Archival institutions—archives for short—are repositories for records of historical value. They collect, arrange, catalog, describe, and make available materials in various formats to researchers. While archives are similar to libraries and museums, they differ in the sense that libraries focus on published information such as books and periodicals. Museums primarily focus on artifacts, or physical objects. Archives focus on collecting unpublished original records and other materials in all formats.

For the past 85 years, one of the long-standing most enduring physical legacies of the African Diasporic experience has been preserved in Harlem. In 1926, the New York Public Library purchased Puerto Rican-born black scholar and bibliophile Arturo Alfonso Schomburg’s collection for a mere $10,000, a fraction of its worth. Reportedly, the bibliographer’s collection included over five thousand books, three thousand manuscripts, two thousand etchings and portraits, and several thousand pamphlets. Highlights include an original edition of Phillis Wheatley’s poems and Toussaint L’Ouverture’s proclamation of freedom for Haiti (1801) by Haitian revolutionary Toussaint L’Ouverture. Excerpted from the Journal du soir, Courrier de la Republique Francoise.

Building on Arturo Schomburg’s Legacy

BY STEVEN G. FULLWOOD

The Schomburg Center 85th Anniversary Gala will be a festive celebration at Frederick P. Rose Hall, Home of Jazz at Lincoln Center on Monday evening, January 24, 2011. The event will celebrate the Schomburg Center’s sustained dedication to ensuring that the contributions of people of African descent remain available as part of the history of mankind. It will also pay tribute to Howard Dodson, who is retiring after more than 25 years of service to the Center as its Chief and prime mover behind the phenomenal growth of its resources, facilities, and outreach efforts.

Your support of this celebratory evening will help to ensure that its services and programs will be sustained well into the future.

CELEBRATION HONORARY CHAIRS:
Dr. Chinua Achebe, Dr. Maya Angelou and H.E. Sidney Poitier.
The Celebration Co-Chairs are NYPL Trustees Gordon J. Davis, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., and Raymond J. McGuire.

TICKET INFORMATION
Reception, Performance & Dinner:
Corporate and Major Donor Tables (10 guests per table): $85,000, $50,000, $25,000, $10,000.
Individual Tickets: $2,500, $1,500, $1,000. For more information about tickets at these special gift levels, please call Shayla Titley at (212) 491-2250.
Reception & Performance: $150.
Concert Only: $100, $85.
For gala ticket information please visit The Schomburg Shop or call (212) 491-2206, or visit www.schomburgcenter.org.
The recent announcement of my plan to retire in February 2011 has sparked a variety of reactions. Numerous individuals have written, called, or spoken to me in person telling me that I simply cannot retire. The principal reason they give is that my leaving will result in the demise of the Center. While I appreciate these acknowledgements of my role in the development of the Center over the last 25 years, I have not done it alone. And while many say they won’t be able to find someone like me as a successor, I’m not convinced that someone exactly like me is what the Center needs.

My successor will need to have an uncompromising commitment to preserving the legacies of our ancestors that are documented in the Center’s collections and those that still need to be documented, preserved, interpreted, and celebrated. But he or she will also need to be someone who is ready to grab hold of the new technologies that are emerging everyday and use them to extend access to our rich and varied heritage nationally and globally. He or she will need to be entrepreneurial enough to find the money needed to support such effort. And he or she will need to be capable of establishing, maintaining, and exploiting (in the best sense of the term) relationships with a vast array of economic, political, civic and social leaders (locally as well as nationally and internationally), and ordinary black people (if there is such a thing) domestically as well as internationally. Most importantly, the Schomburg has always been and must continue to be a forum for the free and unfiltered exchange of ideas, a cardinal principle that my successor must be dedicated to defending. And a person will be found. A competent, committed, truth-seeking Director of the Schomburg Center can and will be found to succeed me. The search for the next Director is being led capably by Library Trustees Henry Louis Gates, Jr. and Gordon Davis. The Center will not die so long as black people are committed to keeping it alive, growing and serving. Ultimately, the future of the Schomburg Center is (as it has always been) in our collective hands, not just mine or my successor’s.

What has moved me the most about the flurry of emails, blogs, and news stories that have appeared in print and electronic media has been the deep, passionate concerns that so many have expressed about the future of the Schomburg Center. This has, indeed, been heartening because it is clear evidence that so many of you care deeply about the Center’s future and are prepared to support, defend, and protect it. What has troubled me is that unfortunately, some of the concerns that motivated these expressions of commitment are simply not true, not based on fact. The most disturbing of the false rumors that are circulating and creating so much anxiety is the notion that The New York Public Library planned to break up the Schomburg Center’s collection and relocate them to its branch libraries. No proposal to do such a mindless and egregious thing has ever been presented during my 25-plus year history here. A series of consulting firms working for the Library did recommend strategies for consolidating the research library operations that included centralizing research library functions and collections in the 42nd Street Building.

