Celebrating Blackness

Through Collections, Essays, and Programs at the Schomburg Center

“Black is Beautiful” ©Ilka Hartmann
Celebrating Black Pride in the Age of Black Lives Matter

Finding Inspiration in the Schomburg Collection

In a year of tremendous loss, including the deaths of pop icon Prince and boxing legend Muhammad Ali, and the tragedies in Orlando, Florida, and in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, we've tried to keep spirits high as recent acts of police brutality continue to make news headlines and spark vital calls for action on social media. That has not always been easy.

But if there is anything Ali has taught us it is that loving each other, ourselves, and our blackness is the only way to get through times like these.

That's why we do what we do at the Schomburg Center. It’s not for praise and bragging rights about our vast collection; it’s to reach people across the globe that black is enough, black is beautiful, and black is power. It has been 50 years since the Black Power Movement catapulted a new level of pride in the community. The message remains the same—and it is as vital as ever.

In June, we were proud to have former Black Panthers Kathleen Cleaver and Jamal Joseph help us commemorate the movement, sharing powerful words necessary in our current socio-political time. "Our identity is our activism," said Joseph. And our identity is not limited to the United States. We are celebrating blackness from across the globe, as evident in our Afro-Latino Festival: Our commemoration includes the September publication of the book Black Power 50, co-edited by Dr. Sylviane A. Diouf, Curator of Online Exhibitions and Director of the Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery. The book beautifully illustrates the movement, featuring original interviews with key figures, essays by today's Black Power scholars, and more than 100 stunning images documenting the era.

And this June, with the launch of our "Live from the Reading Room: Correspondence" podcast series, Curator Alexandra Mitchell, Librarian in our Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books and Ron Blackwell Hurston Research and Reference Division, has made the voices of our ancestors—historical black artists, writers, and intellectuals—come alive using a whole new medium. Our Junior Scholars Program imagined Black Power and Youth Summit.

We will continue to honor 50 years of black pride with the expanded Black Power 50 exhibition on view in February 2017, as well as several additional events that will help us commemorate the movement in June. We look forward to celebrating this time with you.

Honor Our Black and Brown LGBT Narrative and Precious Lives Lost in Orlando

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they were plucked out of this world like roses—the beautiful ones, the queer ones, the ones and brown ones with freshly glossed lips and eyelashless eyes. They were taken away to be placed behind the mirror, behind the reflected matter that revealed their smiles, their freedom, and their power to rule themselves.

On June 12 at Pulse Orlando Night Club and Ultra Lounge in Florida, a popular gay club in the city, they were taken. Forty-nine black and brown people were murdered in the deadliest mass shooting in American history. Many victims found their closets to hide in and some found bathrooms to help protect themselves from gunfire.

At a night shelter, the bathroom is where the

Imagine being shot in a nightmare and never waking up. Imagine America, her monsters found in clubs and churches instead of beneath your bed. Imagine dead red roses, everywhere.

You haven't heard silence until your mouth feels like it’s been shut with terror at the sight of bullets flying around you, erasing the narrative of your existence. All the while, we hear some people say, “It was their fault…they shouldn’t have been there.”

Where is this world can we be free?

I imagine seeing black and brown bodies scattered on the floor of the bathrooms—fingers that once moved through graceful black hair, pulling curls back to reveal the still face of a beautiful ones escape to, where the queer ones convene at mirrors with squared eyes and high cheekbones to apply makeup, where friends find friends dancing and filled with joy, clapping their hands, fastening clip-on roses to their hair. It is in the bathroom where our smiles, our freedom, and our power to rule were said. They shouldn’t have been there.

Where is this world can we be free?

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Imagine hiding in a bathroom underneath a portal through which you escape. Imagine a mirror inside a stall, wishing that the mirror, behind the reflected matter that revealed their futures, their freedom, and their power to rule were said. They shouldn’t have been there.

Where is this world can we be free?

