

AFRICANA HERITAGE

The New York Public Library • Volume 7, No. 4, 2007 • Where Every Month Is Black History Month

GRAND OPENING OF THE NEW SCHOMBURG CENTER



Terrence Jennings



Bob Gore

From left to right: Assemblyman Keith L.T. Wright; Manhattan Borough President Scott Stringer; Chairman of the Board, NYPL, Catherine Marron; President, NYPL, Paul LeClerc; NY State Senator Bill Perkins; and Schomburg Chief Howard Dodson cutting the ribbon to unveil the New Schomburg Center on May 10, 2007.

Cutting the ribbon in front of the new Scholars Center are: (left to right) Howard Dodson; Councilwoman Inez Dickens; Alma Rangel; Assemblyman Larry Seabrook; Assemblyman Vincent Gintelli; and Director of the Scholars-in-Residence Program Colin Palmer. For more images from the *Grand Opening of the New Schomburg Center* see page 6.

HERITAGE WATCH

Breaking the Silence

BY HOWARD DODSON

Prior to the 1960s, the basis of much of the scholarship and the perspectives on slavery available derived from the abolitionist literature and campaign of the 1830s to the 1860s. This body of literature was written or collected to document the horrors of slavery. Its purpose was to show how slavery oppressed, exploited, and victimized the enslaved African population—hence the victim’s perspective. A closer, more critical reading of many of the same sources, especially the slave narratives, revealed a much more complex set of relations in slavery and an equally more diverse and complex enslaved African population.



AARRIS Architects

A rendering of the African Burial Ground Memorial designed by Rodney Leon. The Memorial will be dedicated October 5-6, 2007.

Over the next four decades, the scholarship on slavery and the slave trade shifted from the dominant victim’s perspective to a more nuanced one in which the enslaved African population became



Michael Darough

The Amistad sailing away on June 20, 2007 for its yearlong journey tracing the transatlantic slave trade routes, to commemorate the bicentennial of the abolition of the slave trade both in the United States and Britain.

the subjects—active agents in the making of their own history rather than mere victims of oppressive, exploitative, all powerful slavery systems. The results of this approach and the scholarship it produced have been stunning and quite revelatory—becoming the foundation of the Schomburg Center’s action strategy to re-

member America’s slavery past and hopefully prevent its ever being forgotten again.

Seven years ago, the Schomburg Center celebrated its 75th Anniversary and unveiled an exhibition on the slave trade and slavery. *Let Us Forget: The Triumph Over Slavery* became the first major exhibition on the subject in the United States. Comprised of more than 300

Continued on page 4

There are lots of reasons to celebrate here at the Schomburg Center! We finally completed the first phase of a major renovation project and held a series of highly successful Grand Opening events. Thousands of people came to see the newly renovated facilities, view the two inaugural exhibitions, and marvel at the fresh new look of the building façade and lobby. Thanks to New York City Council President, Christine Quinn, the Council, and the Center's Councilwoman, Inez Dickens, funds have been provided to open the City's libraries six-days-a-week!

This means that for the Schomburg Center, funds that had been cut from our annual city appropriation over the last few years have been restored making it possible for us to hire additional staff in all of the Center's collection divisions and extend public service hours in each. Councilwoman Inez Dickens took the leadership in securing a \$7.5 million capital budget

Now it's on to preparations for the unveiling of the Memorial for the African Burial Ground National Monument the weekend of October 5.

— Howard Dodson, Schomburg Chief



appropriation to support the estimated \$9-10 million second phase of the Center's larger renovation needs. These funds will be used to, among other things, put a new roof on the Landmark building, renovate the Langston Hughes Theater, upgrade and renovate the Art and Artifacts, Moving Image and Recorded Sound, and Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books divisions!

There are lots of reasons to celebrate here at the Schomburg Center. And I would like to take this opportunity to again thank Senator Bill Perkins, Mayor Bloomberg, and Councilwoman Dickens for the contributions they made to the success of Phase I. I also want to thank Councilwoman Dickens for the leadership role she played in seeking funding to support Phase II!