The New York Public Library is on record as saying that the Schomburg Center’s collections will remain intact and its programs and services will be housed in its Harlem headquarters at 135th Street and Malcolm X Boulevard. The President of the Library, Dr. Paul LeClerc and several board members have assured me that the Schomburg Center will continue to thrive in its current location. Gordon Davis and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., took the lead on the Board of Trustees in assuring that neither the Center nor its collections would be moved from Harlem. Both of them have been incredibly responsive to my requests for help with fundraising and other support. New York City Councilwoman Inez Dickens and New York Congressman Charles Rangel have also been actively involved with the Library in assuring that neither the Center’s programs nor its collections would be moved from its Harlem-based headquarters.

Thanks to Councilwoman Dickens and the New York City Council, the Schomburg Center is in the midst of planning the second phase of its major renovation project. Ms. Dickens and the Council have committed $10 million toward renovating the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, upgrading the Art and Artifacts and Moving Image and Recorded Sound Divisions, renovating the Langston Hughes Auditorium, replacing the roof on the Landmark Building, upgrading the HVAC and fire alarm systems, and redoing the streetscape in front of the complex along Malcolm X Boulevard and 135th Street. With full funding from Ms. Dickens and the Council in hand, architects have been hired and preliminary architectural plans are being reviewed. The Schomburg Center is being readied for decades more service from its Harlem-based location.

In late 2008, I asked Dr. Gates and Dr. Johnnetta Cole to chair a committee of leaders in the arts, culture, and academic fields, to assist the Schomburg in developing a strategic vision for a renewed Schomburg Center for the 21st Century. The report of that work is now available on the Center’s Web site (www.schomburgcenter.org). In it, you will find a vision for a bright future for the Center, both in terms of the incredible significance of its work and its ongoing leadership role in communities local, national, and worldwide. I urge you to read the materials that are on the Center’s Web site.

I encourage you to visit the Schomburg in person and online and also to attend our numerous public programs throughout the 2010-2011 season. Thank you for your passion and for your continued support of the Schomburg.
This summer the Schomburg Center held its sixth 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 Institute carefully selects ten rising seniors, 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 Institute took place from June 14 to July 23. The fellows in attendance were from New York City universities and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Ashli E. Carter (Dillard University); Naemah Ayisha Kitchens (University of Maryland Eastern Shore); Mamadou Ndoye (Morehouse College); and Vincent T. Smith Jr. (Virginia Union University) hailed from HBCUs. From New York were Terrell Armistead (St. John’s University); Julia Katz, Tamara Davidson, and Ericka Ward (New York University); and Raquel I. Ruiz (The New School University/Eugene Lang College.) Nicole Burrowes, who pursues a Ph.D. in history at City University of New York, and Sean Greene, a doctoral student in history at the University of Pennsylvania, served as their mentors.

The students explored the “Africana Age:” the dominant political, economic, and cultural events of the 20th century in Africa and the African Diaspora. Twenty-five distinguished scholars from the United States, Africa, and the Caribbean, working in various disciplines such as history, English, women’s studies, black studies, political science, art history, creative writing, or sociology gave the fellows three-hour seminars every day. Among the scholars present this year were Salah Hassan (Cornell); Simon Gikandi (Princeton); Ehiedu Iweriebor (Hunter College); Alondra Nelson (Columbia); James Stewart (Penn State), and Benjamin Talton (Temple.)

For six weeks, the students went into the Center’s collections and learned to do research. As a collective project, they identified, selected, and interpreted photographs, prints, articles, books, and manuscripts for the development of a website illustrating the “Africana Age.” They also worked on a personal research project that can form the basis of their senior thesis. Some of the diverse topics they chose to explore included “Inner-City Community Food Systems as Real Change: People’s Grocery of West-Oakland”; “Slavery in Puerto Rico and its Abolition: Labor and Experiences of Enslaved Women;” “Exploring Ella Baker’s Popular Education Praxis;” “Black Radical Responses to the Vietnam War;” “The Black American Digs up His African Past,” and “Not Far From Home: The Great Migration and the Sexual Politics of Blackness in the Big City.”

To better understand the application process to graduate school and to prepare themselves adequately, they were offered workshops on writing by Deirdre Hollman, Public Education Programs Manager, and Dr. Karen Jackson-Weaver, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs and Diversity at Princeton gave a seminar on “Understanding the Graduate Admissions Process: Challenges and Opportunities in the New Millennium.”

The fellows toured the African Burial Ground and Harlem with Christopher Moore, Schomburg’s Exhibitions Coordinator and an expert on African Americans in New York. They went to see the Tony-nominated musical _Fela!_ on Broadway; they toured exhibitions at the International Center of Photography and the Studio Museum in Harlem, and enjoyed a minicruise around the city.