I imagine seeing black and brown bodies scattered on the floor of the bathrooms—fingers that once moved through graceful black hair, pulling curls back to reveal the still face of a
Looking into Their Faces

Expressions of Struggle and Triumph in WPA Prints

Schomburg Teen Curators Present Their First Exhibition

The 80-Year-Old Story of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) Art Collection is Seen through Young Eyes

One of the Teen Curator exhibition panels

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ne of the Schomburg Center’s most renowned collections, the 80-year-old Works Progress Administration (WPA) Art Collection, was freshly interpreted through the young eyes of our marvelous Teen Curators at their inaugural exhibition in June, which was on display in our Langston Hughes Lobby. After five months of exploring works by artists like Lillian Richter, Caroline Durieux, and Will Barnet, and books such as Subway Floor in Harlem by Richard Loederer, the students curated ten panels that portrayed themes including hope and faith, revelations, oppression, and rhythm and dance.

The Schomburg Teen Curators Program, one of the few initiatives of its kind in New York City and even across the United States, is an after-school art history enrichment program where 50 high school students in the center of the arts-rich Harlem community—helping youth explore their creative identity. “The Teen Curators Program sparks the imagination, stimulates creative flow and opens teens’ artistic eye to a new way of seeing,” said Abigail Jefferson, Education Coordinator. We’re accepting applications for the next season of Teen Curators! Visit schomburgcenter.org/education for details.

Applications for the 2016–17 Season of Junior Scholars are Now Available

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e’re accepting applications for our 15th season of Schomburg Junior Scholars! We’re excited to kick off an alumni association for former Junior Scholars. To learn more, contact our Education team at schomburgedu@nypl.org.

The 2016–17 Junior Scholars Program begins on October 22, 2016 and culminates on May 13, 2017, with the annual Youth Summit. For more information, visit schomburgcenter.org/education.

One of the Teen Curator exhibition panels
5 Questions With... Amilcar Priestley, Director of the Afro-Latino Festival

It's fitting that 9 years after Arturo Schomburg founded one of the most important collections celebrating African Diaspora experiences, and three years after Mal-Elka Prado founded the prominent Afro-Latino Festival in New York City, honoring the Afro-Latino experience, it would coordinate to present the Afro-Latino event as the cultural event—a way to honor Arturo's legacy to uplift and celebrate the unique contributions and voices across the Diaspora. Here is my conversation with the Director of the festival, about what it makes today so inspirational:

In today's geopolitical climate, what is the most important reason for the Afro-Latino Festival?

In the time of Black Lives Matter and ever-present concern over the status of immigrants in the U.S. it is important that we ensure the voices and experiences of 200 million Afro-Latinos play a role in understanding policy implications and developing justice priorities. The festival is an opportunity to raise our consciousness, and celebrate Afro-Latino culture and share it with others. It is imperative that we use it as an opportunity to raise our consciousness. It is a cultural platform that includes the work of Schomburg founder Arturo Alfonso Schomburg, who was a proud Afro Puerto Rican scholar. In fact, it was a huge honor to host Day Off the festival at the house that Schomburg himself built.

What is the most enriching conversations you've heard that dialogue across the Diaspora?

Through the use of the web via blogging and podcasting, the letters featured not only cross the boundaries of the Diaspora, but also space, time, and memory, while activating the archive. For some, it compels listeners to engage in a conversation about black genius, creativity, ingenuity, and the personal lives of 20- and 21st-century figures of the African Diaspora.

What do you think is the best way for the library community to support the Afro-Latino Festival?

As creator and curator of the series, I have the pleasure of going through the web gallery of the letters featured from Schomburg collections, Archives and Rare Books Division to select some of the most captivating letters. The series stands at the creative intersection of audio, text, and photography that provides listeners with a deeper understanding of the work and consciousness of our intellectual and artistic foremothers and forefathers already from the people themselves. To sum up, it compels listeners to engage in a conversation about black genius, creativity, ingenuity, and the personal lives of 20- and 21st-century figures of the African Diaspora.