As members of the Schomburg Society for the Preservation of Black Culture, you play a critical role

in helping us secure support from public and private sources. Inevitably, whenever we solicit such contributions, we are asked what kind of support we are receiving from our constituency. Your contributions — both the number of donors and the cumulative amount you give each year from all of the 50 states and the District of Columbia make it possible for us to say that we enjoy genuine national support and that your individual gifts of \$35-\$5,000 are evidence of your commitment to the mission and goals of the Schomburg Center. We thank you for your support and for your investment in the Center's future. As you can see, it encourages others to support us.

We had a very busy summer. The first group of scholars to use our new Schomburg Scholars Center was the 11 individuals selected to participate in the six-week 2007 Schomburg-Mellon Summer Humanities Institute, which opened on June 18. Six rising seniors from Historically Black Colleges and Universities and five from New York City colleges and universities were selected as fellows in this intensive and immersive course in African-American and African Diasporan history and culture, taught by some of the leading scholars in the field. The goal of the program is to encourage these young people to pursue Ph.D. degrees in African-American and African Diasporan Studies.

People are arriving by the bus loads from throughout the country to see the New Schomburg Center. Attendance at public programs since the opening has attracted overflow audiences. Two women-focused programs — a panel discussion on the treatment of black women in the public media sponsored by a coalition of women's organizations and a concert, *Ladies Sing the Blues*, drew over 500 people each to our 340-seat auditorium. Both *Black Art: Treasures from the Schomburg* and *Stereotypes vs. Humantypes: Images of Blacks in the 19th and 20th Centuries* have been real hits, evoking amazement and providing enlightenment if viewers' comments are to be believed. The always festive Harlem Book Fair took place over the weekend of July 21 with C-Span coverage of forums at the Schomburg Center.

Now it's on to preparations for the unveiling of the African Burial Ground Memorial Monument the weekend of October 5. We look forward to seeing you here this fall!

STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

During the Grand Opening Celebrations Schomburg Center staff, volunteers, and alumni gathered to take group photos:



Current Schomburg staff members.

Bob Gore



Schomburg Center volunteer corps with Howard Dodson.

Bob Gore



Current and past Schomburg staff members fill the entire stage in the Langston Hughes Auditorium.

Bob Gore

Scholars-in-Residence Class of 2008

Johanna Fernandez

STUDY: *When the World was their Stage: The Young Lords and the 1960's*. Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of History, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Nicole R. Fleetwood

STUDY: *In the Light: Visibility, Gender and the Discourse of Blackness*. Assistant Professor, American Studies Program, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Kali Gross

STUDY: *Mary Hannah Tabbs, Murderess: A Case Study of Social Violence and Urban Justice in Philadelphia, 1887*. Assistant Professor of History and Director of Africana Studies, Departments of History and Politics, Drexel University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Shannen King

STUDY: *Home to Harlem: Community, Gender, and Working Class Politics in Harlem, New York, 1916-1928*. Visiting Assistant Professor, Department of History, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

Ivor Lynn Miller

STUDY: *West African Ekpe and Cuban Abakua: A Cross River Basin Diaspora in the Caribbean*. Visiting Research Faculty, African Studies Center, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts.

Evie Shockley

STUDY: *Renegade Poetics: Black Aesthetics and Formal Innovation in African American Poetry*. Assistant Professor, Department of English, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

At the African Burial Ground reinterment ceremony, horse-drawn hearses led a procession up Broadway, the Canyon of Heroes, to the African Burial Ground. Right: Archaeologists examined and studied the 419 remains that were excavated at the burial site.



Continued from page 1

objects, *Lest We Forget* documented the origin and development of the slave trade from Africa to the Americas. Reflecting the new scholarship, however, it went a step further. It explored the ways in which critically-thinking, self-actualizing enslaved Africans transformed themselves into new people in the midst of slavery. The new languages, religions, families, and cultures they created were documented and celebrated as well as the forms of resistance and struggle they fashioned.

In conjunction with National Geographic Press, the Center published a companion book to the exhibition entitled *Jubilee*. An online exhibition was also created on the Schomburg's Web site. Early in 2004, the Center entered into an agreement with UNESCO to expand the site and make it one of the centerpieces of the *Year to Commemorate the Struggle Against Slavery and its Abolition*. In its expanded form, the site added more content about slavery and abolition in Latin America and the Caribbean. *Lest We Forget*, the online exhibition, is now available in four languages.