Since its inception in 2005, the Schomburg-Mellon Humanities Summer Institute has been quite a success. Eighty-five percent of the tracked fellows are in graduate school, from Purdue to Carnegie Mellon, Yale to Berkeley and from NYU to Oxford. Some have spent time in Senegal, Honduras, Thailand, Uganda, and Cambodia; and ten percent will apply to graduate school either this year or next.
BY ROBYN C. SPENCER

In 1964 Robert Span Browne, an economist who worked with the U.S. Agency for International Development, wrote a letter to Attorney General Robert Kennedy criticizing the U.S. involvement in Vietnam from his unique perspective as an African American who had “lived in Indo China from 1955-1961” and “married into a Vietnamese family.” One of the earliest critics of the war in Vietnam, Browne worked with peace groups, labor unions, and community organizations. Browne was part of a group of highly visible African Americans such as cultural icon Muhammad Ali, leading civil rights activist Martin Luther King, Jr., and members of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) who commanded international attention for their activism against the Vietnam War. Less known are the stories of the many organizations and individuals, rooted in grassroots black America, who opposed U.S. involvement in Vietnam from the late 1950s through the early 1970s, when the U.S. withdrew. This hidden history of black anti-war activism involved thousands of African Americans who defined their actions as part and parcel of the black freedom movement.

The movement against the Vietnam War in black America grew in the same soil that nurtured the Civil Rights Movement. During the 1950s, the U.S. government began to send a stream of military supplies and advisors to aid the French war effort in Vietnam, which took on increased strategic importance due to the Cold War. Although the situation in Vietnam had not become a mainstream media issue, some African-Americans activists argued that the North Vietnamese were people of color waging an anti-colonial struggle against Western colonizers. They considered Vietnam as part of a constellation of injustices that were both national and international. By this time, collective mass action such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott which launched Martin Luther King, Jr. to national acclaim; legal victories such as the Brown vs. Board of Education “separate but equal is unconstitutional” ruling and grassroots outrage unleashed by the tragic lynching of 14-year-old Emmett Till signaled the beginning of the movement for civil rights.

As the movement progressed, the centrality of non-violent assimilation as a strategy for Southern-based civil rights was increasingly challenged. Radical notions of black political empowerment, cultural autonomy, and self-defense gained currency in urban areas due to popular black nationalist spokespersons such as Nation of Islam leader Malcolm X and Robert Williams, a militant advocate of self defense. When Black Power took center stage in the mid-1960s advocates constructed a world view that saw no contradiction linking international events such as the Bandung Conference, the Cuban Revolution, African decolonization, the murder of Congolese president Patrice Lumumba, and the Vietnam War with the domestic black freedom movement. Williams argued in 1963 that there was a direct connection between “the racist savages whose bombs blow the heads off black babies in Birmingham, USA, who viciously club pregnant Afroamerican women into insensibility on the streets of America,” and the “beasts who murder, torture and maim the patriots of Vietnam.” His words reflected an expansive vision of liberation that connected the struggles of oppressed people all over the globe that was part and parcel of the movement for Black Power.

Black activists diverged from the grow-
A ticket to the “U.S. Policy in Vietnam” featuring Robert S. Browne on May 22, 1966 in New York City at the 15th Annual Meeting of the New York Jewish Conference. Browne, a former program officer with the U.S. Aid Mission in Vietnam, was a staunch anti-war supporter; African-American Protesters; Anti-Vietnam War demonstrators; A poster that captures the anti-war sentiments among African Americans.

One of the major thrusts of black anti-Vietnam War activism was fighting the draft. Black soldiers were disproportionately called in the draft and often signed up as a route out of poverty. Project 100,000, a 1966 Department of Defense program which shuttled previously ineligible men to Vietnam, dramatically increased the number of black inductees. Muhammad Ali, heavy weight boxing champion, had failed the Armed Forces qualifying test years before but was reclassified in 1966. He refused to serve in the army and adopted conscientious objector status. His case became highly visible due to his flamboyant personality, his association with Malcolm X, and his membership in the Nation of Islam, which caused him to change his name from Cassius Clay. Ali’s bold statement that “no Vietcong ever called me nigger” made him an emblem of black anti-draft activism and he gained national attention when his boxing license was stripped and he was convicted for refusing induction. (In the early 1970s his conviction was reversed and his license restored.)