What do you think is the best way for the library community to support the Afro-Latino Festival?

By Alexsandra M. Mitchell, Librarian, Manuscripts, Archives and Rare Books and Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Divisions

At the Library

The Importance of Diversity and Inclusivity for Library Staff

By A.J. Muhammad, Librarian, Jean Blackwell Hutson Research and Reference Division

Diversity in the United States and abroad. An African-American male librarian, drawing inspiration from Anita Walton Moore, the first African-American woman to receive a library science degree from the University of Mississippi in the 1960s. And novelist and creative writing professor Mitchell Jackson, author of the 2013 book The Residue Years (available in our Schomburg Collections), gives a keynote speech about growing up in an impoverished neighbourhood in Portland, Oregon, and the circumstances that led him to a life of crime as a young man. He gave firsthand accounts on how policies, lack of opportunities, institutional racism and the criminalization of black men affected others like him.

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Although the struggle to diversify and dismantle whiteness in libraries and cultural institutions remains an arduous one, the solution is to provide mentorship to the next generation of library leadership of color. The Schomburg Center offers development and educational opportunities to African-American and Latino youth through an array of innovative programs. For example, our BNY Mellon Pre-Professional Development Program helps college students receive the necessary experience to transition into careers at research libraries and other institutions. Programs like these ensure that librarians reflect the times, and the increasing diversity in the United States and abroad.

The Residue Years (2015-24), whose principles of justice, recognition, and development we embrace.

Invisible Man (1952), Audre Lorde’s Sister Outsider—all housed in our collections—Frederick Douglass, and even her family members to empower attendees to advocate for diversity in their own industries and communities. Harroch discussed what is glaringly true: whiteness is at the root of the library profession. Out of the couple hundred attendees at the institute, the majority of participants were white Caucasian women. Approximately seven men of African descent attended, which included my colleague Masa Jata and I. Another panel featured presentations by three librarians of color, including Tahari Alphonso-Williams. Alphonso-Williams, a librarian at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, explained how Black Feminist Librarianship is an outward reach of scholarship and was done by the African American woman to receive a library science degree from the University of Mississippi in the 1960s. And novelist and creative writing professor Mitchell Jackson, author of the 2013 book The Residue Years (available in our Schomburg Collections), gives a keynote speech about growing up in an impoverished neighbourhood in Portland, Oregon, and the circumstances that led him to a life of crime as a young man. He gave firsthand accounts on how policies, lack of opportunities, institutional racism and the criminalization of black men affected others like him.

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DIGITAL SCHOMBURG

Stepped away from your computer and missed the last Schomburg trending topic? No problem. We’ve got you covered in our latest roundup of content that’s captured the attention of our global digital audience on SoundCloud, our website, and livestream. Check it out:

PUBLIC PROGRAMS
Black Power 50
Former Black Panthers Kathleen Cleaver and Jamal Joseph dropped precious nuggets of knowledge at our first program of our yearlong celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Black Power Movement. Catch up on their conversation on livestream.com/schomburghistory

BLOGS
Celebrating Miriam Makeba on the 56th Anniversary of Her Iconic Album
56 years since she first captured audiences with her lively beats and uplifting lyrics with her debut album, singer/songwriter Miriam Makeba is honored in a post written by former Schomburg Communications Pre-Professional, Alicia Perez. Schomburghistory.org

PODCASTS
Live From the Reading Room: Philippa Duke Schuyler to Josephine Schuyler
Hear a 1962 letter from piano prodigy and journalist Philippa Duke Schuyler to her mother, Josephine Schuyler, about racial prejudice as her musical career traveled overseas. SoundCloud.com/Schomburghistory

(SoundCloud Playlist: Live From the Reading Room: Correspondence)

SOCIAL MEDIA
Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery Facebook Page
Nearly two years since its launch, and countless enriching programs later, the Facebook page for the Lapidus Center for the Historical Analysis of Transatlantic Slavery is now official. “Like” it to stay informed on slavery issues in the U.S. and across the Diaspora. Facebook.com/LapidusCenter

—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**

**OCTOBER**

**Monday, October 3 at 6:30 PM**

**Between the Lines:** Imbolo Mbue


**Wednesday, October 5 at 6:30 PM**

**Chisholm ’72: Unbowed & Unblemished**

*Chisholm ’72: Unbowed & Unblemished* is an exhibition of her works, an exploration of black activists who mobilized international opinion in favor of the protests in America in her film, *Not Your Mama’s Movement*. A discussion with the filmmaker and a panel of activists will follow the screening.

