

FATH DAVIS RUFFINS

Current Position: Curator of African American History and Culture in the Division of Home and Community Life.

I have been a historian at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History since 1981. Between 1988 and 2005, I worked as the historian in the Archives Center, including twelve years as the Head of the Collection of Advertising History.

Publications:

Current writing project: Book: Finding our Story in the History of the Nation: An Illustrated Guide to Black History and Art in America's Museums (HarperCollins/Smithsonian Imprint).

"The Paradox of Preservation: Gullah, Culture and Imagery" in **Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art**. Dale Rosengarten, Theodore Rosengarten, Enid Schildkrout, editors. Museum for African Art, 2008.

"Money Makes a Difference: The Impact of Rising Prices on African American Collecting Since 1968." in **The International Review of African American Art**. Volume 21. Number 4, January 2008. Special Issue: Connecting the Three C's: Collecting, Conservation, and Collaboration.

"Revisiting the Old Plantation: Reparations, Reconciliation, and Museumizing American Slavery." in **Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations**. Ivan Karp, Corinne A. Kratz, Lynn Swaja, and Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, editors. Duke University Press, 2006. First presented at the conference in Bellagio, Italy on "Museums and Global Public Spheres." Rockefeller Foundation, July, 2002.

"A Community Revealed: The Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture" in **Curator** magazine. Volume 49. Number 1. January, 2006.

"Roundtable: Conversations on Race and Ethnicity in Advertising." **Advertising & Society Review**. (on-line journal). Distributed by Johns Hopkins University Press, Project Muse. Volume 6, No.2 (2005). I convened the original conversations among several scholars and edited the final piece for publication.

Four African American Women on the National Landscape" in **Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation**. Gail Dubrow, ed. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

"Sites of Memory, Sites of Struggle: The 'Materials' of History" in **Major Problems in African American History. Volume 1: From Slavery to Freedom, 1619-1865**. Thomas Holt and Elsa Barkley Brown eds. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

"Reflecting on Ethnic Imagery in the Landscape of Commerce 1945-1975" in **Getting and Spending: American and European Consumption in the Twentieth Century**. Charles McGovern, Susan Strasser, and Matthias Judt, eds. Cambridge University Press, 1999.

"Culture Wars Won and Lost: Ethnic Museums on the Mall," in **Radical History Review**. Two-part article. No. 68, Spring, 1997 and No. 70 Winter, 1998. (Part One: The Holocaust Memorial Museum and the National Museum of the American Indian. Part Two: The African American Museum on the Mall Project.)

"Recovering Yesterday" Co-author with Paul Ruffins. **Black Issues in Higher Education**. Vol. 13, No.25 February 2, 1997.

"The Politics of Cultural Ownership." **AIGA Journal of Graphic Design**. Vol. 14, No. 1.

January, 1996. (American Institute of Graphic Arts.)

“*Lifting As We Climb: Black Women and the Preservation of African American History and Culture.*” in **Gender and History**. Vol. 6, No. 3. November, 1994.

“*Mythos, Memory, and History: African American Preservation Efforts, 1820-1990.*” **Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture**. Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine, eds. Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.

“*African American Museums: Teaching the Politics of Culture,*” in **Point of View (The Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Magazine)**. Dinner Book Issue, September, 1987.

“*Race and Revolution: 18th Century African Americans.*” Conference pamphlet. Program in Black American Culture. National Museum of American History, February, 1987.

“*A Faithful Witness: Afro-American Public History in Historical Perspective.*” Co-author with Jeffrey Stewart. **Presenting the Past: Critical Perspectives on History and the Public**. Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds. Temple University Press, 1986.

“*Interpreting the Past in the Present.*” **The Journal of the Washington Academy of Science**. June, 1986.

“*The Exhibition as Form.*” **Museum News**. October, 1985.

Exhibitions:

Curator, **Ralph J. Bunche: Statesman, Activist, Peacemaker** at the National Museum of American History. (2004-2005)

Guest Curator. Historical exhibition: “**From Slavery to Freedom**”. Inaugural “permanent” gallery. National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. Opened, August, 2004.