The Center also collaborated with UNESCO to create traveling versions of the original *Lest We Forget* exhibition. A total of six bilingual exhibitions in 32 framed color panels have been created for distribution throughout the Atlantic World. To date, bilingual versions have appeared in Cameroon, South

Lest We Forget: The Triumph Over Slavery became the first major exhibition on the subject [of slavery] in the United States.

Africa, Cape Verde, Senegal, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, The Bahamas, Jamaica, Dominican Republic, Trinidad, Brazil, Ecuador, Sweden, France, Finland, and Norway. While on tour, it has served as a catalyst for a variety of educational and cultural programs interpreting and/or commemorating the struggle against slavery and its abolition.

In February 2005 another exhibition, *In Motion: The African-American Migration Experience*, focused on documenting the major migrations of people of African descent to, within, and outside of the United States. A remarkable online version, www.inmotionaame.org, includes over 8,000 images and over 16,000 pages of text — narratives, scholarly essays, primary source documents, and curriculum modules. National Geographic Press published a companion book and the Center produced a Black History Month Kit for dissemination to teachers. A traveling version of *In Motion* opened for a limited time during Black History Month

2006 at Miami's Lyric Theatre.

Since the rediscovery of the African Burial Ground in lower Manhattan during construction on a federal office building in 1991, the Schomburg Center has been involved in its historic preservation and interpretation. A Federal Steering Committee, headed by Schomburg Chief Howard Dodson, drafted a report to the United States Congress outlining the ways in which the burial ground should be memorialized. Following the report's recommendations, Howard University's W. Montague Cobb Laboratory conducted scientific study of the 419 remains that were excavated. The African Burial Ground has been designated as both a City and National Landmark and in February 2006, President Bush proclaimed the portion located at Duane and Elk Streets a National Monument. The full five-acre site is believed to be the final resting place of over 20,000 Africans from colonial New York.

The 419 excavated ancestral remains were reinterred at the African Burial Ground Memorial site on October 4, 2003. As part of the reinterment ceremonies, the Schomburg Center organized a series of commemorative programs in five cities over a three-day period, ending with a vigil, tributes, and special programming in New York City. Since then, annual tributes to the ancestors have taken place, including a Ring Shout ceremony with New York City Schoolchildren circling the



Some of the thousands of schoolchildren participating in the Annual Ring Shout commemoration at the African Burial Ground.



Former Mayor David Dinkins speaking at the ceremony following the symbolic arrival via water of the excavated remains for reburial. Also participating were Mayor Michael Bloomberg, former NYS Secretary of State Randy Daniels, Congressman Charles Rangel, Senator Charles Schumer, and co-hosts Delroy Lindo and Phylicia Rashad.

original burial ground site. The Ring Shout has grown every year—reaching 3,000 participants last year.

In April 2005, the U.S. General Services Administration and the National Park Service selected Rodney Léon, of AARRIS Architects, to design the African Burial Ground Memorial. A dedication ceremony as well as celebratory events will take place the weekend of October 5, 2007. The Office of Public Education and Interpretation, located in the lobby of the federal building at 290 Broadway, continues to provide site tours of the commemorative artwork and memorial site, documentary film presentations, and programs for educators. A link documenting the African Burial Ground and the commemorative tribute programs is available on the Schomburg Center's homepage. Keeping with the goal to make the New York's African Burial Ground a major heritage tourism destination, the African Burial Ground Monument Foundation, was founded by Edward Lewis, Chairman and Founder of Essence Communications, Inc.; Dr. James Forbes, former Senior Minister of Riverside Church; and Howard Dodson, Schomburg Chief. The Foundation aims to raise funds and generate global outreach for the African Burial Ground National Monument. October's Dedication Ceremony will be the Foundation's first task.

A second slavery-related project undertaken by the Schomburg Center focused on

a New York State legislative initiative, which established a New York State Freedom Trail Commission to document and interpret the state's Underground Railroad history. The Schomburg Center was contracted to research and write the Commission's background document and action agenda. Historic sites, personalities, and events related to slavery in New York have been documented and selected historic properties are being restored. A historic marker program is being planned to identify significant Freedom

Slavery related topics have been a part of the Center's annual program agenda.

Trail sites, events, and personalities throughout the state, the ultimate goal of which is to organize educational programs and heritage tourism activities throughout the state. The Center has also drafted a *Freedom Trail Curriculum* which has been mandated to be incorporated into the State's K-12 curriculum.

