On Tuesday, November 4, 2008, hundreds of people gathered at the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture to watch the election returns. The historic night was filled with extreme joy as Democrat Barack Obama became the first African American to be elected President of the United States. For more pictures from this historic night, go to page 6.

Like Attucks, people of African descent were among the nation’s true founders and pioneers. Since its origins, millions of African Americans have labored, fought, bled, and died to help America live up to its ideals of freedom, justice, and equality for all, as promised in the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights. African Americans and American Politics is a brief survey of that quest over more than 200 years.

Prior to the Civil War, the overwhelming...
A new America is aborning! In the midst of the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, a new America is coming into view. The old America is dying—being driven into the shadows of the past by the audacity of hope unleashed by the political campaign of Barack Obama for the presidency of the United States of America. Much attention has been focused on the historic nature of his campaign—the nomination of an African American to be the standard bearer for one of the two major parties of American democracy and the election of the first African-American President of the USA. But there is more to his election than his racial identity in American society. Barack Obama is the first person of color selected and elected to lead a majority white society in the Western World!

More importantly, his campaign has redefined what America is and what it aspires to be. It has inspired Americans—black, white, Hispanic, Asian—to be their best selves; their best American selves. It has affirmed the Americaness—the long-term Americaness of people of African descent. And it has reiterated the American ideals of freedom, justice, and equality for all as the defining basis of America’s national identity. In doing so, he has awakened in some and reawakened in others the realization that black people have been integral and at times central actors in the making of the American past. He has also made it clear that they intend to be central actors in defining America’s future.

When we were able to return to our sanity, a brother from the audience reminded us that it was time for a prayer. I invited him and a minister friend of mine, Obery Hendricks, to lead us. Invoking the presence of God in this triumphal moment, they led us in thanks and praise. Obery became the moment of the announcement must have lasted continuously for 15 minutes or more. The yelling, screaming, and noisemaking that erupted at the moment of the announcement were unleashedpent up emotions of the last 45-50 minutes were unleashed and the yelling, screaming, and noisemaking that erupted at the moment of the announcement must have lasted continuously for 15 minutes or more.

When we were able to return to our sanity, a brother from the audience reminded us that it was time for a prayer. I invited him and a minister friend of mine, Obery Hendricks, to lead us. Invoking the presence of God in this triumphal moment, they led us in thanks and praise. Obery became so overcome by the power of the moment that he burst into tears giving all of us who felt compelled to do so the license to do the same. We cried tears of joy and then returned to our celebration—one that is still going on.

We celebrated Mr. Obama’s historic victory here at the Schomburg Center on November 4 with an overflow audience of anxious but hopeful Americans—black and white! Hundreds more tried to come but we didn’t have the space. Those who made it in brought an expectant spirit with them. But they started off uneasy—afraid that they still couldn’t risk believing that a new America was on the horizon. They were neither reassured nor affirmed by the first returns. Though they had been given the tools of celebration—whistles, tambourines, noisemakers—the Langston Hughes Auditorium remained relatively hushed until Pennsylvania went for Barack. The first real sign that victory was at hand! The place went wild! Then came Virginia. What many in the audience never believed would happen in their lifetimes, was now clearly possible. By 10:15, Barack had crossed the 200 electoral vote threshold—207 to be exact. Only 63 more needed to reach the magical 270! And then CNN stopped reporting. Froze, stuck and stayed on 207.

By 10:30, we had returned to our earlier state of anxiety. “What were they doing to fix this one?” we asked—memories of Florida 2000 in all of our heads. “What were they doing to steals this one?—to keep him/us from our historic victory?” The sense of uneasiness, if not fear, that engulfed the auditorium threatened to kill all of our spirits. So close and yet, it still could be snatched from him, snatched from us.