**Thursday, October 6 at 6:30 PM**

**Black Power 50 Films: Samba deutel**

This program will present an intergenerational, on-this-moment performance based on the musical composition *Freedom Now Suite* by Yusef Lateef. The music will be accompanied by Demonte and Cornelia East and Black Counterbalance. The evening will feature a special appearance by New York City-based youth poets.

**Monday, October 10 at 6:30 PM**

**La Jolla Center Presents:**

*Architects of Their Own Liberation: African Americans and the Abolition Movement*

In her groundbreaking book, *The Slaves’ War: A History of U.S. Slavery*, Hannah Smock examines the role of black people in the abolition movement. She will discuss the centrality of slavery to the ideas and tactics of abolition. The conversation will be in conversation with Pulitzer Prize, Cineaste Prize, and Bancroft Prize winner Eric Foner.

**Wednesday, October 12 at 6:00 PM**

**Films at the Schomburg: Shirley Chisholm**

Shirley Chisholm was the first African American woman to run for a presidential nomination in a major party. Her candidacy showcases her tenacity throughout her campaign as she was faced with opposition from politics and the media. Join us for a screening and a talkback with director Shola Lynch. Curator of our Moving Image and Recorded Sound Division, in collaboration with Rahaman Al-Amin, Islam.

**Thursday, November 2 at 6:30 PM**

**First Fridays**

*Image as Protest*, which was an essential part of black culture that touched their lives, and who was determined to make her way back to Harlem. It is this kinds of stories that remind us what the Harlem community means and reafﬁrms our work in preserving the history and documenting the black experience.

**November**

**November 4 at 6:00 PM**

**Schomburg on Location:**

*Black Power in Conversation: The Image as Protest*

This program will explore the currency of tragedy, resistance, and call out bad behavior in our increasingly digital lives. This afternoon, Callie will be in conversation with DuBois.

**November 9-11**

**First Fridays**

*Siempre Palante!* will examine the theme “Image as Protest,” which will feature Ajayi in conversation with Dubois.

**November 17-19**

**First Fridays**

**Dec 11-13**

**First Fridays**

**December**

**Tuesday, December 6 at 6:30 PM**

**Films at the Schomburg: Not Your Average**

This program will discuss the story of one immigrant Dreamers, adding African stories to the canon of history and documenting the black experience.

**Schomburg Society Conservators: The Schomburg Center is pleased to acknowledge the following donors of gifts of $3,000 or more from April 1, 2016, through June 30, 2016.**

**PAULA T. ARNOLD**

Gloria J. Brown, Michael A. Chin, Chaka Dayton

**THE DUN & BRADSTREET FOUNDATION**

Cora Miles, Russell Reaves, Julia Richie, Warren Reahe

**BMCM & LUDWIG FOUNDATION**

George B. Simpson, Dr. Michaela H. Smit, Patricia Zollar

**NEW MEMBER DISCOUNT 10% off Schomburg Center space rentals**

Whether it’s an intricate gathering or a lavish extravaganza, you can enjoy the fabulous and historic setting at the Schomburg Center while saving money. We offer four magnificent spaces that can house anywhere from 75 to 321 guests. For more details, contact schomburgcenterrentals@nypl.org.

**AFRICANA HERITAGE**

**2016, Volume 17, Number 1**

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Singer/songwriter Fatoumata Diawara performs for a packed audience at the Schomburg.