Inductees and soldiers were a central part of the black anti-war movement. Activists believed that if black people resisted the draft, the U.S. war effort would suffer and sought to raise the political consciousness of blacks in the military. The Black Anti-Draft Union argued that “as a young Black man you have an obligation to your own people to resist the draft and stay here in our community and fight for jobs, decent and adequate low rent housing, better quality education and an end to police brutality and against rotten court systems, and for political self-determination.” Soldiers on the battlefield were politicized during the course of the war. In the wake of urban rebellions in Harlem, Detroit, and Newark, Carl Smith founded Black Servicemen’s Awareness Committee, arguing that “‘Black Power’ and the National Liberation Front became only different expressions of the same principle—self-determination.”

General Baker, a local activist in Detroit who would become a leader of the League of Revolutionary Black Workers—a radical union that grew out of the auto industry and other industries, was one of the first African Americans to resist the draft in 1965. Baker wrote a well publicized and scathing response... Continued on page 14
AROUND THE SCHOMBURG CENTER

Ilyasah Shabazz, daughter of Malcolm X and Betty Shabazz, spoke at the New York City Opera performance of *The Life and Times of Malcolm X* on May 12, 2010.

Carolina Chocolate Drops, a group of young African-American string band musicians, performed at the Center on May 1, 2010 as part of the Carnegie Hall’s Neighborhood Concert Series.

Schomburg Chief Howard Dodson introduces the cast of the Opera.
This year’s Annual Women’s Jazz Festival featured (clockwise from top) Spelman Jazz Ensemble, Toshi Reagon, Somi, and Black Rock Coalition.

The Winard Harper Group performed at the CareFusion Jazz Festival on Father’s Day at the Center.
freedom for Haiti in 1801.

Schomburg's collection, his personal archive, serves as the foundation for the center that bears his name today, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. His tireless dedication to rescue and preserve black culture is recounted in *Arthur Alfonso Schomburg: Black Bibliophile & Collector* by Elinor DesVerny Sinnette. “He would become a master at locating and collecting the evidence,” wrote Sinnette. “[Schomburg’s] photographic memory enabled him to recall names, dates, and pertinent information concerning persons and historical events.” Schomburg’s life’s work has had tremendous, perhaps life-saving implications for the African Diaspora.

“The best way to devalue a group of people is to convince that group that is has no value,” said Howard Dodson, chief of the Schomburg Center. Before institutions began to collect and preserve black culture and history, it could be argued that blacks indeed had no history. While this seems ludicrous today, Arturo Schomburg, among many, lived that reality.

History has it that as a youngster in late 19th century Puerto Rico, Schomburg was told by a teacher that there was “no such thing as black history.” This negation of a recorded past and therefore self, placed a seed inside of Schomburg, one that would grow to extend its arms to research and recover and reclaim forgotten, stolen, and obscured African histories and African Diasporic histories. That seed has blossomed into an Amazon rainforest.

Today, the Schomburg Center is considered to be one of the leading institutions dedicated to the preservation of black culture. For more than 80 years the Center has collected, preserved, and provided access to materials documenting black life, and promoted the study and interpretation of the history and culture of peoples of African descent. The Schomburg Center consists of three connected buildings: The Schomburg Building, the Langston Hughes Building, and the Landmark Building.

But what types of materials does the Schomburg house in its collections? And exactly how do curators select materials for the respective divisions? The Center’s divisions include the General Research and Reference Division, the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division, the Arts and Artifacts Division, the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division, and the Photographs and Prints Division. “The Schomburg is divided into five divisions by format,” says Diana Lachatanere, Assistant Director of Collections and Curator of the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division. “Each division is responsible for developing its collections and each division has strengths and areas to grow in as trends in research and collecting dictate.”

For example, the Black Arts Movement is a popular subject in the academy right now. Relevant collections in the Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division include the major figures of that time including Julian Mayfield, Larry Neal, and Amiri Baraka. The Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books Division collects, preserves, and makes available for research purposes rare, unique, and primary materials, which document the history and culture of peoples of African descent throughout the world, with a concentration on the Americas and the Caribbean. “When I look at a collection, I consider its research value and how a collection might augment the collections we have now.” Lachatanere also stressed that collection development is a complicated task. “Criteria for selecting materials are often based on foresight. About every 40 years a particular topic becomes popular. Because our collection scope is wide, we have been able, in some sense, to stay ahead of those trends.”

The Photographs and Prints Division houses both documentary and fine art photographs which document the history and culture of peoples of African descent worldwide. “There is also a special emphasis on the work of photographers of African descent,” said Mary Yearwood, curator of the division, clarifying her acquisition sensibilities as she builds her division’s vast collection. “My interests are largely in supporting research trends, anticipating trends, and keeping abreast of new artistic expressions as well as technological innovation as seen in digital photography. Ob-
viously the subject is primary, and this can be very broad.” While the curator seeks good quality materials, Yearwood also considers images that capture a unique subject focus such as the Black Arts Movement, or independence movements in Africa and the Caribbean. “We are looking to preserve materials that illustrate people of African descent in a broad spectrum of life throughout the historical photographic and print record,” said Yearwood.

