More than 450 guests participated in the Schomburg Center’s tribute to six world-renowned legends at its 75th Anniversary Africana Heritage Awards Gala at United Nations Headquarters on January 23, 2001. The international and multi-disciplinary group of achievers whose timelines parallel that of the Center—distinguished individuals who have attained the age of 75 or above—were honored in a festive evening celebrating the historical and cultural heritage of Africa and the African Diaspora.

Specially commissioned award statuettes based on Meta Warrick Fuller’s early twentieth-century sculpture The Awakening of Ethiopia were presented to: Katherine Dunham, dancer, choreographer and anthropologist by Harry Belafonte; Dorothy Height, organizer and civil and women’s rights activist by Johnnetta B. Cole; Amadou—Mahtar M’Bow, Senegalese educator, administrator and international public servant by Rex Nettleford; Abdias do Nascimento, Brazilian scholar, artist, author and politician by David N. Dinkins; Gordon Parks, photographer, film director, author and composer by Spike Lee; and Billy Taylor, pianist, composer, educator and jazz activist by Howard Dodson. Sherry Bronfman accepted the award for Dr. Height who was unable to attend because of illness; and Abdias do Nascimento’s son, Osiris, traveled from Brazil to deliver the acceptance remarks of his mother.

**AFRICANA HERITAGE AWARDS PRESENTED TO DIASPORA LEGENDS**

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**THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP GIFTS**

**Rangel and CBC Support Creation of African American Migration Digital Archive**

In an historic move spearheaded by Congressman Charles B. Rangel with the unanimous support of the Congressional Black Caucus, the United States Congress has appropriated $2.4 million for the creation of a digital archive documenting African American migration. Schomburg Center Director Howard Dodson expressed appreciation to Congressman Rangel and the Caucus “for affirming the Center’s national leadership role in the preservation and dissemination of information on the global black experience by entrusting it with the responsibility of developing this groundbreaking resource.”

The new archive—The African American Migration Experience—will contain vast amounts of digitized material covering the three major waves of African and African American migration to and within the United States: the forced migration from Africa to America through the slave trade; the great migration of African Americans from the Southern to the Northern States; and the voluntary migration from the African Diaspora, particularly the Caribbean, to the United States.

The majority of the materials digitized for this archive will be selected from the expansive collections of the Schomburg Center, which include over 5 million items—over 3.5 million manuscript items, 170,000...
A little over a year ago, we launched a 75th Anniversary national membership drive. Our membership base at that time totaled some 3,000 individuals mainly concentrated in the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut areas. Under the leadership of Dr. Maya Angelou and with the able assistance of Dr. William “Bill” Cosby, the national direct mail campaign has already surpassed its goal. I am pleased to report that over 10,000 people are now dues paying members of the Schomburg Society for the Preservation of Black Culture. They live in every state in the union including Alaska and Hawaii!! Their membership gifts confirm our belief that the Center is a national resource serving a national constituency. We thank each of you who has joined for your support. And we invite those of you who haven’t to join at your earliest convenience.

The United States Congress, under the leadership of Congressman Charles B. Rangel and the entire Congressional Black Caucus, also recently affirmed the national significance and role of the Schomburg Center. Last December, the Congress approved a $2.435 million appropriation for the Center to develop a major web site on African American migration. The project will start in September 2001. (See front page story.)

The Center’s 75th Anniversary Gala was a stunning success! It honored six living legends of the Africana world, raised some $300,000 and celebrated the Schomburg legacy in grand style. (See front page story.) You won’t want to miss the 75th Anniversary Africana Heritage Festival, the closing event of the yearlong celebration. It will take place from June 26 to July 1 in multiple venues throughout Harlem. Featuring leading artists and entertainers from throughout the African world, the Festival will present music, dance and literary performances, forums, and dialogs. Mark your calendar now and organize your plans to be there!

This issue of Africana Heritage also highlights the unique role the Schomburg Center plays in acquiring and preserving at-risk documentary records on the global African experience. The recent acquisition of the personal and professional papers of dancer and choreographer Lavinia Williams is featured in this “Heritage Watch” article.