Exhibition Content Consultant: Muhammad Ali Center in Louisville, Kentucky. In planning phases, 2000-2001. Opening, 2004.

Exhibition Developer. **A Collector's Vision of Puerto Rico**. Opened July, 1998

Exhibition Curator. **1848: New Border, New Nation**. Opened May, 1998. Both at the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.

Exhibit Developer. The African Voices Project. National Museum of Natural History. Smithsonian Institution. (Planning phases.1993-1995)

Guest Curator. Section on the **African Diaspora in British North America**, for the Ghana-Smithsonian Exhibition Project. Cape Coast Castle in Cape Coast, Ghana, West Africa, 1995.

Exhibition Developer. The Africa Project Reinstallation. Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, Illinois. (Planning phases 1989-1990)

Guest Curator. **From Victory to Freedom: Afro-American Life in the Fifties, 1945-1965**. National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center, Ohio Historical Society. Inaugural exhibition. Wilberforce, Ohio. [Opened 1988.]

Project Director. **After the Revolution: Everyday Life in America 1780-1800**. Permanent

installation. National Museum of American History. [Opened 1985.] Also Curator, traveling version for the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service--toured from 1986-1997.

Conferences:

Symposium Chair. **Deep Rivers: Bridging Ancestral Streams: A Symposium on African American Genealogy in the 21st Century** . For the Program in African American Culture, National Museum of American History. February, 2002.

Program Committee Co-Chair. American Studies Association Conference- November,2001.
Multiple Publics/ Civic Voices.

Program Committee. **The Middle Passage.** For the Program in African American Culture, National Museum of American History. February, 1999.

Program Chair. **100 Years of Black Film: Imaging African American Life, History, and Culture.** For the Program in African American Culture, Department of Public Programs. National Museum of American History. February, 1995.

Program Chair. **African American Culture and the Constitution.** Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, September, 1987.

Program Chair. **Race and Revolution: African Americans 1770-1830.** For the Program in Black American Culture. Department of Public Programs. National Museum of American History. February, 1987.

Previous Work Experience:

Historian and Head of the Collection of Advertising History. Archives Center. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution 1988-2005.

Historian and Program Manager. Department of Social and Cultural History. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, 1983-1987.

Historian and Program Administrator. Department of Social and Cultural History. National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution, 1981-1983.

Assistant to the Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, Stanford University, 1979-1980.

Administrator, W.E.B. Du Bois Institute for Afro-American Research, Harvard University, 1976-1979.

Administrator, Afro-American Studies Program, Simmons College, 1978-1979.

Education:

Modern Archives Institute. National Archives. Completed, August, 1988

Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
Completed course work for Ph.D. in the History of American Civilization 1976-1979

A. B. Magna cum laude--Radcliffe College, Harvard University
American History and Literature 1976 (Phi Beta Kappa)

National Cathedral School for Girls--Valedictorian, Washington, D. C. 1972

Fellowships, Honors, and Awards

Gave the keynote address: "Missing Artifacts, Missing Archives: A Curator's Perspective" at the Hagley Fellows Conference on "Missing Subjects" – March, 2007

Gave the Fred Miller Memorial Lecture on Public History in Philadelphia, 2003

American Studies Association— elected National Council Member 2000-2003

Award for Contribution to Scholarship. The Society for Women and Historic Preservation. 2000

Twentieth Anniversary Award. Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Washington, D. C. 1997.

"Historian: Keeper of the Culture" awarded by the American Women's Heritage Society, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 1997.

Alumnae Association Board. National Cathedral School--At Large Member 1994-1996.
Chairman of the Centennial Oral History Project--1997-present

President. Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, 1993-1994.
Vice President for History 1986-1990

Research Opportunities Fund Grant. Smithsonian Institution, February, 1992 -- to conduct research at the Bibliotheque Nationale, Paris

American Association of Museums/International Committee of Museums. Institutional Exchange Program Fellow. Worked in Ghana, West Africa with the Ministry of Museums and Monuments, Winter, 1990.

