CELEBRATING 90 YEARS OF SCHOLARSHIP, COMMUNITY BUILDING, AND BLACK CULTURE
Reflecting on the Schomburg’s 2015 Legacy

By Dr. Khalil Gibran Muhammad, Director of the Schomburg Center

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henever I speak on behalf of this amazing institution, I always remind people how powerful and important history is. To members like you, this goes without saying. But in our 90th year I think it bears repeating. History matters. It is the story greater than our individual lives. It is the narrative that binds us together and gives hope and inspiration to believe in each other. It is a source of knowledge and understanding that seeks to answer the most innocent question one can ask: Why? In times of crisis and suffering, in moments like Baltimore and Charleston, history is a lifesaving force for change, for renewal, for justice. Police killings, community uprisings, racial tensions, and Confederate symbols of resistance to equality are deeply rooted in the soil of the past. Make no mistake. What we don’t teach children will help carry us forward as we keep fostering support and dedication to what we do. Thank you for being here for our first 90 years. We know you, your children, and your grandchildren will help carry us forward as we keep fostering the search for answers and shining a light where darkness has too long prevailed.

Building on our legacy is truly no easy task. The depth of the Schomburg Center’s collection contains dozens of print articles and playlists that highlight both the professional and personal life of the award-winning actress and Broadway star (1948–2003). Researchers will be able to use the scrapbook to trace Carter’s career—including the sitcoms Gimme a Break! and Hangin’ with Mr. Cooper, musicals Ain’t Misbehavin’, Hello Dolly! and Ain’t Misbehavin’, Hello Dolly! and Annie, as well as the films Bebe’s Kids and The Grass Harp. Also new to this division is the Stormé DeLarverie Collection, which features dozens of photographs of the self-described “butch lesbian” performer and a veteran of the Stonewall uprising. Among items featured are images of female impersonators from the 1970s to the present, flyers and programs, and audiovisual materials.

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The history of the Blackamoor figure in European decorative arts is derivative of the black body as imagined in Western society. The ornamentation of the laboring dark figurines, juxtaposed with the concurrent question of the migrating black body that is increasingly shifting the conversation and reality of the African/black presence in Europe and the United States, became the entry point of African/black presence in Europe and the shifting the conversation and reality of the landscape of modern (re)discovery and insight 

Why study black portraiture? The global landscape of the black body is deeply rooted in representations of blackness and the black experience, feeding narrative constructions of black humanity and anti-blackness. An archive, as a site for the preservation and accessibility of these visual histories, is integral to the study and vulnerability of the black image. In many of the presentations at the conference, the archive was positioned as a way to discover and reconstruct the binary narratives of absence and presence; representation and authorship; and evidence and the imaginary. Renée M. Mussai, Curator at Autograph ABP, explored the urgency of staging the archive as a landscape of modern (re)discovery and insight on the black subject in photography that are absent from our public record and consciousness. This “curatorial intervention in the archive,” as Mussai frames it, was illustrated in her recent exhibition, ‘The Missing Chapter: A Project based in Trinidad and Tobago along with the aesthetics of improvisation evident in the Louis Armstrong collection in Queens, NY. Our conversation centered on an interrogation of the meaning of public history and creative processes of collecting. This segued into the work and legacy of the Schomburg Center’s own Jean Blackwell Hutson, whose leadership and vision nurtured a curatorial public that shaped the future of radically integrating the archive within the histories of the black world.

Moving beyond the archive and the panels, the interpretation of these conversations by contemporary visual artists and practitioners prompted a critical exchange and response to the scholarly mappings of black portraiture and imaging. The visual backdrop of the conference was a diptych composed of a portrait by visual artist Omar Victor Diop alongside the picturesque Blackamoor statues, further dramatizing the tensions between authorship, gaze, and historical context whose pervasive guide the four-day exchange on black portraiture. There was also the exhibition ‘Resegregation’, curated by Amba Ambakpa and staged across three sites in Florence with the intent of both (re)interpreting the Blackamoor trope and juxtaposing the ornaments with a counter contemporary art.

Another new teen program beginning this fall is the Teen Curators Program (TCP), an after-school program that aims to use art education to increase the historical and cultural literacy of teenagers and promote their artistic, intellectual, and professional engagement. Through partnerships with neighborhood schools, TCP will identify participants who traditionally lack avenues for high-quality history and arts programming. TCP will immerse participants in aesthetic and academic experiences with the Schomburg’s collections through intensive art study, historical research and writing, archival presentations, living artist interviews, community programs, docent tour-giving, and hands-on curatorial exhibition work. The goal is to encourage Teen Curators to produce and present multimedia exhibitions at the Schomburg Center, in the community, and in their schools. Teen Curators is made possible by a five-year grant from The Pace and Tata Marisc Foundation. For more information, visit schomburgcenter.org/teencurators.