Lest We Forget: The Triumph Over Slavery, the inaugural 75th Anniversary exhibition closed on March 31, concluding a nine-month extended run. Every month is black history month at the Schomburg Center, but February and March 2001 were extraordinary!! The Center was inundated with visitors, especially school children, coming to see the exhibition. Thousands more came to conduct research or attend programs. Many people asked us to make Lest We Forget a permanent exhibition. While we are unable to honor that request, we recently received a grant from the Carl Pforzheimer Foundation to publish a catalog of the exhibit. It will also become the first unit of the African American Migration Experience web site. The final 75th Anniversary exhibition, Africana Age: African and African Diasporan Transformations in the 20th Century, opens on May 17 and runs to November 15, 2001. I hope you’ll plan to see it!

Membership gifts confirm our belief that the Center is a national resource serving a national constituency. We thank each of you who has joined for your support.

— Howard Dodson, DIRECTOR, THE SCHOMBURG CENTER
books, and rich collections of photographs, periodicals, posters, art objects, films, videotapes, audio recordings and memorabilia.

In addition, the Schomburg Center will work with a national advisory panel of prominent scholars who have conducted primary research on African-American migration and will draw on relevant collections and archives of other institutions and agencies such as the National Urban League, the National Archives, and the archives of various southern states such as Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and Louisiana and northern and western urban studies centers and repositories that documented African-American migrations.

The African American Migration Experience digital archive will provide quick access to vast quantities of resource materials spanning the colonial period to the late 20th century. Items will range from slave ship logs and runaway notices; to articles, images and ads in black-owned newspapers dealing with population shifts; to records of benevolent associations organized by people migrating from various parts of the American South and the Caribbean. Tracing these experiences will shed light on the circumstances under which African Americans came to the United States, the places and circumstances they migrated from and to in the United States, and the impact that the African-American presence has had on the communities in which they lived, as well as on the national economic, political and cultural experience.

The archive will have a significant impact on the field of African-American Studies which suffers from relatively limited access to primary source materials. This is especially true of African-American migration because of the many points from which these movements began and ended. The African American Migration Experience digital archive will bring this vast and diverse body of information so central to understanding the national black American experience into an easily accessible database. Of equal importance, it will be developed to include a sufficient level of authority, authenticity and integrity to assure its reliability for scholars, students, other researchers, and the general public interested in its thematic scope.
father, whose physicians would not permit him to travel.

The award selection committee included Maya Angelou, Harry Belafonte, Bill Cosby, David N. Dinkins, Mme Yande Christian Diop, Henry Louis Gates, Judith Jamison, Spike Lee and Rex Nettleford. Vernon E. Jordan, Jr. and Ann Dibble Jordan were honorary chairs for the event;

has worked unceasingly to ensure the documentation of their presence and influence on the history and cultural life of the nation. His role in organizing international gatherings of peoples of African descent has strengthened the bonds between Afro-Brazilians and other African peoples.

DO RO THY HEIGHT (b. 1912, Richmond, Virginia). Ms. Height has been a woman’s, civil and human rights activist for more than half a century. Through her role as President of the National Council of Negro Women for more than four decades, she became an integral part of the leadership of the civil rights movement in the United States and the women’s rights movement worldwide. With fierce determination and superior organizational skill she forged an alliance of affiliated organizations to create the nation’s most powerful voice on behalf of black women’s issues, and an influential force on behalf of the rights of women of African descent throughout the world.

AMADOU-MAHTAR M’BOW (b. 1921, Dakar, Senegal). A distinguished educator and internationally renowned administrator and public servant, The Honorable Amadou-Mahtar M’Bow was the first African chief executive of UNESCO (the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization). With unflinching dedication, he advanced the organization’s mission to contribute to the peace and security of the world by fostering cooperation in the areas of education, science and culture. Mr. M’Bow’s extraordinary foresight and courageous leadership on the world stage have advanced the struggle to decolonize the African mind and African history and facilitated African and Third World participation in global affairs immeasurably.