But then at 10:45 it dawned on me. I went on stage and shared my revelation. “It’s over!” I said. “He has won! But they can’t announce it until after the polls close in California at 11:00 p.m.” So, I told the audience to kick back and relax until 11:00 when they would start announcing the rest of his victories state by state. 11:00 o’clock came. But CNN didn’t go through the exercise of reporting the results in the rest of the unreported states. CNN simply declared Barack the winner—the 44th President of the United States! The pent up emotions of the last 45-50 minutes were unleashed and the yelling, screaming, and noisemaking that erupted at the moment of the announcement must have lasted continuously for 15 minutes or more.

A mini exhibition on the theme African Americans and American Politics is currently on view in our windows along Malcolm X Boulevard, an online version is accessible on our Web site. A comprehensive exhibition on the subject will open at the Center on January 15. And a series of public forums and film screenings will follow.

As we all grapple with the aftershocks of the current economic crisis, at the end of this historic year, we would appreciate it if you would keep the Schomburg Center in mind when you do your year-end or year-beginning philanthropic contributions. We need your continued support, especially in these challenging times.
As part of the commemoration of the U.S. bicentennial of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, NYU’s Institute of African American Affairs and Africana Studies Program hosted an international symposium, *Slave Routes: Resistance, Abolition and Creative Progress*, over the course of three days. UNESCO’s Slave Routes Project supported the symposium and it was co-sponsored by NYU’s Institute for Public Knowledge, the Organization of Women Writers of Africa, Inc., and the Schomburg Center. The African Diaspora Slave Routes Organizing Committee and the Department of African American Studies at Syracuse University provided additional support.

The three day symposium convened, at various sites in New York City, distinguished scholars, writers, musicians, visual artists, and organizers from the international community to discuss slavery, the slave trade and its consequences, in plenary sessions, panels, readings, performances, conversations, and film/video screenings. On October 9, 2008 a film screening of *The Slave Route: A Global Vision* and a Plenary Session, was held at the Schomburg Center. The Plenary Session featured: Dr. Maya Angelou, Ali Mazuri, Michael Gomez, Schomburg Chief Howard Dodson, Rex Nettleford, Amiri Baraka, Craig Calhoun, Rutha M. Harris, and Jayne Cortez.

The purpose of the symposium was to review new information concerning the transatlantic slave trade and slavery, improve understanding, identify innovations, trace impact of progress, examine consequences, discuss modern forms of slavery, and encourage continuation of research and archival projects—all with the goal of increasing public awareness about the physical and monumental heritage of the slave trade and to increase international interest in and research on the project.

### Writers on the Cutting Edge

On October 23, 2008, the Center kicked off its new series: *The Schomburg Reading Room: Writers on the Cutting Edge* with a tribute to Langston Hughes featuring Danny Glover and Randy Weston. The series, curated by acclaimed author, poet, and journalist Quincy Troupe, includes two authors reading from their works with a moderated conversation. The second event, held on November 20, 2008, featured Terry McMillan and John Edgar Wideman, both were moderated by Dr. Clyde Taylor. The series will conclude on May 21, 2009. For a full schedule, please see below.

**January 29, 2009**  
*Two Powerful Literary Masters: Lucille Clifton & Ishmael Reed*  
Moderated by Patricia Spears Jones

**February 26, 2009**  
Art, Music, Politics and Poetry: Amiri Baraka & Jayne Cortez  
Moderated by Herb Boyd

**March 19, 2009**  
Pulitzer Prize Winners: Junot Diaz & Rita Dove  
Moderated by Patricia Spears Jones

**April 23, 2009**  
Singing through the Evocative Language of Poetry: Victor Hernandez Cruz & Ntozake Shange  
Moderated by Patricia Spears Jones

**May 21, 2009**  
Two Novelists who Sizzle with Mystery: Cristina Garcia & Walter Mosley  
Moderated by Patricia Spears Jones

***All programs begin at 7 p.m.  
Tickets: members, $16; non-members, $20. For ticket charge, call The Schomburg Shop at (212) 491-2206 or order through Telecharge.com***

For more information about the series and to order tickets, please visit [www.schomburgcenter.org/readingroom](http://www.schomburgcenter.org/readingroom).
Crispus Attucks, a runaway slave, led the crowd of men and boys who challenged British authorities in Boston on March 5, 1770. The first battle of the American Revolution, the Boston Massacre claimed Attucks’ life making him the martyr of American independence.

