The spectacular Schomburg Center 85th Anniversary and Tribute to Howard Dodson warmed the winter Harlem night at Aaron Davis Hall on January 24, 2011. With special guests Dr. Maya Angelou and Cicely Tyson, co-hosts Avery Brooks and La Chanze opened the gala evening of history tellers, musicians, dancers, and singers. The celebration featured the world premiere of the multimedia performing arts work Transformations, a salute to 20th century African, African-American and African Diasporan achievements, produced by Tony Award-winning choreographer and director George Faison.

The gala evening consisted of two receptions—a VIP one at the Gatehouse and a general reception in the Atrium at Aaron Davis Hall; a tribute program, and a post-tribute dinner. Guests at the Gatehouse and dinner enjoyed the music of Saleem Waters. The evening concluded with the historic “passing of the Schomburg key” from Howard Dodson to incoming Director Dr. Khalil Gibran Muhammad.

Featured performers included Genovis Albright, Maude Arnold, Nick Ashford and Valerie Simpson, Karen Calloway, Maurice Chestnut, Charity Dawson, Andre Deshields, Ebony Jo Ann, Josette Marshack, Andre Smith, Lillias White, Jeffrey Wright, and the Cicely Tyson School of Performing and Fine Arts Concert Choir.

Narrators for the script, written by Khepra Burns, were Jerome Preston Bates, Sherry Bronfman, Daniel Carlton and Kim Yancey Moore. Musicians included Brian Whitted, Eli Fountain, Patience Higgins, Jay Hoggard, and Leon Dorsey. Proceeds from the gala will benefit the Schomburg Center Junior Scholars Program along with other Center research services and programs.

Gala photos continued on page 4
The next words you read on this page of *Afri
cana Heritage* will be that of Director-designate Khalil Gibran Muhammad. These are the last official words you will read "From this Chief." I don't know if Khalil will keep the Chief title, but future editor's letter in *Afri
cana Heritage* will come from him.

I did not coin the title "Chief." I inherited it. When I arrived at the Schomburg Center in September of 1984 and was shown to my office, the brass nameplate on the door read: "Chief." It appears that my predecessors, Wendell Wray and Jean Blackwell Hutson, had this title before I arrived. It also appears that in its original form, it was a shortened or elevated version of The New York Public Library's job title "Chief Librarian."

I frankly didn't know what its origins were or what it meant. But I liked it and I decided to claim it and make it my own. Within the context of African and African-American culture and lore, the word has numerous meanings. I decided not to define it but to try to live up to all the positive ways the word is associated with the concept of leadership. Ultimately, you will have to decide how much I lived up to your leadership expectations. Though my official title was/is Director of the Schomburg Center, I hope that my use of the title "Chief" has not sullied your concept of it.

As announced earlier, I had planned to leave office on the first of February. As you can see, I am still here. Director-designate Dr. Muhammad has contractual obligations to his university and the American Historical Association. The New York Public Library asked and I have agreed to stay on duty until July when Khalil will be free to assume his duties. Among other things, I am putting together a series of orientation sessions for Dr. Muhammad—three to five days a week every month from March to July. The goal is to pass on to him as many of my external contacts and relationships as possible while immersing him in the day-to-day operations of the Center. It is expected that by July, he will be ready to hit the ground running.

I take this opportunity to thank you again for your support and for making me at least feel like "The Chief." The Schomburg Center is a richer, stronger, more appreciated and revered institution because you believed in it and invested in its future.

— Howard Dodson, Schomburg Chief

“I take this opportunity to thank you again for your support and for making me at least feel like “The Chief.” The Schomburg Center is a richer, stronger, more appreciated and revered institution because you believed in it and invested in its future.”

— Howard Dodson, Schomburg Chief
On Thursday, January 6, 2011 the Schomburg Center hosted the Opening Plenary Session for The State of African American and African Diaspora Studies: Methodology, Pedagogy, and Research conference. The three-day conference, which was sponsored by the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, The Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean (IRADAC) of the Graduate Center of The City University of New York, The Program in Black Studies of The City College of The City University of New York, brought together scholars, students, and the general public to assess the current state of African American and African Diaspora Studies.

Before the Plenary, there was a special tribute to the Center’s retiring Director, Howard Dodson. The panelists for the Opening Plenary Session were Cathy Cohen, The University of Chicago; Johnetta Cole, Smithsonian Institution; Vincent Harding, Iliff School of Theology; Maulana Karenga, California State University, Long Beach; Dr. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Indiana University and incoming Director of the Schomburg Center. Howard Dodson moderated the session.

On Friday and Saturday January 7-8, more than 100 sessions were held at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Hundreds of scholars attended the sessions that provided an opportunity for them to examine ways in which the studying and teaching of the black experience have evolved since the 1960s.

