



## Museum Grants for African American History and Culture

**Program Update**  
**May 2011**

*Above: South Carolina State University students and museum interns visit the Harvey B. Gantt Center in Charlotte, NC.*

**Over five years, the Museum Grants for African American History and Culture have made an impact on abilities of staffs, students, and volunteers to tell the stories of their communities, and to train professionals who will shape the museum field for decades to come.**

*—Susan H. Hildreth, IMLS Director*

The National Museum of African American History and Culture Act of 2003 established a Smithsonian museum devoted to the experiences of African Americans and authorized the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), in consultation with the Council and Director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture, to administer a grant and scholarship program “with the purpose of improving operations, care of collections, and development of professional management at African American museums” nationwide.

Launched in the spring of 2006, the Museum Grants for African American History and Culture (AAHC) program has awarded 51 grants totaling \$5,305,548.

The AAHC program focuses on building institutional capacity and sustainability through professional development and supporting projects that focus on one or more of the following three goals:

- developing or strengthening knowledge, skills, and other expertise of current staff of African American museums;
- attracting and retaining professionals with the skills needed to strengthen African American museums; and/or
- attracting new staff to African American museum practice and providing them with the expertise needed to sustain them in the museum field.

Eligible applicants include museums with a primary purpose based in African American life, art, history, and/or culture; museum service organizations with a primary purpose to support African American museums; and historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs).

AAHC grants range from \$5,000 to \$150,000 and require a 1:1 match. Project activities supported by these grants may be carried out for a period of up to two years. The next deadline for submitting applications is January 17, 2012.

*“The strategic planning and professional development gained through this funding has put this young institution on very firm ground.”*

*—Northwest African American Museum*

### Grant Program Information by Fiscal Year (FY)

	Appropriated by the U.S. Congress	# of applications	Amount requested	Amount awarded	# of awards
<b>FY 2006</b>	\$842,000	44	\$3.9 million	\$803,230	8
<b>FY 2007</b>	\$842,000	41	\$3.4 million	\$880,028	10
<b>FY 2008</b>	\$827,000	38	\$3.8 million	\$827,290	8
<b>FY 2009</b>	\$1,310,000	34	\$4.1 million	\$1,310,000	11
<b>FY 2010</b>	\$1,485,000	33	\$4.0 million	\$1,485,000	14
<b>FY 2011</b>	\$1,443,000	41	\$4.4 million	TBD	TBD



*Left:* Cultural Club activities at the Spady Cultural Heritage Museum. *Center:* Opening of the “After Hours” exhibit celebrating the history of jazz at the Northwest African American Museum. *Right:* The Weeksville Heritage Center’s Collections Manager inspects objects prior to updating catalog records.

## Convenings

Convening AAHC grantees at a meeting in Washington, DC, is a highlight of the program. Initiated in 2007, these gatherings offer a personal opportunity for recent grantees to share the successes and challenges of project implementation and to learn more about federal grant reporting procedures, responsibilities, and opportunities.

At each convening, participants share information about their organizations and provide updates on their grant-funded activities. Previous convenings have covered issues such as: recruiting skilled professionals, developing successful internship programs, coping with low salaries and staff turnover, and the challenges of personnel management. Another hot topic has been evaluation, with participants sharing techniques to effectively assess projects as well as overall operations. All participants have inspiring stories to tell and exciting ideas to share about creating strong connections to the audiences they serve.

The next AAHC convening will be held June, 20-21, 2011. Institutions with active AAHC grants awarded in FY 2009 and FY 2010 are invited to attend.

## Application Review Process

An application deadline is established annually, and grant applicants submit proposals according to guidelines and instructions posted on the IMLS Web site. The core of each proposal is a seven-page narrative, organized into four sections: statement of need, project design, project resources, and impact. Each narrative is supplemented by an organizational history, detailed budget forms, schedule of completion, lists of key personnel, and additional documentation to more fully explain the proposed project.

Applications are independently assessed for strengths and weaknesses through a two-tiered peer review process. Final recommendations are reviewed by the director of IMLS who, by law, is charged with the final authority and responsibility for making awards.

## Writing a Successful Proposal

The most successful proposals reflect a careful reading of the program guidelines so that the narrative clearly addresses the information requested and the review criteria. Other tips for successful proposal writing are:

- Start planning early to avoid deadline pressure.
- Be certain that project goals relate directly to the stated goals of the AAHC program.
- Prepare attachments according to the instructions provided.
- Identify consultants and key project personnel if at all possible.
- Carefully prepare a budget and ensure that numbers match narrative statements.
- Contact IMLS program staff for assistance (staff cannot read individual proposals, but will be able to answer questions and provide guidance).
- Register with Grants.gov early in order to prepare for your electronic application submission.
- Visit the IMLS Web site ([www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov)) for information on all our grant programs and sign up for our monthly e-newsletter, *Primary Source*, to learn about inspiring programs funded by the Institute.