Born enslaved in Virginia, B.K. Bruce escaped to Kansas, where he founded a school for free blacks. After attending Oberlin College, he settled in Mississippi and became involved in Republican politics, held a series of appointive offices, and was the dominant political figure in Bolivar County by 1874 when the state legislature elected him to the U.S. Senate.

Exhibition Highlight: African Americans and American Politics

Continued from page 1

Majority of African Americans were not permitted to participate in the American democratic process. For a brief period after the Union victory, amendments to the Constitution making blacks citizens and granting suffrage, offered African Americans their first significant opportunity to be part of the governance of the United States. Formerly enslaved blacks who cast their first ballots in the presidential election of 1868 gave Ulysses S. Grant a margin of victory, but not before many were harassed, injured, and killed trying to cast their votes.

By the 1880s, the gains of the 1860s and 1870s were largely lost. Jim Crow legislation relentlessly eroded opportunities for African Americans to progress through the American political system. Activism born in the black church, however, began to spread at the turn-of-the-century throughout African-American economic, educational, cultural, social, and emerging political spheres.

After World War II, and its Double V Campaign—Victory at Home and Victory Abroad—waged by black soldiers and civilians, a powerful African-American civil rights movement, with supporting political structure and strategies, began to take hold. The movement struggled tirelessly but wisely against legal discrimination and the persistent violence against black Americans, and its many successes built confidence among African Americans, young and old.

Following the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of the 1960s, significant numbers of blacks started to be elected to public office.

Still the hope, or perhaps the unimaginable idea, of an African American ever becoming President had not come into view. By the 1970s, men and women of African descent were setting their sights on the presidency of the United States. Shirley Chisholm and Dick Gregory, Jesse Jackson, Carol Mosely Braun, Al Sharpton, and Alan Keyes all campaigned for the nomination of their respective parties. Obama’s victories in the Democratic Primary campaign of 2007-2008 made him the first African American nominated as a major party’s candidate for the presidency of the United States.

Obama’s unprecedented run and victory to become the President of the United States energized and electrified Americans of all races, ethnic origins, and creeds. He stands on the shoulders of a great many African Americans—those who struggled within the Democratic and Republican parties, as well as outside those parties, to advance the cause of freedom, justice, and human dignity for all of humankind. And their work has not been in vain.
EXHIBITIONS:

African Americans and American Politics
January 15—April 19, 2009
Main Exhibition Hall
Window Gallery

The Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture opens its winter 2009 public program season with a timely and exciting new exhibition, African Americans and American Politics. This exhibition is a survey of the African-American struggle for freedom and human dignity, fighting to make America and American Democracy real for all of its citizens over the last 200+ years.

Obama: The Historic Campaign & Victory in Photos
Now through February 28, 2008
Latimer/Edison Gallery
A 100-photography exhibit curated by Deborah Willis and Jeanne Moutoussamy-Ashe.

RELATED BOOKS:

African Americans in Politics Postcard Book
A special commemorative postcard book, produced by the Schomburg Center and Pomegranate Communications, features 30 cards highlighting individuals and events of the black experience in American politics. This postcard book also serves as a companion piece to the Schomburg Center exhibition, African Americans and American Politics.
Price: $9.99

The Historic Campaign in Photographs
by Deborah Willis and Kevin Merida (Amistad)
Through 150 striking color photographs, Obama: The Historic Campaign in Photographs charts the road to Barack Obama’s nomination as the first African American to lead the presidential ticket of a major party. This amazing collection of photographs captures the public and private moments of his journey, and offers a unique window into one of the great triumphs in American politics.
Price: $26.95

Continuing the Legacy: A Salute to the Congressional Black Caucus of the 110th Congress
Continuing the Legacy, offers a list of the CBC’s major accomplishments during the 110th Congress and a look at the work of Rep. Clyburn as majority whip and the CBC members chosen to lead full House Committees. (For more information or to order, visit: http://www.cbcfinc.org/cbcbook)
Price: $30