Similarly the remaining three divisions, the Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division, the Art and Artifacts Division, and the General Research and Reference Division, collect materials according to their respective formats. All divisions are open by appointment only, with the exception of the General Research and Reference Division. Hours of operation for all divisions are listed on the Center’s Web site: schomburgcenter.org.

The best way to understand the value of archives is to, of course, use them. Hundreds of researchers pour through Schomburg’s doors every year to access its vast collections for materials to write papers, theses, dissertations, books, articles, essays, scripts, or to find resources for documentaries and films, and other art projects. Others use the Center’s resources to mine their family histories, and sift through the library’s census records and related genealogical resources.

Arthur Schomburg understood, perhaps prophetically, how the digging up of black history was a significant and necessary pursuit for people of African descent, particularly in the United States. “If there is not an institution dedicated to collecting and preserving black culture, collective memory of the race will be lost,” says Dodson. “A record of people’s actions, thoughts and behavior will be lost, will cease to exist. This goes to the heart of what is valued in a culture, what essentially has meaning. Without the physical or digital record, it does not exist.”

To get a visual sense of the Center’s vast and rich collections, visit the exhibition What’s Up @ the Schomburg?, extended until February 28, 2011.
An exhibition preview was held on May 6, 2010. Installation shots from the exhibition What’s Up @ the Schomburg?
On April 20, 2010, Majora Carter delivered an inspiring and compelling presentation at the Schomburg called *Green the Ghetto*. Ms. Carter, a MacArthur Genius, environmental justice advocate, and economic consultant, was the founder of the pioneering and successful Sustainable South Bronx, a non-profit organization that focuses on environmental justice through economically sustainable projects like the Hunts Point Riverside Park. Currently, she is the President of the Majora Carter Group consulting with cities, foundations, universities, and communities around the world to help unlock their green dollar economic potential. Ms. Carter is not your typical environmentalist. When she moved back to her native South Bronx after college Ms. Carter refused to believe she had to leave her neighborhood in order to live in a clean environment. At Sustainable South Bronx, she started the BEST program, training locals for green jobs and getting residents involved in their environment. We spoke to Ms. Carter, a few weeks after her presentation, to talk about her environmental advocacy work.

Q: Why was it important for you to get involved in the green movement?

**Majora Carter:** When I finally came home [to the South Bronx], I had an understanding that most communities weren't like ours, that there is an environmental injustice, that what we were dealing with was not something that had to be considered normal. When I realized that the city and state were planning on building this huge waste facility on our waterfront, [the entire Bronx] was already handling 40 percent of the city's commercial waste at the time and the new facility would have brought in 20 percent more, I just got inspired to be part of the solution and to advocate against the waste facility. It was the very first thing I worked on as an advocate.

Q: What were some of the obstacles you faced in the beginning?

**Majora Carter:** Well, I was an arts teacher so I had no idea how to do any of the things I had suddenly dedicated my life to, whether it was how to write a grant or understanding how a city council meeting works. I truly had no clue, but I realized that there were people to support you who have been doing it for a while. Some of the biggest challenges came from working with a city that wasn't all that open about learning how to do solid waste sustainably and how to do community planning.

Q: How did you get the local community involved?

**Majora Carter:** When you're dealing with poor communities, you help them see the economic value of improving their communities. I think people have to go through their process of understanding that they actually do have a right to speak and that their voices are really important to be heard.

I wanted young brothers and sisters to understand that there were ways they could be in the legitimate economy, put money in their pockets, and that their work would be a part of a [larger] civil rights struggle. That was one of the most beautiful things I've been able to get out of that process. I started one of the country's first free green jobs training program. I didn't want to just leave it in the South Bronx; I realized we can do this kind of stuff all over the country. I knew that the stuff had legs and well beyond here and that's why I started my company Majora Carter Group as a national green job developer.

Q: Tell me more about the green jobs training program.

**Majora Carter:** These projects allow folks to learn very specific skills. It's a very specialized skill set that people need to learn to do this work and people with significant barriers to traditional employment can be trained to do this kind of work so we want to make sure that we're setting people up to succeed.

Q: What are some of the current projects you are working on with the Majora Carter Group?

**Majora Carter:** We're working on developing a national brand of urban grown produce. It's a new business and the idea is to create and then aggregate local produce. We will also create indoor greenhouse facilities in urban areas, then use that as an opportunity to employ people and engage them in the art of urban agriculture for locally grown foods that meet the demand for the institutions that are there: such as schools and later on restaurants, corner stores, and grocery stores.