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On the first Friday of every month, the Schomburg Center takes over Harlem with our monthly community mixer, First Fridays. Our regular visitors come through the doors and are instantly transported to a musical nirvana, with a free pass to experience our collections through our wonderful exhibitions. First Fridays encourages communities to engage in our space in a fresh way that goes beyond what you would typically expect at a library. The first Friday of the month—from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m.—allows our neighbors in Harlem and beyond to immerse themselves in our historical space and network or dance the night away on our legendary cosmogram, which houses Langston Hughes’s ashes and speaks to his relationship with Arturo Schomburg, in the Langston Hughes Lobby.

This past year we have explored themes that target various subcultures and populations, to let people know that we welcome everyone across the globe. For instance, in June we packed the house with a record-breaking 800+ attendees for the Black Gay Pride Edition, which was inspired by our “In The Life Archive.”

First Fridays themes are conversation starters even before the events kick off because they evoke dialogue and research on subjects in a fun and creative way. It’s a safe space where our guests can enjoy themselves and come together as community no matter their gender, race, or background. We hope to see you at our next First Friday so get those dancing shoes ready and explore our wonderful collections!

The Schomburg presents **two new exhibitions** on view September 25–December 31

**Schomburg’s First Fridays**

**Teaching History in a Fun and Fresh Way**

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**Black Suburbia: From Levittown to Ferguson**

What do the suburbs teach us about the black experience, family ideals, community, and racial identity? How is the myth of the American Dream complicated by the African-American suburban experience? These and other questions are explored in our new exhibition, Black Suburbia: From Levittown to Ferguson, co-presented by The National Center for Suburban Studies at Hofstra University. This exhibition travels through Hempstead, New York; Shaker Heights, Ohio; Compton and Baldwin Hills, California; and other American suburbs. The collection features photographs, letters, property deeds, personal interviews, artifacts and compelling archival film footage that trace a 20-century narrative of migration and community building that reveals a rich tapestry of contradictions and the persistence of hope.

**Unveiling Visions: The Alchemy of the Black Imagination**

Unveiling Visions: The Alchemy of the Black Imagination is sure to satisfy the sci-fi/fantasy nerd in all of us. Curated by artist John Jennings and scholar Reynaldo Anderson, this exhibition includes artifacts from the Schomburg collections that are connected to Afrofuturism, black speculative imagination, and Diasporan cultural production. Offering a fresh perspective on the power of speculative imagination and the struggle for various freedoms of expression in popular culture, Unveiling Visions showcases illustrations and other graphics that highlight those popularly found in science fiction, magical realism, and fantasy. Items on display include film posters, comics, T-shirts, magazines, CD covers, playbills, religious literature, and more.

**Schomburg Exhibitions**

**Schomburg presents two new exhibitions on view September 25–December 31**

See page 11 for information on the September 24 Member’s Preview.
Actor Isaiah Washington charms the audience at our New York premiere of the film Blackbird.

Author Ellen D. Wu leads a conversation on African-American and Asian-American racial politics.

Essence Editor Vanessa Karen DeLuca and Journalist Akisa Omulepu discuss The Portrayals of Black Women in Media.

DIGITAL SCHOMBURG

Can’t make it to the Schomburg Center? No problem. With our growing online presence and active social media imprint (serving a staggering 59,000 followers and counting across the globe), you never have to miss a single highlight. Whether it’s a great event, recent addition to our digital collections, or other interesting news about the Schomburg, you’ll find the information on our various platforms.

Here’s what’s been trending online since our last issue:

Exhibitions:
The 75th Anniversary of the American Negro Theatre via SchomburgCenter.org

Events:
From Binaries to Bridges: Black Liberation and the Model Minority Mutiny via livestream.com/schomburgcenter

Videos:
Tarik Bell, our Junior Scholars Instructor and IMLS National Medal community member representative, shares how the program has inspired him via our Youtube channel: www.youtube.com/user/TheSchomburgCenter

Blogs:
Schomburg Treasures: The Green Book
The legendary Green Books are now available in our digital collections (The Negro Motorist Green Book; The Negro Travelers’ Green Book; The Travelers’ Green Book) via schomburgcenter.org

Podcasts:
Maroons Revisited: History and Stories
Tune in via our Soundcloud page at soundcloud.com/schomburglive.

Exclusive Program:
Emmett Till Project, a commemorative project that explores the legacy of Emmett Till. Visit emmetttlproject.com

—C.F.
The following calendar listings are highlights from our full public program schedule. For the most complete and up-to-date program information, please visit schomburgcenter.org/calendar.

**PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

**SEPTEMBER**

Wednesday, September 16 at 6:30PM
Between the Lines: Arthur Browne and Khalil Gibran MILLI

Saturday, September 26 at 2:00PM
Elombe Brath Celebration
Celebrate the life, activism, and leadership of the late Pan-Africanist Elombe Brath.

**OCTOBER**

Tuesday, October 20 at 6:30PM
Films at the Schomburg: Queen Nanny
Director Roy T. Anderson and history professor Harcourt T. Fuller present Queen Nanny, legendary Maroon Cheifness, a documentary on the struggle for freedom of the Jamaican Maroons led by 19th-century spiritual leader and guerrilla tactician Nanny. Presented with the Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery.

Thursday, October 22 at 6:30PM
Between the Lines: Te Nihot Coates
Te Nihot Coates presents the story of his awakening to the truth about history and his place in the world, as chronicled in his new book, Between the World and Me.

Tuesday, October 26 at 7:00PM
Carnegie Hall Neighborhood Concert Series: Brianna Thomas
Since her debut at age six, singer Thomas has performed across the world at notable jazz festivals.

Wednesday, October 28 at 6:30PM
Talks at the Schomburg: Rethinking Ferguson through the Prism of Suburbia
Join our panel on the perceptions of “suburbia,” which have been challenged recently as suburbs such as Ferguson, Missouri, have become sites of policing controversies.

Thursday, October 29 at 6:30PM
CIN Lecture Series: Don Wilmot
At our 11th Annual Caribbean International Neomization (CIN) Lecture Series, CEO of Grace Kennedy Limited Don Wilmot traces the history of the company, and its outline for global strategy.

**NOVEMBER**

Monday, November 2 at 8:00PM
Comedy Night at the Schomburg
Join three leading ladies of comedy for an evening of laughter and conversation.

Monday, November 9 at 6:30PM
The Call of Innocence: Criminal Justice Reform and the Opportunity for Change
Our panelists, including Barry Scheck, Co-Director of The Innocence Project, explore opportunities and challenges in criminal justice reform.

Tuesday, November 10 at 6:30PM
Talks at the Schomburg: One Island, Two Nations
As many Dominicans have been stripped of their citizenship due to recent nationality laws in the Dominican Republic, this conversation explores questions of race, identity, and citizenship.

**PUBLIC PROGRAMS**

**FUTURE EVENTS**

**An Artistic and Educational Legacy**

Renowned painter Jacob Lawrence moved to New York as a teenager and perfected his craft under the tutelage of leading African-American artists, including Charles Alston and Augusta Savage, at the Harlem Community Arts Center housed in the 153rd Library, which is now the Schomburg Center. Barbadian native Gwomduhndi Knight also studied with Savage, and joined a Works Progress Administration mural-project where she and later married Lawrence in 1941. The Lawrences settled in Seattle in 1970, but never forgot New York or the Schomburg. Mrs. Lawrence’s trust included a generous legacy to the Schomburg Center in both her names. These funds have supported the Schomburg’s Curriculum Programs, Scholar’s Program, which is consistent with the Lawrence’s longstanding interest in youth development. You too can help secure the Schomburg Center for future generations. To learn more about including the Schomburg Center in your own estate plans, please contact John Mason, Director of Supporter Relations.

**Mark Your Calendars for Member Events!**

**Friend Level Members (500+):**
Exhibition Preview
Thursday, September 17, 2015, 6:00PM–8:00PM
Enjoy a reception and view our new fall exhibitions, Black Suburbia: From Levittown to Ferguson and Unveiling Views: The Alchemy of the Black Imagination, before the exhibitions open to the public. Invitations were mailed in August.

**Patron Level Members (2500+):**
Curator’s Colloquium Series
First Fridays at the Schomburg
Thursday, October 15, 2015, 6:00PM–8:00PM
Enjoy a reception and discuss treasures from the Schomburg’s Manuscripts and Archives and Rare Books Division.

**Supporter Level Members (1000+):**
Holiday Open House
Sunday, December 6, 2015, 1:00PM–4:00PM
Celebrate the season at our annual thank-you party for donors. Stephen A. Schwarzman Building at Fifth Avenue and 42nd Street Invitations will be mailed in October.

**The Schomburg Center would like to recognize our volunteers who have passed away this year: Rosa Lee Johnson, LaVerne Adams Cook, Esther McCall, Beatrice Miles, and Dr. Vivian Winfrey. We appreciate their time and dedication to help carry out our mission at the Schomburg Center.**
Mary Yearwood, Curator of the Schomburg’s Photographs and Prints Division, shares a laugh with Leah Dickerman, Curator of the Museum of Modern Art, at the reception for the exhibition, One-Way Ticket: Jacob Lawrence’s Migration Series and Other Visions of the Great Movement North.