ABDIAS DO NASCIMENTO (b. 1918, Franca, Sao Paulo, Brazil). An artist, scholar, philosopher, educator, elected official and social activist, Nascimento has been the most passionate and persistent troubadour for racial and social justice in twentieth-century Brazil. A staunch defender of the civil rights of Afro-Brazilians, he

The Africana Heritage Award statuette is based on this classic work by Meta Warrick Fuller (1877-1968), one of the first renowned African-American women sculptors. Fuller used the allegorical figure of Ethiopia—clad in Egyptian wrappings and headaddress—as a symbol of the re-emergence of black cultural awareness. Ethiopia’s proud and serene face gazes into the future as the wrappings of ignorance and oppression fall away.
Forces of Nature drummers invoke the spirit of Africa as guests move to dinner.

City Councilman Wendell Foster, Carver Bancorp CEO Deborah Wright and Eugene Webb.

Award recipient Billy Taylor with his wife Teddi Taylor.

City Councilman William Perkins and Pamela Green-Perkins.

Award recipient Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow.

Congressman Major Owens.

Alma Rangel and Congressman Charles Rangel.

Gordon Parks receiving his award from Spike Lee.

Verizon representative Gregory Robeson Smith.

City Council Speaker Peter Vallone, NYPL Chairman Samuel C. Butler and Harry Belafonte.

Honorary Chair Vernon E. Jordan, Jr., 75th Anniversary Campaign Chair Johnnetta B. Cole, and NYPL President Paul LeClerc.

Award recipient Katherine Dunham with Marie Christine Dunham Pratt, Harry Belafonte, Julie Belafonte, Rex Nettleford and Sylvain Raymonde M'Bow.

Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields.

Gala Chair Sherry B. Bronfman, Gordon Parks and Katherine Dunham.

Mayor David N. Dinkins and Osiris do Nascimento.

Susan Newhouse

Russell Simmons
Building the Schomburg Center’s collections over the last 75 years has been a highly rewarding adventure! The vast majority of the 5 million items in the collections have been acquired through the gifts of generous donors, many resulting from the systematic, planned solicitations of individuals and organizations by the Center’s curators and director. An equal number, however, have come through good fortune and circumstance. The following are just a few of the unique and varied ways the Center has become the permanent repository of resources that, in many instances, were at risk of being hidden away, destroyed or lost forever.

**The Lavinia Williams Collection**

Lavinia Williams, the noted dancer and choreographer, had a high regard for the Schomburg Center, and was well aware of the Center’s role in preserving and promoting black history and culture. In fact, she very graciously participated in a ten-hour oral history interview in the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division. Hence, the news that upon her death in Haiti in 1989, Ms. Williams left her personal archives and a part of her library to the Center was gratefully received. Delivery of the collection, however, would not be easy!

Although the Haitian government of the time honored Lavinia Williams with a state funeral, it moved immediately to block the transfer of her gift, applying the same standards to her collection as it would to that of a Haitian national. Since Ms. Williams was a U.S. citizen, the materials she had willed to the Center were her personal property and not that of the Haitian government. Nevertheless, a “National Patrimony” stamp was placed on the thirty cartons of material that a Friends of Lavinia Williams group was attempting to ship to the Schomburg Center, and the materials were subsequently placed in storage in Port-au-Prince, where they remained for more than a decade. An examination of the boxes in 1999 by dance historian Annette MacDonald and a
Schomburg staff member revealed that materials had begun to deteriorate. MacDonald secured the services of a Haitian attorney, and worked with the executor of the Williams estate to secure the release of the materials. The Center agreed to pay the accumulated storage fee, as well as shipping costs. Twelve years after the boxes were placed in storage, the collection has finally arrived at the Schomburg Center.

The Lavinia Williams Collection includes photographs documenting her years with Katherine Dunham, activities in Haiti, and her daughter’s career with the Alvin Ailey dance company; as well as papers and audiovisual materials highlighting her work as a choreographer and dance teacher that offer special insights on Caribbean dance.

The Richard Saunders Collection
It took an Act of Congress to have the Richard Saunders Collection donated to the Schomburg Center. Saunders, a world-renowned photographer, produced the bulk of his work while employed by the United States Information Agency (USIA), the overseas propaganda arm of the United States government. The legislation authorizing the establishment of USIA strictly prohibited the agency from distributing any of its information in the United States. Americans were not even allowed to subscribe to its monthly magazine, Topic, for which Saunders did most of his work.