Becoming American
(Sterling Publishing)

The following is an excerpt from the introduction to Becoming American: The African-American Journey by Schomburg Chief Howard Dodson. Published by Sterling. Available February 2009. Price $13.95

The African-American experience in the United States had its origins on the continent of Africa. Indeed, all of humankind traces its roots back to Africa. Whether one uses the biblical Adam and Eve or the anthropological Lucy as a point of origin, Africa is recognized as the place where human beings originated as a species. Ancient Egypt, the most highly developed ancient civilization, called itself Kemet, which means “Land of the Blacks.” Nevertheless, well into the twentieth century it was widely believed in the Western world that black people had no history or culture. Twentieth-century scholarship has largely refuted these myths, and many of Martin Luther King Jr., are chronicled, as are the recent challenges facing blacks in urban America. The centrality of blacks’ self-initiated activities in the making of African-American history is not always apparent, and their active role over the last two hundred plus years over in defining and redefining the very concept of America and Americans is usually not fully appreciated.

Becoming American: The African-American Journey offers a unique chronological approach that affords readers an opportunity to begin discovering the active, generative role blacks have played in the making of America as we know it today. It also reveals the ways in which blacks’ attempts to make America live up to its founding creed have kept them on the path to “Becoming American.”
Presidential Watch Party:
A Historic Election Night in Harlem

Howard Dodson, Chief, takes the President of the Dominican Republic Leonel Antonio Fernández Reyna and his wife Margarita Cedeño Fernández on a tour of the Schomburg. Right, President Fernández poses with two of New York City’s Finest.

The panelists of the Black Liberation Theology and Black Women forum on October 20, 2008 were: (standing) Rev. Violet Dease, Abyssinian Baptist Church, New York; Dr. Teresa L. Frye Brown, Emory University, Chandler School of Theology, Atlanta; Dr. Stacey Floyd-Thomas, Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, Forth Worth; and Rev. Dr. Joy R. Bostic, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, (sitting) Rev. Yvonne Delk, Center for African American Theological Studies, Chicago and Dr. Jacquelyn Grant, Interdenominational Theology Center, Atlanta.

The crowd that gathered at the Schomburg Center to watch the returns had a range of emotions.
Aaron Douglas: African American Modernist

Patrons viewing one of the Schomburg’s four Aspect of Negro Life murals at the exhibition preview.

Andy Owens (red shirt), of Harlem Heritage Tours, conducting one of two walking tour of famous sites of the Harlem Renaissance as part of the Family Day festivities.

Schroeder Cherry performing his puppet show: “Can You Spell Harlem?” at the Aaron Douglas Family Day event on September 13, 2008.

Brian Collier, illustrator of Barack Obama: Son of Promise, Child of Hope, led a collage-making workshop for children.

One of the participants, of the collage-making workshop, displaying his artwork.
The passing in 2006 of media activist, educator, and social work analyst Preston Wilcox, and the acquisition of his papers by the Schomburg Center, add an important name to the roster of black intellectuals who made Harlem their home. "Wilcox's long residence in Harlem, given his interests and energy, has involved him in just about every major event and incident in the community's history over the last 60 years or so," wrote New York Amsterdam News columnist Herb Boyd in 2004.

Born in Youngstown, Ohio in 1923, the gangly 6 foot 3 Wilcox moved to New York with his mother shortly after World War II, to complete his education and to play basketball. He played with the Morehouse Maroon Tigers for a brief stint before his induction into the U.S. Army during World War II, and was the first African American to sign a professional basketball contract in New York in 1948. He played with the New York Gothams, the Brooklyn Pros, and the Harlem Yankees.

Graduating from the City College of New York in 1949, "Brother Wilcox" as he was later known, accepted a job as a social investigator with the Department of Welfare in New York, and later as Director of the Maria Lawton Center for Older People in Bedford-Stuyvesant. His social work experience also involved running a gym program, "cooling out gang confrontations" in Brooklyn and at a detention center for juvenile delinquents in the Bronx. Wilcox earned a Master's degree in social work at Columbia University in 1957. His social work praxis was grounded in his involvement with community groups and social service agencies in East Harlem from 1957 through the mid-1960s.