The 2011 conference was a follow-up to the 2003 State of Black Studies that was sponsored by the Schomburg Center, The Program in African-American Studies at Princeton University, and The City University of New York Institute for Research on the African Diaspora in the Americas.
The Schomburg Center

Celebrates 85 Years
Over nearly 20 centuries, Africans journeyed to distant lands of the Indian Ocean world. Most of these men and women from dozens of ethnicities and societies, and practicing various religions, initially came from the coastal areas of eastern Africa. Over time, more came from the interior Great Lakes region, followed by Central Africa. In India, they became known as Siddi or Habshi. Siddi is either derived from ‘sayyid,’ an honorific title used in Arabic, or from ‘saydi,’ meaning “captive” or “prisoner of war;” Habshi is derived from Al-Habash, the Arabic term for Abyssinia (Ethiopia.)

Ethiopians traveled to the Arabian Peninsula, India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka, as early as the 1st century CE as merchants and sailors. Around the 12th century, they traveled as professional soldiers, sailors, and administrators for the Mughals and Arabs. They settled in Northwestern, Northern, and Central India and were mostly Muslim. Some rose through the ranks to become rulers, prime ministers, admirals, generals, and religious leaders. The most prominent was Malik Ambar (1549-1626) born in Harar, Ethiopia. He was sold into slavery, changed owners several times in Yemen, Iraq, and Arabia before arriving in India where he became the prime minister of the sultanate of Ahmadnagar in the Deccan region from 1600 to 1626. Other Africans established dynasties in western India that ruled over independent states until 1941.

In the 15th century, the Portuguese followed by the Dutch, British, and French arrived in the Indian Ocean and South Asia and by the 16th century, they enslaved Eastern Africans and transported them to India. Many of those who ended up in Goa, the Portuguese enclave on the western coast of India, escaped and settled in the Western Ghats mountains of Northern Karnataka where they formed maroon communities. Others left the service of Muslim and Hindu rulers and migrated into the area from various directions at different times.

Today the Siddis number about 50,000 in India. Those who live in Karnataka are about 20,000 (10,000 live in Gujarat and 12,000 in Hyderabad.) Those who fled Portuguese Goa are generally Catholics. Their African origins are probably in the region of Mozambique. Another segment of the Siddi population in Karnataka, which may have come from Hyderabad or the Deccan, is Muslim and speaks Urdu or other local Indian languages. A very small percentage of Karnataka Siddis are Hindu and speak Hindi.

While they have adopted, adapted, and integrated many cultural aspects of the Indian peoples with whom they have lived for generations, Siddis have also retained and transformed certain cultural and artistic traditions from Africa. The performing arts are the strongest, especially Certain music (drumming and song) and dance traditions. In the visual arts, one tradition stands out—the art of patchwork quilts known as kawandi.

Walking through a Siddi village one sees...
A colorful array of quilts (kawandi) draped over fences, hung on lines, or spread on low roofs to be aired and dried in the sun. These wonderful textiles are the traditional beds and covers of many—made with love by women, especially the elderly—for their children and grandchildren. This tradition is not unique to the Siddis; yet Siddi quilts have a distinctive style that sets them apart from those of other groups.

Women, especially older women who can no longer work in the fields, are the most numerous quilters, but younger women who have learned the skills from their mothers or female relatives, may also become well-known quilters. Those with the best reputations are sometimes commissioned to make quilts for friends and neighbors in exchange for goods or cash.

Quilts are traditionally made for family members as sleeping mattresses or covers to keep them warm during the cool, damp Monsoon nights. Small, crib-sized ones are often highly decorated with bright colors and lots of small patches. These fill wooden cribs suspended from the rafters of Siddi homes. Larger ones come in sizes to accommodate one, two or more family members. Ones for three or more persons are seen as auspicious for they imply progeny—a prosperous, growing family with children.

When not in use or folded in piles in a room, kawandi are displayed outside, hanging from roofs, clotheslines, or fences in order to air out and dry in the sun. Their bright colors and vibrant patterns contrast sharply with the brownish red earth and tiled roofs. The beauty and artistry of the finest quilts sometimes prompts friends and neighbors to commission a quilt from a master quilter, but the vast majority of them are made by, and for, a family member.

A Siddi quilt is the visual history of a family and its fashions. It documents the well-worn, discarded clothes of family members over the previous years. Mixing together vibrant array of patterns, colors, and textures from all kinds of fabrics, this patchwork summarizes the fortunes and the styles of family members as they embody the artistic sensibilities of their makers—the women of Siddi communities.

Coming soon to Digital Schomburg is the Web site The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean World. Visit www.schomburg-center.org for more information. The exhibition Soulful Stitching: Patchwork Quilts by Africans (Siddis) of India is currently on view in the Schomburg Center’s Latimer/Edison Gallery until June 30.