This year, Great Britain marked its Bicentennial of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade with a series of events and in 2008 the United States will recall its own. To coincide with these two important mile-

stones, the United Nations organized a special month long exhibition of *Lest We Forget* in March 2007, to observe the International Day for the Commemoration of the Abolition of the Transatlantic Slave Trade; and the Amistad America's Freedom Schooner Amistad began its yearlong *Atlantic Freedom Tour* sojourn in June retracing the slave route. As part of its continuous involvement and interpretation of slavery, the Schomburg Center is a member of the planning committee for the 2008 U.S. commemoration.

The Schomburg Center has continued to build its collections of primary and secondary source materials on slavery, the slave trade, and the African Diaspora. Slavery-related topics have been a regular part of the Center's annual program agenda. Finally, the Center and these initiatives have been catalysts for additional programs by other organizations. Americans in general and African Americans in particular are still wary of remembering slavery and the slave trade as a fundamental part of America's national heritage. But the contributions of those who were enslaved to building this country should not be forgotten. The educational content of the initiatives described herein have contributed in meaningful ways to opening dialogues on these subjects. While there is still a lot of work to be done, the strategies for action described herein have worked and are working to *break the silence*.

Selected Images from the Various Events to Celebrate the Grand Opening of the New Schomburg Center



Bob Gore

Howard Dodson cutting the ribbon in front of the new Latimer/Edison Gallery with (left to right) John Banks, Vice President, Government Relations, Con Edison; and New York Public Library, Chairman of the Board, Catherine Marron; New York Public Library, President and Chief Executive Officer Paul LeClerc; and Andrew W. Mellon Director of The New York Public Libraries David S. Ferriero.



Anthony Toussaint

Hypnotic Brass Ensemble provided entertainment in front of the new Schomburg Center.



Terrence Jennings

Hamalali Wayunagu Garifuna dancers at the Open House celebration.



Terrence Jennings

Kaïssa and her band performed during members' previews on May 10 and May 11, 2007.



Terrence Jennings

At the Center's Public Open House on Saturday, May 12, two young participants show off their complimentary face painting by Glitterbug.



Terrence Jennings

Amadoma Bediako led an enthusiastic audience with "Back to the Roots" African storytelling at the Public Open House.



Terrence Jennings

Schomburg Society members received an exclusive guided tour of the *Black Art* exhibition in the new Latimer/Edison gallery with the show's curator Deirdre Bibby.

AROUND THE SCHOMBURG CENTER



Bob Gore



Bob Gore

Dianne McIntyre and Olu Dara performing their collage *Pieces of Pieces* on June 3, 2007. *Pieces of Pieces* joined Olu Dara's band with Dianne McIntyre's dancers. Support for this concert is from The New York State Music Fund, established by the New York State Attorney General at Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.



Terrence Jennings

Schomburg Chief Howard Dodson with author Colin Channer and activist/actor/author Ruby Dee at a special book celebration for both of their books, *Girl with the Golden Shoes* and *Life Lit by Some Large Vision*, respectively, on May 17, 2007.



Terrence Jennings

Saxophonist Sonny Fortune at the annual JVC Father's Day Concert on June 17, 2007.



Bob Gore

Participants of the August Wilson play *Radio Golf* panel on May 17, 2007.



Bob Gore

Participants of the *Celebration of the Ethiopian Millennium* panel and film screening on June 10, (left to right): Rabbi Hailu Paris, Beejhy Barhany, Howard Dodson, Dr. William Scott, and Professor Yvonne Vanterpool.



Terrence Jennings

On June 26, the Schomburg hosted a special forum, organized by various women's groups called "R-E-S-P-E-C-T When Did We Lose It? How Do We Get It Back?" C. Vivian Stringer, Coach of the Rutgers Women's Basketball Team, The Scarlet Knights, served as a special guest; Harriette Cole, Creative Editor of *EBONY Magazine*, served as the moderator, and the panelists included: Gary Anthony Ramsay, President, New York Association of Black Journalists; Jewelnel Davis, University Chaplain, Columbia University; Tamika Mallory, Director, Decency Initiative, National Action Network; Maurice Cox, Vice President, Pepsi-Cola Company; John Flateau, Dean External Affairs, Medgar Evers College; Vanessa Bush, Executive Editor, *ESSENCE Magazine*; and Cathy Lee Jones, Franchise Owner, Wu Tang Clan.

