



Smithsonian
*National Museum of African American
History and Culture*

Lonnie G. Bunch, III, Founding Director

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Historian, author, curator and educator Lonnie G. Bunch III is the 14th Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, the world's largest museum complex. He was appointed in June 2019.

Prior to assuming this position, Bunch was the founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture. In this position he promoted the museum's mission to help audiences see African American history as American history, and provided strategic leadership in areas of fundraising, collections, and academic and cultural partnerships.

The museum, the 19th to open as part of the Smithsonian Institution, is located on the National Mall where Smithsonian museums attracted more than 24 million visitors in 2005. It stands on a five-acre site adjacent to the Washington Monument and opposite the National Museum of American History in Washington, DC. The museum opened to critical scholarly and public acclaim on September 24, 2016.

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 historical and museum community.

Prior to his July 2005 appointment as director of NMAAHC, Bunch 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 Tokyo, 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 and historian at the Smithsonian’s National Air and Space Museum, where he developed multicultural 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 slavery, 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. In 2010, he published the award-winning book “Call The Lost Dream Back: Essays on Race, History and Museums.” “Slave Culture: A Documentary Collection of the Slave Narratives” was published in 2014 and in 2015 he published “Memories of the Enslaved: Voices from the Slave Narratives.” In 2016, Bunch co-authored “From No Return: the 221-Year Journey of the Slave Ship São José.”

In 2017, he authored for the World Economic Forum in Davos Agenda (blog), “America, Slavery and how Museums can help to heal Fractured Societies.” 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, Sweden, Ghana, Senegal and Cuba. Since 2008, Bunch has served as the series co-editor of the “New Public Scholarship Edition” of the University of Michigan Press. During the inaugurations of President Barack Obama, Bunch served as an on-camera commentator for ABC News.

In service to the historical and cultural community, Bunch has served on the advisory boards of the American Association of Museums, the African American Association of Museums, the American Association of State and Local History and the ICOM-US. Among his many awards, he was appointed by President George W. Bush to the Commission for the Preservation of the White House in 2002 and reappointed by President Barack Obama in 2009. In 2005, Bunch was named one of the 100 most influential museum professionals in the 20th century by the American Association of Museums and in 2009, *Ebony* Magazine named him one of its 150 most influential African Americans. Again, in 2016 he was chosen as one of the 100 most significant African Americans by *Ebony* Magazine. In 2011, BET (Black Entertainment Television) selected Bunch to receive its BET Honors for outstanding service to American education. In 2014, BET selected Bunch as one of its ICON Men for his work mentoring young African American men. In recent years, Bunch has been honored with: Visionary History Award, DC Historical Society (2016), Rainbow Push Torchbearer Award (2016), Delta Sigma Theta Remembering Our Heritage Award (2016) and National Newspaper Publishers Association Torch Award (2016). In 2016, *Washingtonian* magazine named him Washingtonian of the Year and Bunch was listed as #1 in the Washington Business Journal's Power 100 ratings and in Vanity Fair's Hall of Fame. In 2017, Bunch was given the President's Award at the NAACP Image Award and the Greater Washington Urban League presented him with the Impact Leader Award. In addition, BLACK ENTERPRISE presented Bunch with the inaugural XCEL Award at their Summit. In 2018, the Phi Beta Kappa Society presented Bunch with the Phi Beta Kappa Award for Distinguished Service to the Humanities and the National Education Association honored him with the Award for Distinguished Service to Education.

Bunch has received honorary doctorates from an array of Universities including: Princeton University, Brown University, Dominican University, Roosevelt University and Rutgers University.

In 2017, Bunch was elected as a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

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, a museum educator. They have two daughters, Sarah and Katie.

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