**Related Program**

**CONCERT**

Red Baraat Saturday, May 14, 2011
1 p.m. The Schomburg Center in collaboration with Carnegie Hall’s Neighborhood Concert Series presents Red Baraat, the first and only dhol ‘n’ brass band in North America. Red Baraat mends infectious North Indian Bhangra with brass funk and expresses the human spirit through improvisation and a powerful live sound. Free Admission. RSVP required at (212) 491-2040. Carnegie Hall’s Neighborhood Concert Series is sponsored by Target.
For the third installment of the Black Liberation Theology conversations, (from left): Rev. Jeremiah Wright, Dr. Anthea Butler, Howard Dodson, and Dr. Obery Hendricks, focused on Doing Black Liberation in the Age of Obama on December 3, 2010.

Black Rock Coalition Orchestra performs hits from Blaxploitation soundtracks at Bad Mutha...Shut Yo Mouth on November 20, 2010.

Vy Higginson and her Mama Foundation for the Arts Gospel for Teens Choir at the Center’s annual holiday open house on December 11, 2010.

Howard Dodson with two of the photographers featured in the new exhibition *Harlem Views/Diasporan Visions: The New Harlem Renaissance Photographers*, Tyrone Rasheed (middle) and Burroughs Lamar (right).

Lisa Dubois’s works are also featured in the exhibition.

Celebrating Haiti’s musical legacy (below) Emeline Michel celebrates Haiti’s musical legacy with Beethova Obas (left) on January 14, 2011.

Professor Henry J. Drewal, curator of the exhibition *Soulful Stitching: Patchwork Quilts by Africans (Siddis) in India*, at the members’ preview on January 31, 2011.

Exhibition Co-Curator Mary Yearwood with Hakim Mutlaq Inniss (also featured in the exhibition).

Bob Gore
The Schomburg Education Institute will convene again this summer for five days to unite educators (school teachers, college faculty, and community educators) and college students with premier historians and scholars to explore the history and cultures of African Americans and African peoples throughout the Diaspora. Participants will engage in dynamic learning experiences—lectures, interactive workshops, curator talks and community walks—that are connected to the Schomburg’s current exhibitions, permanent collections, and vast digital resources. Fees: five-days for $500, one-day for $125. To register, or to get more information, email schomburged@nypl.org or call (212) 491-2234.

SAVE-THE-DATE: SUMMER 2011
Monday-Friday, July 25-29, 2011
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
The Schomburg Center’s Summer Education Institute 2011: Black History 360°

SAVE-THE-DATE:
Saturday, May 7
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
The Schomburg Center JUNIOR SCHOLARS present
Youth Summit 2011
The Rebirth of Black

Black people have always been trend-setters, trailblazers, and cultural innovators. Black life is constantly reinventing itself—redefining what black is. The youth of today are the next wave of image-makers and the Junior Scholars represent The Rebirth of Black for the 21st century. Join us for our multimedia program of theater, dance, spoken word, video, media, research and visual art presentations on Saturday, May 7, 2011 at the Schomburg Center. The Rebirth of Black is our legacy and this program expresses a full spectrum of ideas, emotions, and critique born from both historical and contemporary analyses of issues facing young Americans of African descent.

Call (212) 491-2234 or email dhollman@nypl.org for more information.

The New York Life Schomburg Center JUNIOR SCHOLARS PROGRAM

SAVE-THE-DATE:
Saturday, May 7
10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
The Schomburg Center JUNIOR SCHOLARS present
Youth Summit 2011
The Rebirth of Black
EXHIBITION

Now through June 30, 2011
Main Exhibition Hall

Harlem Views/Diasporan Visions: The New Harlem Renaissance Photographers is the inaugural exhibition by the 25 members of New Harlem Renaissance Photographers. Views of Harlem, including the recent West African immigrant community and glimpses of the African Diaspora—in and out of Harlem—as seen through daily life, festivals, and celebrations, the performing arts, and cultural, social and political activism.

The New Harlem Renaissance Photographers are dedicated to promoting African American photographic art and a better understanding of photographers’ concerns. The exhibition is curated by Deborrah Willis and Mary Yearwood. Harlem Views/Diasporan Visions is made possible, in part, by funds provided by NY State Senator Bill Perkins (D-30th District).

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

June 4, 2011 • 7 p.m.
Another Saturday Night: The Black Rock Coalition Orchestra Serenade’s Sam Cooke
Tickets: Members, $16; Nonmembers, $20.

June 6, 2011 • 7 p.m.
New York City Opera presents Treemonisha in Concert
The New York City Opera in collaboration with the Schomburg Center presents Treemonisha, an opera composed by Scott Joplin. Tickets $10. Visit nycopera.com to purchase tickets.

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AFRICANA HERITAGE

2011 Volume 11, Number 2
Africana Heritage is a 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.
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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