The Slave Trade and Its Abolition

Several studies on the international slave trade have been published recently and new scholarship has emerged that paints in great details a more comprehensive as well as more focused picture of this crime against humanity. In 2008, year of the bicentennial of the American abolition of the transatlantic slave trade, the Schomburg Center will offer several programs related to this topic. Two teachers' workshops on new perspectives on the slave trade and its abolition will take place in November 2007 and January 2008.

In January, a new Web site dedicated to the abolition, its consequences, successes, and failures will be launched. It will explore the abolitionist movement, the slave trade and

In February, three historians will present the latest scholarship on the slave trade, from the general to the particular.

the Constitution, the illegal slave trade, abolition in the rest of the Western Hemisphere, and the fight to reopen the slave trade in the US. Illustrations, books, book chapters, manuscripts, and articles will enable users to get in-depth information and analyses.

In February, three historians will present the latest scholarship on the slave trade, from the general to the particular. David



Photographs and Prints Division

Much is now known about Africans who were victims of the slave trade thanks to autobiographical and biographical accounts, such as one published in 1734 about the life of Job ben Solomon of Senegal. Enslaved in Maryland in 1731, he returned to his country three years later.

Eltis, Emory University, Atlanta, will explain numbers, ethnicities, and destinations throughout the Americas with the help of a new database of 35,000 slave voyages. Paul E. Lovejoy, York University, Toronto, will talk about deported Africans' autobiographical and biographical accounts, and what we can learn from them. Sylviane A. Diouf, Schomburg Center, will recount the detailed story of a group of young people transported to the United States in 1860. Also in February, a historian, a microbiologist, and a representative from a DNA testing laboratory will discuss what DNA can and cannot do in the tracing of African ancestry.

Undergrad Summer Institute Wraps Third Year

This summer the Schomburg Center held its third Schomburg-Mellon Humanities Summer Institute to encourage minority students and others with an interest in African-American and African Diasporan Studies to pursue graduate studies in the humanities. It is a joint effort by the Center and the Mellon Foundation, which share the deep concern of universities and learned societies regarding the low number of African-American graduate students in the humanities. Of particular concern for the Center is the paucity of graduate students in African-American and African Diasporan studies.

In order to help improve this situation, the Schomburg-Mellon Humanities Summer Institute identifies carefully selected prospective scholars, develops and nurtures their interest, and provides them with intellectual challenges and orientations to encourage them to pursue humanities careers and to reach their full potential. The Summer Institute took place from June 18 to July 27. The fellows in attendance were from New York City universities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Six students joined the program from HBCUs in various states: Christopher Bonner, Melanie Chambliss, and Omare Kinsey, Howard University, Washington D.C.; Shannon D. Malone, Tougaloo

College, Mississippi; Taqwaa Saleem, Savannah State University, South Carolina; and Courtney Sanders, Hampton University, Virginia. From New York came Marjuan Canady, Fordham; Liana George, New York University; Ianna Hawkins Owen, Hunter College; Keondra Prier, Barnard College; and Sheena Stringer, Fordham. Nicole Burrowes, who is pursuing a Ph.D. in history at City

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Bob Gore

Third year participants of the Schomburg-Mellon Humanities Institute with lecturer and scholar Robert A. Hill, Professor of history at UCLA.

University of New York and Sean Greene, a doctoral student in history at the University of Pennsylvania, served as their mentors throughout the program.

The theme of the Institute was "Africana Age." Focusing on the 20th century, it explored the dominant political, economic, and cultural events of the period; black achievements in social, artistic and cultural realms that challenged the myth of white supremacy; efforts to

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Migrations: 366 Days of Black History 2008 Wall Calendar and Engagement Calendar, by the Schomburg Center, IOKTS Productions and Pomegranate Communications

Focusing on the theme of Migrations, the 2008 wall and engagement calendars incorporate images, paintings, and sculptures along with important people, places, and events in African-American and African Diasporan history. These calendars make beautiful gifts and collectibles.