We're also really excited about developing a national strategy for a jobs program around wetland restoration. We've all seen the damages that the BP oil spill has caused in the Gulf Coast, but based on the research some of that land will continue to deteriorate because the wetlands in that area have been systematically destroyed over the past 50 years. The natural protection is gone. So, we believe that there is an opportunity to create a jobs program since [the wetlands] are not going to grow back on their own.
When Michael Jackson died last June, the soundtrack of summer 2009 became clear: the music of Michael Jackson. “Got to Be There,” “Can You Feel It,” “Thriller,” “Beat It,” “Bad,” “The Way You Make Me Feel,” and many other songs. In essence, all Michaels, from the iconic Jackson Five in the 70s to stratospheric solo success in the mid 80s until his death. Youtube.com played his videos. Memorial celebrations and music marathons of Jackson’s catalog were held in countries around the globe to mark his passing and his far-reaching, and complicated legacy.

While all the gossip and controversy raged in the popular media, one thing became clear: there was no one Michael Jackson. Indeed, for many discussing Jackson or his music was never a matter of black and white. This past June the Schomburg Center hosted After the Dance: Conversations on Michael Jackson’s Black America, a two-day forum, co-produced by Dj lynnee denise, featuring discussions held among writers, djs, cultural critics, filmmakers, and activists discussed the life and legacy of the King of Pop.

Dj lynnee denise, transplant from California, now Brooklyn-based dj and founder of Wild Seed Cultural Group, brought the idea of hosting a conference to consider the life and legacy of the King of Pop to the Schomburg Center. “The idea came to me immediately following the death of Michael when I realized the celebration about his musical career wasn’t enough to fill the void that was created by the truth of how he died—a drug overdose,” lynnee said. “As a dj, I thought it was important to take the conversation off the dance floor and into institutions that engage in critical research around issues that affect black America—the Schomburg.”

Showcasing Jackson’s musical videos offered a visual coda to frame each of the ensuing conversations. “Thriller,” Jackson’s landmark short film preceded opening remarks by Nelson George and Touré. George began by sharing memories of writing about Jackson and the Jackson family (for his first book The Michael Jackson Story) and also read from his latest book, Thriller: The Musical Life of Michael Jackson, setting the tone for the first evening. George correctly noted that Jackson’s ascendency to pop superstardom allowed many people to have careers and acknowledged his own debt to Jackson as a successful writer. “Here I am, a middle-aged black man, [who] has written two books about Jackson,” he remarked. “Who would have thought that a) as a black writer I’d get to write two books about anybody; and b) books about the same person in my lifetime?”

Touré, a Brooklyn-based writer and television personality, centered his talk in Jackson reminiscences—watching the Jacksons cartoon, the “Thriller” video, the Motown 25th Anniversary special, and when he fainted at a live Bad concert in Paris. Both writers then sat down for a conversation that touched on Jackson’s musical sensibilities and influences, trading thoughts about the man’s sexuality and masculinity, and briefly touched on Jackson’s global humanitarian efforts, such as USA for Africa. Many of these subjects were further explored the following day.

On Saturday the first of three panels, “To Be White, Gifted and Black: Managing Acceptable Representations of Blackness as The King of Pop,” moderated by Esther Armah, featuring Arthur Jaffa, DJ Qool Marv, and lynnee denise, and was introduced by a video clip of Jackson at a James Brown concert in 1983. Afterward denise noted Jackson’s musical savvy. “With all that was going on around him, Michael grabbed the mic at the right moment, ” she said, emphasizing his gifts as a consummate performer. “The dude of badness himself, the gloved one,” suggested that “the only thing we can agree on is that Michael was a genius, everything else is up for discussion.” Jaffa, a visual artist and cultural critic, said we should bring “our creative imaginings” to these conversations and considered the notion that Jackson committed racial suicide. “Trying not to be black is the blackest thing you can do,” mused Jaffa, “in
“The difference in the way that people were attracted to him,” Neary said, “is that he had an audience that appreciated his sensitivity and that’s probably why people were attracted to him.”

Jackson’s difference was further clarified by Neary, “Jackson was real, almost other-worldly because of all the isms, because of his story,” sharing that “people almost have a desperation with sameness,” and Jackson in many ways never fit a standard mode.

When asked if Jackson was on the down low, Dj Reborn said, “Jackson’s sexual persona spanned the range of sexuality, there were so many gray areas. In my heart, I just don’t see that he was gay.” Neal, an associate professor at Duke University, revised the question offering that Jackson was perhaps queer, by definition “something strange and oppositional,” invoking applause from the audience. Gender bending was common during the 70s and 80s, and Neal placed Jackson within peers—Sylvestre, Prince, and Rick James. “What did the white rockers look like?” Neal suggested, a subtle framing of Jackson’s ambitions to get on the then new—and virtually white—MTV.