From 1958 to 1964, Preston Wilcox worked as a tenant organizer and later as director of the East Harlem Project; as a program consultant to the East Harlem Summer Festival, a United Neighborhood Houses initiative designed to prevent juvenile delinquency; and as a consultant and catalyst for the Massive Economic Neighborhood Development, an anti-poverty program in East Harlem. He also participated as a social researcher in the Princeton University six week summer studies program for junior high school students that led to the nationally-funded Upward Bound Program. Known as "the father of school decentralization" in New York City, and "the leading theoretician of the community control movement," Wilcox was at the forefront of the campaigns at Intermediate School 201 in Harlem and later in the Ocean-Brownsville school district, for parent participation in curriculum development and in the hiring of school supervisors and teachers.

A prolific writer, he authored some 200 articles, position papers, and essays on public education and community empowerment, published in professional journals and as chapters in books between 1963 and 1973. He also taught courses in social work theory and community organization at Columbia University's School of Social Work between 1963 and 1968, and at Clark Atlanta University, Medgar Evers College, and other institutions of higher learning in the 1970s. In 1972, after 20 years of involvement in the black educational movement, he reached...
the conclusion that “One cannot be Black and in higher education in white America.” In a provocative “Letter to Black Educators” published in the Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, he maintained that it was impossible “to get through a white institution without Uncle Tommy,” and that higher education was either “irrelevant” or thrived on “the exploitation of the miseries of nearby residents.” He opted instead for the AFRAM model of advocacy and community empowerment.

Wilcox, along with Kenneth Haskins and Gregory Simms, founded AFRAM Associates in 1968 as a public service agency to provide technical assistance to community groups in the areas of education, economic development, and consumer rights. Between 1970 and 1975, AFRAM operated a parent-implemented program in education, funded by the Follow Through Program Division of Compensatory Education of the U.S. Office of Education, at eight AFRAM-affiliated sites in Arkansas, Massachusetts, Illinois, Michigan, New York, New Jersey, and the District of Columbia. AFRAM also operated a farm experiment, AFRAM Farm, in upstate New York, as a campsite and recreational center for urban-bound families and groups, and as a conference and rural educational research and study center. In later years, AFRAM evolved into one-person alternative clearinghouse compiling and disseminating information relevant to the black community. An admirer of Malcolm X, Wilcox maintained an informal network of Malcolm X followers and former associates: the Malcolm X Lovers Network.

A Rich Archive, Now Open to the Public

The Preston Wilcox Collection comprises 21 linear feet (50 archival boxes) of personal and professional papers, writings, office files, and printed matter, documenting the author’s dual career as an educator and community organizer. Included are biographical and autobiographical narratives; some correspondence and organization files; an extensive writings series; proposals, minutes, reports, and other documents dating from 1958 to 1965 pertaining to the East Harlem Project, the East Harlem Summer Festival, and the Massive Economic Neighborhood Development (MEND); confidential files from the 1964 Princeton Summer Studies Program, the pilot project for the pre-college Upward Bound program; compilations of material on public schools, decentralization, and community control; and AFRAM’s surviving records. Some of the themes explored in the writings are: decentralization and parental decision-making, community organization and economic development, Black Power versus integration, social policy and white racism, empowering the poor, and black studies and black schools.

The AFRAM files include the following categories: Administrative, Publications, Parent Participation in Follow Through, Malcolm X Lovers Network, and Vertical Files. The latter two categories are compilations of articles and other printed matter, with editorial notes by Wilcox on Malcolm X, and other selected topics and personalities, including education, community control, reparations, Harlem, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King, Jr., Kwame Toure (Stokely Carmichael), and Leonard Jeffries.

The photographic and audiovisual components of the Wilcox archive are not yet available for research. A copy of the finding-aid from which this article is extracted is available by sending an e-mail request to scmarbref@nypl.org. For more information, please call (212) 491-2224.