Please note that you must submit a complete application to be eligible for a grant. Additional tips for writing successful proposals can be found in the program guidelines on the IMLS Web site.

“IMLS funds strengthened our Preservation and Collections departments with new staff in advance of our upcoming expansion in 2012. These positions have added crucial capacity that allowed us to attract additional support for a Conditions Report and Vulnerability Assessment for the historic houses and collection objects.”

—*Weeksville Heritage Center*

“This grant was a life changer for the professional interns at the Stanback [Museum and Planetarium] who discovered museums as special places to enrich their lives and present new career opportunities. They took great joy in registering and cataloguing collections, including James Brown artifacts and African Art, visiting museums behind the scenes, and presenting at the national Association of African American Museums conferences, where networking is leading them to newly found careers.”

—*South Carolina State University*

## 2010 Grant Awards

### **African American Civil War Museum, Washington, DC.** *Amount: \$78,556*

The museum will develop a docent training program, creating a team of 24 docents to volunteer a minimum of five hours each month. The docents will greatly enhance the museum's capacity to provide learning experiences for its visitors. The project includes development of a training assessment tool. Docent training materials will be made accessible on the museum's Web site to support ongoing training for existing docents and recruitment of new docents. A brochure will be designed and published to inform visitors of the expanded tour schedule in the museum's new facility.

### **Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, Birmingham, AL.** *Amount: \$129,830*

The museum will improve the delivery of programs and services to its diverse audiences by enhancing staff capacity to effectively utilize technology. A computer and information systems assistant will be hired to provide technical support for exhibitions and staff functions, and a series of training programs for all staff will be offered in Internet and software applications. The project promotes greater efficiency between the various museum departments.

### **David C. Driskell Center, University of Maryland, College Park, MD.**

*Amount: \$149,719*

The project will document Professor Driskell's one-of-a-kind archive of 50,000 objects assembled over six decades. IMLS funds will hire an archivist, two graduate student interns, and a consulting archivist to guide the process. The archivist will develop procedures for inventorying and accessing the collection, supervise students in data entry, and write a manual of procedures. Archives accessibility will be enhanced through an online program to increase outreach and exchange of ideas with researchers and arts professionals.

### **DuSable Museum of African American History, Chicago, IL.** *Amount: \$135,000*

Six of the current staff members will participate in professional development opportunities to build skills in operations, external affairs, and other specific areas in addition to attending professional conferences and workshops. New hires include a collections manager and director of educational public programs. As it approaches

its 50th anniversary, the museum will use a consulting firm to revise its capital expansion plan and to redirect its focus on strategic planning, institutional identity, and professional services for the public.

### **John Gilmore Riley Center/Museum of African American History and Culture, Tallahassee, FL.** *Amount: \$124,946*

This project will support a succession plan for the John Gilmore Riley Center/Museum by expanding staff capacity through hiring an administrative officer and creating a full-time assistant director for projects and programs. An administrative assistant will also be hired with primary responsibility for on-site tours and general office duties. During the grant period, the founding director will work with the board of directors to implement recommendations of the institutional strategic plan to guide the next phase of the museum's growth and development.

### **Mayme A. Clayton Library and Museum, Culver City, CA.** *Amount: \$148,982*

The museum will hire a new executive director who will be immersed in a series of workshops and training opportunities to provide familiarity with the archival management of the institution. In addition, the executive director will participate in peer mentoring activities designed to build a team of experts capable of providing ongoing professional consultation and support. IMLS funds will also double the hours of the part-time archivist. The archivist will work with existing volunteers to establish "train the trainer" sessions to involve more students and adult volunteers in professionally processing the collections.

### **Museum of Contemporary African Diasporan Arts, Brooklyn, NY.** *Amount: \$108,954*

The Emerging Curators Fellowship Program will offer four individuals the opportunity to learn the practical skills involved in the curation of exhibits. Two fellows will complete the program in each year of the two-year project, working full-time as research and administrative assistants for the museum's director of exhibitions. The fellows will have opportunities to participate in exhibition research, development, label-writing, loan processing, publicity, and programming, and will curate their own exhibitions toward the end of the program. The project includes support for

site visits to other museums to meet with curators and participate in professional conferences.