The last panel, “Black Ain’t Green: Honoring Michael’s Environmental Consciousness and Philanthropic Endeavors,” primarily highlighted Jackson’s championing sustainable living and green technologies before it was popular and offered the audience a moment to reflect on their own thoughts about “green” living. Jackson’s video “Earth Song” opened the session giving panelists an opportunity to frame the ensuing discussions. The moderator, Walker Sands, chief staff at the Majora Carter Group, a community-based consulting group, was taken by Jackson’s use of black aesthetic forms in the video. “This video was very black and very green,” he said noting Jackson’s use of gospel to illustrate the value of all the people featured in the video, heightening the value of human rights and environmental justice.

Panelist André Carter, an instructor at the Sustainable South Bronx, a community organization dedicated to environmental justice solutions, concurred. “The video was very black and very green, as well as the in between,” he said noting Jackson’s inclusion of images of indigenous communities. This is vital Carter contends, because “sustainability is a global issue.” Anisa Keith, co-founder of Sustainable Business Committee, felt that “Michael Jackson was planting a seed about sustainable living 14 years in the ‘Earth Song’ video before the industry became mainstream.” William Thomas, green jobs leader and trainer, praised Jackson’s ability to “think outside the box,” and also noted that black people have been green forever, primarily due to economics. “Black people have had to adapt, to recycle and reuse out of necessity,” he said. Michael Jackson’s environmental consciousness helped to raise the world’s consciousness about who we are as a people and what we are doing to our planet. Thomas encouraged black people to “think about sustainability for the future of their children and the future of the planet.”

Throughout the two-day event audience members expressed an enormous amount of affection for Jackson, and were eager to discuss with others the impact his music and life choices had on their lives, the music industry, and the world at large. Denise shared insights about the success of the program. “Michael Jackson’s life provided us the evidence we needed to take a deeper look into issues surrounding addiction, self-image, self-hate, music industry politics, sexuality, and artistic genius,” she said. “After the Dance, which is actually a Marvin Gaye song, was the perfect title for this conversation. Michael’s issues mirrored so many of our own and collectively I felt like we owed it to Michael and to ourselves to figure out how to have and honor these difficult, but inescapable conversations.”
Vietnam War, continued from page 5

to his induction letter refusing to fight in an unjust war. He linked the murder of Patrice Lumumba, the sufferings of Africans in Angola and South Africa, the war in Vietnam, the murder of Medgar Evers, the Birmingham church bombing, French actions in Algeria, and the exploitation of the Congo as reasons. He asked Uncle Sam: “You want me to defend the riches reaped from the super-exploitation of the darker races of mankind by a few white, rich, super monopolists who control the most vast empire that has ever existed in man’s one million years of History—all in the name of ‘Freedom!’” The letter ended delineating the struggles that Baker would be happy to fight for: “UHURU, LIBERTAD, HALAUGA, and HARAMBE; “free South Africa;” “liberate Latin America from the United Fruit Co., Kaiser, and Alcoa Aluminum Co., and from Standard Oil;” “jail the exploiting Brahmns in India in order to destroy the Caste System;” “free the black delta areas of Mississippi, Alabama, South Carolin,” and “FREE 12TH STREET HERE IN DETROIT!” Many scholars have argued that Vietnam was understood by African Americans as a foil to the movement for black liberation, citing the backlash against Martin Luther King Jr.’s support of the anti-war movement and the often strained relationship between the civil rights and Black Power movement and the white peace movement. Black activists criticized the anti-war movement for ignoring the connection between the domestic and international situation. During a speech at the San Francisco Moratorium Demonstration in the 1960s, Black Panther leader David Hilliard castigated the anti-war movement for focusing on oppression abroad to the exclusion of domestic issues: “We’re not going to let you talk about waging a struggle in support of people 10,000 miles from here, when you have problems right here in fascist America.” Black church leaders organized a referendum on Vietnam in 1970, complaining that “the white antiwar movement ignored the impact that the expenditures on the war were having on efforts to reduce poverty at home.” However this criticism did not preclude African-American activists from organizing against the war in Vietnam on their own terms. Imbued with the ethos of black power, they dared to envision a global order premised on justice, not despite of the racism and oppression that they experienced domestically but because of it.

Students-in-Residence Class of 2010-2011

**National Endowment for the Humanities/Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**

Dennis R. Childs. Assistant Professor, Department of Literature, University of California, San Diego. Project: Formations of Neoslavery.


Andrew W. Mellon Foundation


**National Endowment for the Humanities/Samuel I. Newhouse**

Our new calendar with color-coded program listings and categories makes it easier to choose the events you will attend. New this season starting in October:

- Family @ the Schomburg are programs tailored to children six years and older with hands-on workshops and performances.
- Classes @ the Schomburg include Wednesday Sings presented by Vy Higginsen and the Mama Foundation for the Arts, a monthly singing class open to all levels.

