

1994

## African-American Museum (1993-1994): Correspondence 02

Robert McC. Adams

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SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

*Washington, D.C. 20560*  
*U.S.A.*

November 4, 1993

Honorable Wendell Ford, Chairman  
Committee on Rules and Administration  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

It has come to my attention that some members of the Committee have questions regarding H.R.877, the "National African American Museum Act." As you are aware, this legislation has a long history beginning in 1989 with the introduction of H.R.1570, by Representative John Lewis of Georgia, to authorize the Smithsonian Institution to establish and construct the "National African American Heritage Memorial Museum" in the District of Columbia. In November, 1990, Senator Paul Simon introduced S.1959 which authorized the Smithsonian to establish and construct a museum and authorized an appropriation of \$10,000,000 to carry out the Act.

Action on these two pieces of legislation was not completed before the end of the 101st Congress. During the next three years, as the Federal budget situation became more constrained, the Institution explored alternate ways to create such a museum. Finally, the Institution proposed, and the Congressional sponsors agreed, that the museum should be housed in the existing Arts and Industries Building on the Mall and should be constructed during the already-planned and funded renovation of the building. This approach would greatly reduce the amount of funds necessary to create the museum.

In testimony before the House Committees on Public Works and Transportation Committee and House Administration, I stated the Institution's desire and intent to create this museum in the most economical way and to mitigate the need for Federal funds at every opportunity. If H.R.877 were passed, our strategy would be to use approximately \$475,000 in existing planning and design monies to develop a comprehensive plan to create the museum using non-federal funds. Therefore, there will be no request for federal funds for this project in Fiscal Years 1994-96. Further, it would be our strong preference to make no additional requests

for federal funds for this project. The Board of Regents has stated, however, that it does not wish to preclude the possibility of requesting federal funds if it can be demonstrated that those funds could bring a significant return in matching private contributions.

As you are aware with the National Museum of the American Indian's Mall museum, one-third of the total cost for construction must come from non-federal sources. This is an excellent example of a public-private commitment to our nation's culture and history. It may be well demonstrated that some mix of public-private funds is necessary and desirable with regard to the African American museum. We need to move forward with the planning for the museum in order to answer these important questions. Passage of H.R.877 will allow us to do this, and I request that the Committee act favorably on the legislation.

Sincerely,

  
Robert McC. Adams  
Secretary