviews about the history of African-American exhibits at the Smithsonian Institution as part of her dissertation research. In 1999 and 2001, Gates Moresi interviewed six curators from the National Museum of American History (NMAH), Richard E. Ahlborn, curator in the Division of Community Life; Ellen Roney Hughes, curator in the Division of Community Life; Claudia B. Kidwell, curator in the Division of Costume; Edith P. Mayo, former curator in the Division of Political History; Keith Melder, former curator in the Division of Political History; and Rodris Roth, curator in the Division of Domestic Life. In 2001, she also interviewed Cynthia H. Hoover, curator in the Division of Musical History, also at the NMAH.

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 conduct interviews with current and retired Smithsonian staff and others who have made significant contributions to the Institution. There are also reminiscences and interviews recorded by researchers or students on topics related to the history of the Smithsonian or the holdings of the Smithsonian Institution Archives.

The History of African American Exhibits at the Smithsonian Oral History Interviews were compiled by graduate student Michèle Gates Moresi as part of her research on the presentation of African American history at the Smithsonian.

Descriptive Entry

The History of African American Exhibits at the Smithsonian Oral History Interviews conducted by Michèle Gates Moresi cover each curator's role in and views on National Museum of American History exhibitions that have portrayed African-Americans. These interviews cover the relationship between research and exhibition at the NMAH; changes in attitudes towards culturally diverse exhibits; exhibit processes during 1964 to 1990 at National Museum of History and Technology (now NMAH) and the incorporation of Negro History and other ethnic groups, especially Hispanics; the Bicentennial of the American Revolution exhibit, *A Nation of Nations*; and integration of African American collections into the music, costume, and political history collections.

The History of African American Exhibits Oral History Collection consist of 7 interview sessions, totaling approximately 9.0 hours of audiotape recordings, and 231 pages of transcript. There are three generations of recordings: original audio cassettes, preservation digital audio .wav files, reference digital audio .mp3 files and reference audio cassettes. In total this collection is comprised of 10 original audio cassette tapes, 18 preservation digital audio .wav files, 18 reference digital audio .mp3 files, and 10 reference copy audio cassettes. The original tapes are reserved in preservation storage.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

African Americans
African Americans -- History
Employees
Exhibitions
Museum curators -- United States -- Interviews

Types of Materials:

Audiotapes
Interviews
Oral history

Names:

Ahlborn, Richard E.
Ahlborn, Richard E., interviewee
Gates Moresi, Michèle, interviewer
Kidwell, Claudia Brush
Kidwell, Claudia Brush, interviewee
Mayo, Edith
Mayo, Edith, interviewee
Melder, Keith E.
Melder, Keith E., interviewee
National Museum of American History (U.S.)

National Museum of History and Technology
Roth, Rodris
Roth, Rodris, interviewee

Container Listing

Box 1

Transcripts of Interviews

Box 1 of 1

Interview 1: 30 June 1999

Note:

- Interview of Richard E. Ahlborn discusses the exhibit processes during 1964-1980 at National Museum of History and Technology and the incorporation of Negro History and other ethnic groups, particularly Hispanics.
- Transcript, pp. 1-32, of audiotape recording, 1.0 hour.

Box 1 of 1

Interview 2: 1 July 1999

Note:

- Interview of Edith P. Mayo discusses exhibit processes during 1964-1980 at National Museum of History and Technology; the incorporation of Negro History; and exhibits such as *We the People*.
- Transcript, pp. 1-33, of audiotape recording, 1.0 hour.

Box 1 of 1

Interview 3: 3 August 1999

Note:

- Interview of Rodris Roth addresses the exhibit processes during circa 1964-1980 at National Museum of History and Technology, including such exhibits as *A Nation of Nations*, the *Hall of Everyday Life in the American Past*, and *1876: A Centennial Exhibition* and the incorporation of Negro history into exhibits.
- Transcript, pp. 1-44, of audiotape recording, 1.5 hours.

Box 1 of 1

Interview 4: 4 August 1999

Note:

- Interview of Ellen Roney Hughes covers the exhibit processes circa 1964-1980 at National Museum of History and Technology and Bicentennial of the American Revolution exhibit, *A Nation of Nations*.
- Transcript, pp. 1-23, of audiotape recording, 1.0 hour.

Box 1 of 1

Interview 5: 14 September 1999

Note:

- Interview of Claudia B. Kidwell focuses on the exhibit processes during 1964-1980 at National Museum of History and Technology and the incorporation of Negro history, especially in the American costume collection.

- Transcript, pp. 1-32, of audiotape recording, 1.0 hour.

Box 1 of 1

Interview 6: 14 September 1999

Note:

- Interview of Keith E. Melder address the exhibit processes during 1964-1980 at National Museum of History and Technology and the incorporation of Negro History into the Political History collections and exhibits.
- Transcript, pp. 1-41, of audiotape recording, 2.0 hours.

Box 1 of 1

Interview 7: 18 July 2001

Note:

- Interview of Cynthia A. Hoover covers her early years at the Smithsonian in the 1960s, the inclusion of African American music and musicians in exhibits at the National Museum of History and Technology; creation of the Division of Performing Arts, the Folklife Festival, and the Jazz Program; and the development of African American collections.
- Transcript, pp. 1-26, of audiotape recording, 1.5 hours.

Audio Recordings of Interviews

Box 1 of 1

Interview 1: 30 June 1999

Note:

- Total recording time: 1.0 hour
- Original Masters: 1 audiotape cassette
- Preservation Masters: 2 digital audio .wav files
- Reference Copies: 1 audiotape cassette and 2 digital audio .mp3 files

Box 1 of 1

Interview 2: 1 July 1999

Note:

- Total recording time: 1.0 hour
- Original Masters: 1 audiotape cassette
- Preservation Masters: 2 digital audio .wav files
- Reference Copies: 1 audiotape cassette and 2 digital audio .mp3 files

Box 1 of 1

Interview 3: 3 August 1999

Note:

- Total recording time: 1.5 hours
- Original Masters: 2 audiotape cassettes
- Preservation Masters: 3 digital audio .wav files
- Reference Copies: 2 audiotape cassette and 3 digital audio .mp3 files

Box 1 of 1

Interview 4: 4 August 1999

- Note:
- Total recording time: 1.0 hour
 - Original Masters: 1 audiotape cassette
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital audio .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 1 audiotape cassette and 2 digital audio .mp3 files

Box 1 of 1

Interview 5: 14 September 1999

- Note:
- Total recording time: 1.0 hour
 - Original Masters: 1 audiotape cassette
 - Preservation Masters: 2 digital audio .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 1 audiotape cassette and 2 digital audio .mp3 files

Box 1 of 1

Interview 6: 14 September 1999

- Note:
- Total recording time: 2.0 hours
 - Original Masters: 2 audiotape cassettes
 - Preservation Masters: 4 digital audio .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 2 audiotape cassettes and 4 digital audio .mp3 files

Box 1 of 1

Interview 7: 18 July 2001

- Note:
- Total recording time: 1.5 hours
 - Original Masters: 2 audiotape cassettes
 - Preservation Masters: 3 digital audio .wav files
 - Reference Copies: 2 audiotape cassettes and 3 digital audio .mp3 files