### **The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum, Baltimore, MD.**

*Amount: \$48,050*

This project will strengthen the museum's school tours program by developing a new interactive curriculum aligned with the Maryland State Standards of Learning. An experienced director of education will be hired to assist in the development of the curriculum and to develop the vision for the museum's additional school and public programs. The director of education will oversee the work of two new part-time educators who will engage in strategic community outreach.

### **National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, Cincinnati, OH.** *Amount: \$66,096*

The Museum Science Apprenticeship Program will attract recent and talented graduates, with a focus on recruiting from HBCUs. IMLS funds will support one new participant in this intensive program that combines on-the-job training and classroom instruction over a two-year period. The intern will complete coursework at the University of Cincinnati, earning a certificate in museum studies, as well as an eight-week summer internship at a partner African American cultural institution in the United States.

### **New Orleans African American Museum of Art, Culture, and History, New Orleans, LA.**

*Amount: \$149,464*

The museum will enhance its institutional capacity and sustainability by recruiting, hiring, and providing professional development opportunities for a curator of collections and a museum educator. The museum will partner with the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute and the Historic New Orleans Collection in a structured mentoring program, which will be developed and monitored by two consulting museum professionals. The entire staff will engage in effective strategic planning and professional training in best practices to build the long-term capacity of the museum.

### **Spady Cultural Heritage Museum, Delray Beach, FL.** *Amount: \$107,434*

The museum will enhance its capacity to serve its community more effectively by expanding and training staff, and hiring outside professionals to guide a renewed



strategic planning process. A part-time education position will become full-time, and a new position of office manager will be created. A nine-month fellowship through Florida Atlantic University will support a volunteer coordinator. Staff and board members will also participate in professional conferences and training programs throughout the project.

**Texas Southern University, Houston, TX.**  
*Amount: \$81,680*

An experienced archivist will be hired to catalog, index, and properly store the documents and items within the Barbara Jordan Collection at the Robert J. Terry Library. Consulting professionals will provide an initial assessment of collection documentation, formulate a plan of work, and monitor progress. A scanning technician will be hired to begin digitization of the collections, and an information kiosk will be created in the museum gallery to increase public access to the museum's collections information.

**Tubman African American Museum, Macon, GA.** *Amount: \$49,924*

In response to a shortage of funds for school field trips, the museum will train staff in the use of digital video equipment to produce 12 video presentations and 10 downloadable lesson plans. The museum will contract with a certified Georgia teacher to produce standards-based lesson plans. The material will be transmitted over the Internet for K-12 classroom use. This program will also support the recording of museum lectures, workshops, and performances to be archived and retrieved for viewing by general audiences.

**Virginia State University (VSU), Petersburg, VA.** *Amount: \$106,365*

The University will recruit and hire two professionals with the skills needed to strengthen the VSU museum and support the expansion of the museum gallery into a larger space. A museum administrator will be hired to develop a program of public exhibits, services, and outreach. A new archivist will catalog the papers of the late civil rights attorney, Oliver W. Hill, Sr. A strategic plan will be developed for the museum during the course of the project, as well as a student internship program, as the university strengthens its connections with the Petersburg community.

## 2009 Grant Awards

**Harvey B. Gantt Center for African American Arts + Culture, Charlotte, NC.** *\$150,000*

**American Jazz Museum, Kansas City, MO.** *\$40,009*

**B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center, Indianola, MS.** *\$144,561*

**Black Archives History & Research Foundation of South Florida, Miami, FL.** *\$149,549*

**Frederick Douglass-Isaac Myers Maritime Park, Baltimore, MD.** *\$21,535*

**National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, TN.** *\$138,690*

**Northwest African American Museum, Seattle, WA.** *\$136,801*

**Ohio Historical Society/National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center, Wilberforce, OH.** *\$149,478*

**Reginald F. Lewis Museum of African American History & Culture, Baltimore, MD.** *\$82,258*

**South Carolina State University/I.P. Stanback Museum and Planetarium, Orangeburg, SC.** *\$147,119*

**Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn, NY.** *\$150,000*

For information about grantees from previous years, visit the IMLS Web site at [www.imls.gov](http://www.imls.gov).

"These professional development opportunities have been invaluable to the staff members and in building institutional capacity for our new museum. In the process, we have made new contacts and forged partnerships to enhance our programming and professionalize our operations."

—B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center



Above: Staff from the B.B. King Museum and Delta Interpretive Center visit the B.B. King star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame while visiting Los Angeles for the 2010 AAM Annual Meeting.

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