**On sale now:**

Talks and Performances @ the Schomburg include *Call Me Crazy: Diary of a Mad Social Worker* (Oct. 8 & 9); *To Be Young Gifted and Black* (Oct. 14); *James Baldwin: Down from the Mountaintop* (Oct. 30); *Doing Black Liberation Theology in the Age of Obama* (Dec. 3), and *Paul Robeson: Tribute to an American Master* (Dec. 18).

See calendar for other events. Order your tickets at the Schomburg Shop, (212) 491-2206. Sign up for Schomburg News, our email newsletter at www.schomburgcenter.org to learn about upcoming events and exhibitions.

**The Junior Scholars Program is Back!**

Thanks to a special grant from the Ford Foundation, the Schomburg Center Junior Scholars Program has been reinstated for the 2010-2011 school year. One hundred youth, ages 11 to 18, will participate in this uniquely designed pre-college black studies program that began in 2002 and ran until 2009 when its budget was cut. The program, now in its ninth year, will run on Saturdays from October 23, 2010 through May 7, 2011. "I would like to thank the Ford Foundation for supporting our efforts to renew our commitment to empower youth with the knowledge of their history and cultural heritage through the Schomburg Junior Scholars Program" says Howard Dodson, Director of the Schomburg Center.

---

**The Schomburg Center is pleased to acknowledge the following donors of gifts of $1,000 or more from November 3, 2009 to July 16, 2010**

- Anonymous (2)
- American Express
- The Arts and Letters Foundation
- Anna R. Austin
- Clarence Avant
- Wayne Benjamin
- Estate of Gertrude Berryman
- Robert L. Boling
- Gloria J. Browner
- Eric and Cynthia Butler
- Robert L. Carter
- Jan Clarke
- Clifford Chance Rogers & Wells LLP
- Dr. Johnnetta B. Cole
- Charlotte L. Cooke
- Willie E. Cooper
- Dr. and Mrs. Frank L. Douglas
- Deborah Matthews Evans
- Reverend Floyd H. Flake
- Joan and Jonathon Gillette
- Dr. Susan G. Gordon and Dr. Edmund W. Gordon
- Greater New York Chapter The Links, Inc.
- Ego and Cassianna Hayes
- Ira S. Holder
- IBM International Foundation
- Jane Tillman Irving
- Dr. Susan Johnson, Georgia J. Smith and Kathleen J. Pressley
- Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.
- Estate of Peggy Lampl
- Richard C. Ledes
- Daisy W. Martin
- Estate of Milton Meltzer
- Merck Company Foundation
- Junius Mills
- Mr. and Mrs. Stephen Monroe
- Maryanne Mott
- Betty Odabashian
- Dr. Margaret P. Olson
- Dr. Benjamin F. Payton
- Dr. Raymond W. Ransom
- Estate of Lavinia Reese
- Phyllis G. Roe
- Granville and Jeanette Rogers
- Morwin Schmooker
- Sheila Rohan
- Marilyn and Jim Simons
- George B. Simpson
- Social Service Employees Union Local 371, AFSCME, AFL-CIO
- Monica Sweeney
- James N. Thomas
- World Federation of Exchanges
- Roberta J. Yancy
- Camille D. Yarbrough
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

Schomburg Society Benefits

$35 ASSOCIATE
($30 tax deductible)
- A year’s subscription to the Schomburg Center newsletter
- A 20% discount in the Schomburg Shop
- A quarterly program calendar
- A personalized membership card
- Up to 20% discount on tickets to select Center-sponsored programs

$100 SUPPORTER
($70 tax deductible)
All Friend benefits, plus:
- A complimentary gift from the Schomburg Center
- Invitations to VIP events

$250 PATRON
($195 tax deductible)
All Supporter benefits, plus:
- A complimentary copy of a publication

$500 SUSTAINER
($410 tax deductible)
All Patron benefits, plus:
- Two tickets to a select Schomburg Center performance

$1,000 CONSERVATOR
($910 tax deductible)
All Sustainer benefits, plus:
- Acknowledgment in the Schomburg Center newsletter and the Library’s Annual Report

$2,500 HERITAGE CIRCLE
($2,410 tax deductible)
All Conservator benefits, plus:
- A private behind-the-scenes tour led by the Center’s Chief

$5,000 CHIEF’S CIRCLE
($4,810 tax deductible)
All Heritage Circle benefits, plus:
- An invitation to an annual luncheon with the Chief

Please make check or money order payable to the Schomburg Center/NYPL. Mail to:
The Schomburg Society • 515 Malcolm X Boulevard • New York, NY 10037-1801. To charge call The Shop: (212) 491-2206, Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.