When Richard Saunders died in 1987, Rosalie Targonski, a member of the Topic staff and his widow, Emily Saunders, concluded that the American public should experience his extraordinary photographic genius. At their request, Harlem Congressman Charles B. Rangel introduced legislation to have the prohibition waived. The House and the Senate passed legislation respectively in April and July 1991, authorizing the waiver, as well as transferring the collection to the Schomburg Center. Mrs. Saunders subsequently donated her husband’s non-USIA related photographic archive to round out the collection.

The Léon Gontran Damas Collection
Léon Damas (1912-1978), poet, journalist, educator, and statesman born in Cayenne, French Guyana, was a co-founder of the Negritude movement in the 1930s with Martinique-born poet Aimé Césaire and Senegalese author and statesman Léopold Sédar Senghor. Shortly after Damas died, his widow, Marietta Campos Damas, put his personal and professional papers in a Washington, DC warehouse before she moved to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. She died a year later, and shortly thereafter, his sister and heir, Virginia de Campos Vierra, started receiving overdue storage bills from the warehouse. The arrival of an urgent notice advising that the warehouse was going out of business set in motion the chain of events that led to the acquisition of the Damas Collection by the Schomburg Center.

Continued on page 10
Around the Schomburg Center

Fayard Nicholas performing at *Brotherhood of Tap: A Sizzling Film and Live Celebration of the Great Nicholas Brothers.*

A scene from *Nativity: A Life Story* inspired by Langston Hughes’ *Black Nativity.*

Below: Maurice Hines with young dancers at the tribute to the Nicholas Brothers, a Lincoln Center Reel to Real for Kids event at the Schomburg.

National Urban League President & CEO Hugh Price and Howard Dodson open the League’s 90th Anniversary exhibition. (On view at the Center through May 2001.)

Some of the more than 5,000 schoolchildren who visited the Center during Black History Month.

*In Praise of Black Women* author Simone Schwarz-Bart with Howard Dodson; Rose-Myriam Réjouis, translator; Sandrah Monthieux Pélage, publisher; and Dr. Suzan D. Johnson Cook, president, The NY Coalition of 100 Black Women.
A Women's Jazz Festival 2001

Clockwise from top: Geri Allen, Irene Reid, Cindy Blackman, Melissa Walker, Spelman College Jazz Ensemble and Tulivu Donna Cumberbatch

Visit the Schomburg Center On-Line at www.schomburgcenter.org
Ms. de Campos Vierra enlisted the aid of her friend, Elisa Larkin Nascimento, wife of Brazilian artist, activist and legislator Abdias do Nascimento, to help her resolve the problem. Ms. Nascimento called and asked if the Center would agree to pay the overdue storage bills and shipping costs, if Ms. de Campos Vierra would donate the collection to the Schomburg. The Center agreed and upon receipt of the gift, donated duplicate copies of books, as well as copies of selected documents and correspondence to the Association of Friends of Léon Damas in Cayenne, French Guyana.

The Léon Damas Collection encompasses personal papers, professional and literary correspondence, documentation of Damas’ service as representative of French Guyana to the French National Assembly in the 1950s, and research notes including a voluminous compilation of writings and biographical sketches of Brazilian authors of African descent from the 18th century to the 1950s.

An etching of Frederick Douglass by Harlem Renaissance artist Aaron Douglas, a former resident of 409 Edgecombe Avenue.

The 409 Edgecombe Avenue Collection

The dumpster was parked in front of Harlem’s famed 409 Edgecombe Avenue building. The tenants association had given residents an ultimatum. All of the trunks in the basement trunk room had to be removed by the end of the day!

Just before noon, one of the tenants (a friend of the Center) placed a frantic call to report that she had seen several trunks with the names of some rather prominent people on them. So far, no one had claimed them. “Is the Center interested?” she asked. A hastily placed call to the building manager resulted in a day of grace. In exchange for an agreement to pay the cost of renting the dumpster, the tenants association granted the Center permission to take possession of all of the unclaimed trunks.

In addition to World War I and Pullman Porter uniforms, the trunks contained original manuscripts by Walter White, author and chief executive of the National NAACP from 1929 to 1955, personal correspondence of noted Harlem Renaissance artist Aaron Douglas, and a wide variety of other historically-significant documents and artifacts.