* Processed the Preston Wilcox Papers
NEW!!!

African Americans in Politics Postcard Book
A special commemorative postcard book, produced by the Schomburg Center and Pomegranate Communications, features 30 cards highlighting individuals and events of the black experience in American politics. This postcard book also serves as a companion piece to the Schomburg Center exhibition, African Americans and American Politics.
Price: $9.99

A Journey into 365 Days of Black History: Notable Women 2009 Wall Calendar
By the Schomburg Center, IOKTS Production, and Pomegranate Communications
The 2009 wall calendar focuses on African-American women who have risen to prominence and power despite numerous obstacles. The calendar features photographs from the Schomburg Center’s Photograph and Prints Division as well as biographical text on women like Jane Bolin, Marian Anderson, Lorraine Hansberry, and Katherine Dunham.
Price: $13.99

A Journey into 365 Days of Black History in Praise of Women 2009 Engagement Calendar
By the Schomburg Center, IOKTS Production, and Pomegranate Communications
The 2009 engagement calendar’s theme is also African-American women. It features artists, intellectuals, activists and also highlights key events in black history, specifically those connected with black women.
Price: $14.99

The engagement and wall calendars make nice gifts or collector’s items. Both calendars sell out fast, so don’t want until the last minute to get yours!

Public Programs Highlight

The New York City Opera and the Schomburg Center present Opera Matters: Black History at City Opera, a three-part collaboration celebrating the important African American works and artists who have graced City Opera’s stage and featuring discussion, live performance, special guests and historic audio and video clips.

January 28 at 7 p.m.
“I’m on My Way”: Black History at New York City Opera
Last season, City Opera welcomed audiences to its New York premiere production of Margaret Garner, with a large African-American cast and libretto by Nobel laureate Toni Morrison. But Margaret Garner was but the latest of many works in New York City Opera’s repertory to highlight the African-American experience.

February 11 at 7 p.m.
“One Fine Day”: A Tribute to Camilla Williams
This special evening celebrates Camilla Williams, City’s Opera’s first Madame Butterfly, and later an important singing teacher at Indiana University and who, as a favorite artist of Dr. Martin Luther King, became a significant figure in the Civil Rights movement.

March 31 at 7 p.m.
“Troubled Island”: 60th Anniversary Celebration
We celebrate the 60th anniversary of the first world premiere in City Opera history: Troubled Island by William Grant Still and Langston Hughes. First performed on March 31, 1949, it was the first world premiere of any African-American composer’s work presented by a major American opera company.

Tickets for NYC Opera shows: $10.
To charge tickets, call The Schomburg Shop at 212.491.2206, Tuesday–Saturday, noon–6 p.m.
E-mail Announcements

The Schomburg Center would like to send our members e-mail announcements about upcoming program events. To join our e-mailing list, please fill out this coupon and return it to Membership, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, 515 Malcolm X Boulevard, New York, NY 10037.

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ON-LINE SERVICES

Schomburg Studies on the Black Experience

The Schomburg Studies on the Black Experience, a digital archive of 30 volumes on major themes in African Diasporan history and culture available on-line by Pro-Quest to colleges and universities on a subscription basis, has been updated. The latest version features 30 essays written by an academic expert and features a timeline, images, and an extensive bibliography. Also included in this edition is “American Political Systems and the Response of the Black Community.”

The archive provides groundbreaking work from the foremost experts in the field. These leading scholars have selected core articles and book chapters that illustrate the best research and writing in a variety of disciplines, including history, religion, sociology, political science, economics, art, literature, and psychology. Presented in essay form, the writing is self-contained but links together to provide an exhaustive, interdisciplinary survey of the experience of peoples of African descent. While centered on African Americans, the survey examines African and Afro-Caribbean experiences as well. Schomburg Studies on the Black Experience presents ongoing debates and controversies in a thought-provoking and engaging way with the goal of encouraging continuing scholarship.

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AFRICANA HERITAGE

2009 Volume 9, Number 1

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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!

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