



Smithsonian
***National Museum of African American
History and Culture***

Lonnie G. Bunch, III, Director

Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

Historian, author, curator and educator, Lonnie G. Bunch, III is the founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. In this position he is working to set the museum's mission, coordinate its fundraising and membership campaigns, develop its collections and establish cultural partnerships. Rooted in his belief that the museum exists now although the building is not in place, he is designing a high-profile program of traveling exhibitions and public events ranging from panel discussions and seminars to oral history and collecting workshops.

The museum, the 19th to open as part of the Smithsonian Institution, will be built on the national Mall where Smithsonian museums attracted more than 24 million visitors in 2005. It will stand on a five-acre site adjacent to the Washington Monument and opposite the National Museum of American History in Washington, DC.

As a public historian, a scholar who brings history to the people, Bunch has spent nearly 30 years in the museum field where he is regarded as one of the nation's leading figures in the cultural-historical community.

Prior to his July 2005 appointment as director of NMAAHC, Bunch, 53, served as the president of the Chicago Historical Society, one of the nation's oldest museums of history (January 2001-June 2005). There, he initiated an unprecedented outreach initiative to diverse communities and launched a much-applauded exhibition and program on teenage life titled "Teen Chicago." He also led a successful capital campaign to transform the institution in celebration of its 150th anniversary and managed an institutional reorganization.

Bunch has held several positions at the Smithsonian. As the National Museum of American History's (NMAH) Associate Director for Curatorial Affairs (1994-2000), he oversaw the curatorial and collections management staff of nearly 200. In addition to leading the curatorial team that developed the major permanent exhibition "American Presidency: A Glorious Burden," he served as co-author of the exhibition's companion book by the same name.

While assistant director for curatorial affairs at NMAH, (1992-1994), Bunch developed “Smithsonian’s America,” an exhibition that explored the history, culture and diversity of the United States; it was shown in Chiba, Japan as part of the “American Festival Japan ’94.” He also supervised the planning and implementation of the museum’s research and collection agendas. As a supervising curator at NMAH, (1989-1992), he oversaw several of the museum’s divisions, including Community Life and Political History.

From 1978 to 1979, Bunch was an education specialist at the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum, where he developed multi-cultural instructional programs and researched and wrote the history of African Americans in aviation.

Bunch served as the curator of history for the California Afro-American Museum in Los Angeles from 1983 to 1989. There he organized several award-winning exhibitions including “The Black Olympians, 1904-1950” and “Black Angelenos: The Afro-American in Los Angeles, 1850-1950.” Committed to making history accessible, he also produced several historical documentaries for public television.

A prolific and widely published author, Bunch has written on topics ranging from the black military experience, the American presidency and all black towns in the American west to diversity in museum management and the impact of funding and politics on American museums. Lectures and presentations to museum professionals and scholars have taken him to major cities in the United States and to many nations abroad including Australia, China, England, Italy, Japan, Scotland, South Africa, and Sweden.

In service to the historical and cultural community, Bunch has served on the advisory boards of the American Association of Museums and the American Association of State and Local History. Among his many awards, he was appointed by President George W. Bush to the Commission for the Preservation of the White House in 2002.

Born in the Newark, N.J. area, Bunch has held numerous teaching positions across the country including The American University in Washington, D.C. (1978-1979); the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth (1979-1981); and The George Washington University in Washington, D.C. (1989-2000). He received undergraduate and graduate degrees from The American University in Washington, D.C. in African American and American history.

He is married to Maria Marable Bunch, associate director of museum education at the Art Institute of Chicago. They have two daughters, Sarah and Katie.

#