75th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION EVENTS

Save these dates for the final events of the Center’s yearlong 75th Anniversary celebration.

May 17, 2001  Members Exhibition Preview

Africana Age: African and African Diasporan Transformations in the 20th Century. This exhibition will survey 20th-century African and African Diasporan historical and cultural development. At the beginning of the 20th century, virtually all peoples of African descent were living under some form of European colonial domination. Over the last 100 years, struggles for freedom throughout the African world have resulted in the emergence of independent African and Caribbean nations, and the collapse of racial segregation in the United States and apartheid in South Africa. African peoples have established themselves as national and international leaders in political, economic and cultural arenas. Africana Age will celebrate the global achievements of African peoples during the 20th century and reflect on the challenges facing them in the 21st century. (On view through November 11, 2001.)

June 26-July 1  The Schomburg Center Africana Heritage Festival

The grand finale of the 75th Anniversary celebration, the Festival will feature leading artists and entertainment from throughout the African world. Music, dance and literary performances, forums, and dialogs will be presented in multiple venues throughout Harlem. For Festival information call (212) 491-2049 beginning May 1.
City Awards 75th Anniversary Support Increase

The City of New York has been the major source of financial support for the Schomburg Center since its inception. Core library operations including staff, acquisitions, preservation, and security of the collections are funded by the city. Over the last decade, as the city has sought to balance its budgets, the Center’s annual appropriation, like those of other libraries and cultural institutions funded by the city, has been cut. Staff reductions as well as reductions in acquisitions and preservation budgets resulted.

As part of its 75th Anniversary Campaign, the Center made a special appeal to Councilman Bill Perkins to spearhead a city-funding request to restore these cuts. Councilman Perkins and Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields took this request to City Council Speaker Peter Vallone, one of the only individuals in city government authorized to increase the annual operating support for city-funded institutions. With the support of the Council, Speaker Vallone, Borough President Fields and Councilman Perkins were able to secure a recurring $400,000 addition to the Center’s annual operating budget—a magnificent 75th Anniversary gift from the City to the Schomburg!! These funds will be used for strengthening collection and preservation activities, the ongoing improvement of access to documentary resources through traditional processing and cataloging, and the creation of on-line products for its developing website, the Digital Schomburg. The Center and thousands of users will benefit from this reaffirmation of support by Mr. Vallone, Mr. Perkins, Ms. Fields and the City Council.

Schomburg Society Conservators

The Schomburg Center is pleased to acknowledge the following donors of membership gifts of $1,000 and above from July 2000 through February 2001.

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AFRICANA HERITAGE

2001 Volume 1, Number 3
Africana Heritage is a quarterly publication of The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture for members who contribute $35 or more annually. The Schomburg Center is one of the Research Libraries of The New York Public Library, Astor, Lenox and Tilden Foundations.

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Kenneth McFarlin Graphic Designer

Photography credits: Award Gala: James Gilbert and Hakim Mutlaq. Programs: James Gilbert

Africana Heritage, 515 Malcolm X Boulevard, New York, NY 10037
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A Message from the National Membership Chair

Knowing our legacy—undistorted by others and documented by those who lived it—correctly aligns you and me and our children in the continuing struggle to fully claim our dignity in all areas of life.

Please join with me and thousands of others who are making certain that the Schomburg has the funds not only to continue its unique mission, but to expand its outreach into every home, school, and library.

Please join me as a Schomburg Society Member now!

Dr. Maya Angelou

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($35 tax deductible)

• A year’s subscription to the Schomburg newsletter
• A 20% discount in the Schomburg Shop
• A monthly program calendar
• A personalized membership card
• Up to 20% discount on tickets to select Center-sponsored programs

FRIEND - $50
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All Associate benefits, plus:
• A year’s subscription to American Legacy magazine
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SUPPORTER - $100
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• An annual subscription to the Quarterly Black Review of Books
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• A complimentary copy of the African-American Desk Reference

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All Patron benefits, plus:
• An invitation to an annual Black Heritage Tour

CONSERVATOR - $1,000
($940 tax deductible)

All Sustainer benefits, plus:
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• An invitation to join the Schomburg Center’s Chief, Howard Dodson, at a special black-tie event with a distinguished artist
• Complimentary copies of selected Schomburg publications

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