

LOOKING AHEAD SERIES: OVERSIGHT OF THE  
SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

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HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE  
ADMINISTRATION  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS  
FIRST SESSION

DECEMBER 12, 2023

Printed for the use of the Committee on House Administration



*www.govinfo.gov*  
*www.cha.house.gov*

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

WASHINGTON : 2024

54-358

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TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2023

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:37 a.m., in room 1310, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Bryan Steil

[Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Steil, Loudermilk, Griffith, Murphy, Bice, Carey, D'Esposito, Lee, Morelle, Sewell, Torres, and Kilmer.

Staff present: Caleb Hays, Deputy Staff Director, General Counsel, Parliamentarian; Mike Platt, Staff Director; Elliot Smith, Staff; Evan Van Orman, Professional Staff; Jessica Smith, Detailee; Hillary Lassiter, Chief Clerk; Caitlin O'Dell, Legal Assistant and Deputy Clerk; Khalil Abboud, Minority Deputy Staff Director, Chief Counsel; Enumale Agada, Minority Oversight Counsel; Jamie Fleet, Minority Staff Director; Andrew Garcia, Minority Special Assistant; Matt Schlesinger, Minority Oversight Counsel.

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee on House Administration will come to order.

I note that a quorum is present and, without objection, the chair may declare a recess at any time. Also, without objection, the meeting record will remain open for 5 legislative days so members may submit any materials they wish to be included therein.

Thank you, Ranking Member Morelle, members of the Committee, and Secretary Bunch, for joining us for today's hearing.

The Smithsonian Institution is the world's largest educational complex, comprised of museums, educational resources, and research services. Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian preserves our heritage and history, while sharing its knowledge with the world.

Each year, millions of Americans visit the Smithsonian museums, enjoying each of the spaces and educational opportunities the Smithsonian provides. With 21 museums and roughly 137 million objects in its collection, visitors have an abundance of history and heritage to explore.

The Smithsonian receives \$1.14 billion from the Federal Government in the last fiscal year, two-thirds of its total budget, and employs over 4,000 full-time employees.

Today the Committee on House Administration, which is charged with conducting oversight of the Smithsonian Institution, will discuss the Institution's operations and its long-term goals.

It's been 3 years since the Committee has held a wide-ranging oversight hearing of the Smithsonian, and a variety of issues have

come up during that time. In the last 3 years, the Institution has frequently been in the news on some hot button cultural topics, from panda diplomacy to museum repatriation policies. We've seen the Smithsonian in a handful of headlines.

The Committee will explore how the Smithsonian's materials reflect America's diversity of opinions.

As a taxpayer-funded institution, the Smithsonian must ensure its work is not politically partisan or biased. Our job today is to ensure the Smithsonian is acting as a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars. The Committee will also explore two new museums Congress has authorized and the Institution's vision for these facilities.

In 2020, Congress authorized the creation of the National Museum of the American Latino and the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum. While the final decision for placement of these museums looms, the Smithsonian's strategic plans, annual plans, and congressional budget requests outline a robust and complex enterprise, but do not articulate a long-term strategy yet for the two new museums. Without a clear long-term strategy, the museums may find it hard to balance long-term visions with the more mundane daily operations which are so critical for success.

Today's hearing will examine both the day-to-day operations of the Smithsonian while also looking to its long-term goals.

As chairman, I am committed to ensuring our institutions are working in the best interest of the American people.

Mr. Secretary, I appreciate you being with us today. I look forward to our discussion. In particular, I look forward to hearing more about the—what I've been told is the original Cheesehead. After a loss of our Green Bay Packers last night to the New York Giants, it's a little tough to look at the Cheesehead this morning. But I appreciate you being here. I look forward to our conversation.

I'll now recognize the ranking member to provide an opening statement.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening this hearing.

I take no sides between the—you're a New Jersey guy, so you probably appreciate the Giants who play in New Jersey, and the Packers will play in Wisconsin. But I appreciate you being here. We're really grateful to the chairman for convening it, and this hearing providing oversight over what I think is one of the crown jewels of America, the Smithsonian Institution. I certainly welcome Mr. Secretary for being here as our witness.

As the chairman said, since its founding more than 175 years ago, the Smithsonian has become the most visited museum complex on the planet. It has grown to 21 museums, numerous research centers, a library system, a network of hundreds of affiliates, and the National Zoo. As one of the world's foremost research entities, the Smithsonian is on the cutting edge of advances in science, in the arts, and in the humanities.

Just last month, the Smithsonian partnered with NASA to unveil a fragment of an asteroid currently in orbit around the sun. Truly remarkable. As we speak, Smithsonian scientists are studying these asteroid samples to provide insight in how water or organic molecules first reached Earth billions of years ago. The knowledge they gain will inform our understanding of the solar system for

generations to come. And anyone can go look at this piece of asteroid for free. It's truly remarkable that we're able to do it.