Scholarly Studies Fund Award, Smithsonian Institution, August, 1985 to conduct research at the Barbados Historical Society and Museum, Georgetown

Danforth Graduate Fellowship, 1976-1979.

Harvard Black Prize Fellowship, 1976-1979.

Election to Phi Beta Kappa (Iota Chapter,) Radcliffe College, 1976.

American Field Services Traveling Fellowship to Kyoto, Japan, 1971.

Museum, Publishing, and Broadcast Consultancies:

Consultant, Advertising Educational Foundation. 2001 to present. Advisory Board member for the AEF's on-line journal: Advertising & Society Review which is published by Johns Hopkins Press, 1999 to present.

Advisor. Tredegar National Civil War Foundation. 2001 to present

U.S. Capitol Visitor Center. Introductory Video experience. Donna Lawrence Productions, 2004

National Constitution Center. Media Experience. Donna Lawrence Productions.
 Content Consultant 2001-2003

North Brentwood African American Museum Development; Maryland, 2002

National Park Service, 2000 to present (on many exhibition projects)

Museum of African American History in Philadelphia. Advisor to Millennium Project, 2001

Muhammad Ali Center in Louisville, Kentucky. Advisor for Content Specialist, 2000-2001

Cincinnati Museum Center. Exhibition on the Civil War. 2000-present

Broadway Theater Institute: **African Americans and Broadway Project 1999-2002**

D. C. Museum Project of the Columbia Historical Society, 2000-2001

Occasional interviewee or commentator: National Public Radio, 1999 to present.

WTIF, Pittsburgh. Advisor and On-Screen. Stephen Foster documentary. Aired-2001.

African Burial Ground Advisory and Selection Committee. (NYC) Member. 1997-2001

Maryland Afro-American Historical Commission, 2000

American Social History Project, **Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews**, New York, 1997.

NAACP Legal Defense Fund, Archival Collections Planning, 1997-1998

Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York Public Library) Arts and Artifacts Collections, 1996.

WGBH, Boston. **Advisor and On-Screen. Africans In America** series, 1992, 1995-1998.

American History Workshop. **National Underground Railroad Museum**. Planning Project. Cincinnati, Ohio 1995-1996.

African Burial Ground. (New York) Advisory Board to National Park Service and General Services Administration 1995-present

New Jersey Historical Society (Newark) **Teenage New Jersey: Hidden Mysteries**, 1995-1997.

Maryland Public Television, **"If This House Could Talk. . ."** 1995.

Brooklyn Historical Society, Review of book on history of Brooklyn, 1994.

New Jersey Historical Society (Newark), **Paul Robeson** Exhibition planning, 1994.

Smithsonian Institution Press, Reviewer, 1994.

Brooklyn Historical Society --**Bridging Eastern Parkway**, 1993.

Jewish Museum (New York City), **Bridges and Boundaries: African Americans and American Jews** 1991-1992.

The Museum of African American History (Detroit), Collecting Strategies and Board Development 1991-1992.

American Association of Museums: Museum Assessment Program Assessor 1991-1993.

People's Publishing Group, Book reviewer, 1991.

Globe Book Company, Book Reviewer 1989-1990.

NewMarket Battlefield Park: **Orientation Area and Visitor's Center**, 1986-1987.

Moorland-Spingarn Research Center at Howard University. African Diaspora exhibition planning, 1986-1987.

Chicago Historical Society, **We the People** 1984-1987.

Frederick Douglass Home at Cedar Hill (The National Park Service) Interpretive planning, 1984-1986.

Languages: French written and spoken, reading knowledge of Spanish and classical Latin

Travel experiences: extensive travel in Western Europe, Caribbean, Brazil, Africa and Japan

Conference papers, comments, panel participation, list of lectures available upon request