SOLIVITA AFRICAN HERITAGE CULTURAL CLUB

October 18, 2026

Re: Preserving the Historical Integrity and Scholarly Independence of the National Museum of African American History and Culture

Dear Members of the Smithsonian Board of Regents:

On behalf of the Solivita African Heritage Cultural Club, we write to express our continuing support for the National Museum of African American History and Culture and our concern for the preservation of its historical integrity, scholarly independence, and ability to present the full complexity of the African American experience.

Our organization previously adopted a resolution affirming our support for the Museum and opposing efforts that would diminish, sanitize, or remove historically significant aspects of the African American experience. We now respectfully ask the Board of Regents to exercise its governing responsibilities to ensure that decisions concerning the Museum's historical interpretation remain grounded in evidence, professional scholarship, and established curatorial standards.

We recognize that legitimate historical scholarship is not static. New evidence emerges. Interpretations are reconsidered. Exhibitions should be reviewed and improved when scholarship warrants it. Our concern, therefore, is not with change itself.

Our concern is with the basis upon which change is made.

The history presented by the National Museum of African American History and Culture includes some of the most difficult chapters in the American story: slavery, Reconstruction, racial violence, segregation, disenfranchisement, resistance, migration, military service, the struggle for civil rights, and the continuing effort to make the nation's democratic principles a reality for all Americans.

Some of that history is uncomfortable. But discomfort should not be confused with inaccuracy.

Nor should historical interpretation be altered simply because established facts conflict with the political preferences of any administration, political party, ideological movement, donor, or interest group.

We therefore respectfully ask the Board of Regents to affirm the following principles:

1. Historical accuracy should remain paramount. Significant changes to exhibitions should be supported by credible historical evidence and recognized scholarly standards.

2. Professional curatorial judgment should be protected. Smithsonian historians, curators, researchers, and museum professionals should be able to perform their work without improper political interference.

3. Substantial changes should be transparent. When historically significant exhibitions or interpretive materials are materially changed because of outside governmental or political requests, the Smithsonian should make the nature and scholarly basis of those changes reasonably transparent to the public.

4. Qualified scholars should be consulted. When the historical accuracy of important NMAAHC material is challenged, relevant Smithsonian scholars, museum professionals, and appropriate scholarly advisers should participate meaningfully in evaluating the challenge.

5. The complete African American experience should remain visible. The Museum should continue to present African American history in its fullness—including achievement, creativity, patriotism, resilience, and progress, but also enslavement, discrimination, violence, exclusion, protest, and the long struggle for citizenship and equality.

Our request is not partisan.

We would apply these principles regardless of which political party controlled the White House or Congress. No Democratic administration, Republican administration, Congress, donor, advocacy organization, or other outside interest should determine historical interpretation merely because it possesses political or financial power.

The Smithsonian occupies a special place in American life precisely because Americans should be able to enter its museums with confidence that what they encounter represents a serious effort to follow the historical record wherever it leads.

The National Museum of African American History and Culture carries an especially important responsibility. It preserves stories that for generations were frequently omitted from America's national narrative.

Protecting those stories does not diminish America. It enables us to understand America more completely.

We therefore respectfully ask the Board of Regents, as the body entrusted with the governance and independence of the Smithsonian Institution, to reaffirm publicly its commitment to protecting the scholarly and curatorial integrity of the National Museum of African American History and Culture and to ensure that significant changes to its historical presentation are driven by evidence and scholarship rather than partisan political pressure.

We would welcome a response explaining the policies and safeguards currently used by the Smithsonian to protect these principles.

Thank you for your service to the Smithsonian Institution and for your consideration of our concerns.

Respectfully,

Bobby Vance

AHCC Historian

On behalf of the members of the Solivita African Heritage Cultural Clu

africanheritageculturalclub@gmail.com