Calendar, price: \$13.99; Engagement Calendar, price: \$14.99

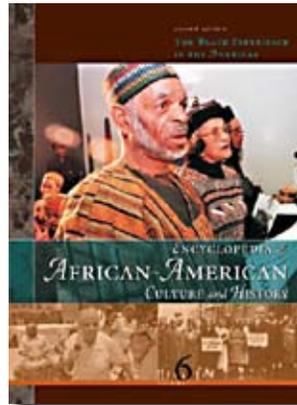


Lest We Forget: The Triumph Over Slavery, a postcard book by the Schomburg Center and Pomegranate Communications

This beautiful postcard book captures some of the highlights of the international exhibition bearing the same name. It features 30 cards made up of photographs, art, and documents that tell the story of a people's journey to freedom. Price: \$ 9.95

The Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History, 2nd Edition: The Black Experience in the Americas

The second edition of *The Encyclopedia of African-American Culture and History* (Thomson Gale) is a six volume, comprehensive compendium of knowledge on the historical and cultural development of people of African descent at the beginning of the 21st century. A product of the most recent scholarship on the African-American and



African Diasporan experience, *The Encyclopedia* offers a convenient introduction to this vast array of information. **Note: Limited sets**

are available to Schomburg Society members beginning at the Supporter level (\$100 and above) at a special price of \$300 (Regular price is \$695).

The Schomburg Shop is having a special clearance on books. Don't miss this opportunity to get dozens of books at a discounted price. Stop by The Schomburg Shop today!

EXHIBITION



Ghanaian Independence, Old Polo Grounds, Accra, March 6, 1957. (Left to right) Archie Casely-Hayford, Komla Gbedemah, Kwame Nkrumah, Kojo Botsio, and Krobo Edusei. Photograph by Griff Davis, Courtesy of the Griff Davis Family Collection.

Re-Dedicate: Ghana @ Fifty: An Exhibition

November 8, 2007 – December 31, 2007

The exhibition will include over 50 photographs of people well known to Ghana's independence, portraits, and views of the country. It will be divided into five thematic sections: On the Front Lines; Seeds of Revolution; Fruits of Independence; African American Expatriates and Ghanaians in the U.S.; and Contemporary Legacies. *Ghana @ Fifty* will offer a comparative look at the legacies of Ghanaian Independence.



AFRICANS IN THE AMERICAS:
CELEBRATING THE ANCESTRAL HERITAGE

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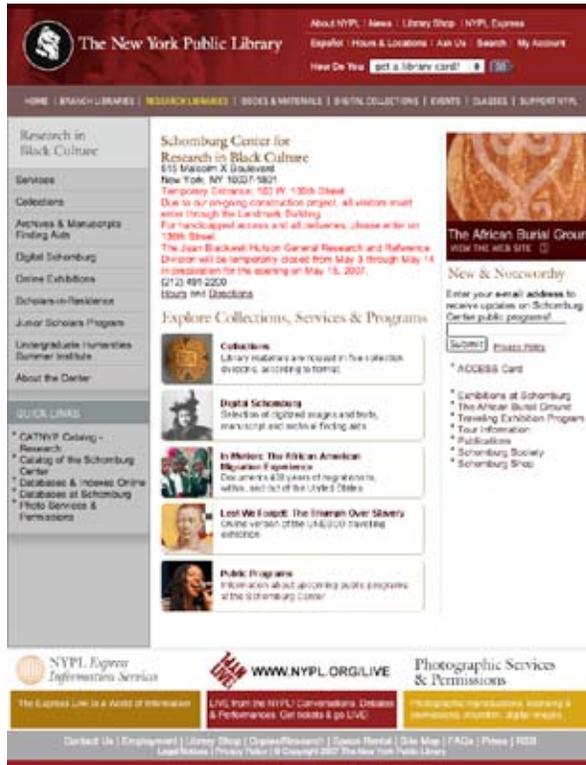
African Burial Ground National Monument Memorial Dedication
Friday, October 5 – Saturday, October 6, 2007

For a complete schedule of activities, please visit schomburgcenter.org.

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In addition to our research services and programs, the Schomburg Center has an active rental service. The beautiful facilities are professionally equipped and can accommodate a wide range of special events from concerts, theater, and cocktail receptions to educational seminars and conferences. The Schomburg is a truly unique and special place to host an event. For rates and more information, contact:

Damond Haynes
Events Coordinator
Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
515 Malcolm X Boulevard
New York, New York 10037
212.491.2257
schomburgcenterevents@nypl.org



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AFRICANA HERITAGE

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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.



Dr. Maya Angelou

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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