A bit closer to home, while all sad to say good-bye to the National Zoo's giant pandas, Americans should take solace knowing that the Smithsonian experts' observations and research over the last several decades has played a significant role in moving giant pandas off the endangered species list.

Despite the Smithsonian's many successes, it is not without challenges. These challenges must be addressed so the Smithsonian can continue its great mission for the next 175 years and beyond.

Earlier this year, I requested an update from you, Mr. Secretary, on the Smithsonian's response to allegations of sexual misconduct from more than a dozen female scientists at the Smithsonian's Tropical Research Institute in Panama. The allegations are deeply unsettling and the conduct described is completely unacceptable. I am very grateful for the Secretary's thoughtful response and the creation of the Smithsonian's Civil Program, a centralized resource for employees to report harassment and other inappropriate behavior, and look forward to continued updates this morning.

In addition, while I am thrilled Congress authorized the National Museum of the American Latino and American Women's History Museum on the overwhelmingly bipartisan basis, I remain frustrated that the original House-passed legislation was amended to make the law conflict with itself. After the House passed legislation declaring it Congress' intent that the museums be on the National Mall and even requiring certain locations on The Mall be considered, the Senate added language prohibiting the museums from being built on the National Mall. Obviously, that makes no sense, especially since the language expressing Congress' intent and requiring a site on The Mall be considered stayed in the bill. So I'm hopeful we can work together to fix the law to ensure these important new museums take their rightful place on America's front yard.

In the meantime, I'm interested in learning about the progress made in developing exhibitions and programs for these museums. I'm especially interested in how the Smithsonian ensures it maintains curatorial independence at a time when many look to explore cultural issues to score political points.

I'm also eager for an update on the Smithsonian's efforts to right a revolting historic wrong, the 19th and early 20th century practice of removing brains from deceased Black and indigenous people for study without the consent of them or their families. There aren't words in the English language sufficient to capture just how repugnant and dehumanizing a practice this was.

Earlier this year, I sent Secretary Bunch a letter asking for details on the Smithsonian's plans to repatriate and return the human remains to victims' families. I, again, appreciate Secretary Bunch's response detailing the work of the Smithsonian's new Human Remains Task Force, as well as, sir, your public apology on behalf of the Institution. I'm looking forward to hearing more this morning, again, about the work of the task force and about any headway that has been made in that repatriation effort.

Finally, I am interested in learning more about efforts to strengthen the Smithsonian's infrastructure and facilities. I hope

your updates on renovations to the Air and Space Museum, my all-time favorite place in the world, status of the deferred maintenance backlog, and actions taken to protect collections against the effects of climate change.

So again, Mr. Secretary, thank you for—not only for being here today but for your continued public service to the country.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

Without objection, all other members' opening statements will be made part of the hearing record if they're submitted to the Committee clerk by 5 p.m. today.

Pursuant to paragraph B of Committee rule 6, the witness will please stand and raise your right hand.

[Witness sworn.]

The CHAIRMAN. Let the record show that the witness answered in the affirmative and may be seated.

I'll now introduce our witness. Secretary Lonnie Bunch assumed the role as the 14th Secretary of the Smithsonian on June 16, 2019. As the Secretary, Mr. Bunch oversees 21 museums, 21 libraries, the National Zoo, numerous research centers, and several educational units and centers. Previously, Mr. Bunch served as the founding director of the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

Secretary Bunch, we appreciate you being here today and look forward to your testimony. As a reminder, we've read your written statement, and it will appear in full in the hearing record. Under Committee Rule 9, you're to limit your oral presentation to a brief summary of your written statement, unless extended. Please remember to turn on your microphone so that members can hear you. I now recognize you, Secretary Bunch, for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF MR. LONNIE G. BUNCH III, SECRETARY OF  
THE SMITHSONIAN, SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION**

Mr. BUNCH. Thank you so much.

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and all members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I hope you do take some time to see these amazing artifacts: the original Cheesehead, to be able to look at a mourning watch from Mary Todd Lincoln, to look at some of the pins that were given for the suffrage movement. So I want to make sure you spend some time looking at that today.

Since I became Secretary in 2019, I have been impressed and gratified by the support of Congress, the administration, and the American public. At the Smithsonian, we help advance the civic, educational, scientific, and artistic life of this nation. The support we receive enables us to engage with and educate people on important topics, like the essence of the American experience, the diversity of world cultures, the sustainability of the planet, and the nature of the universe.

One of my goals as Secretary is to reach every home and every classroom in the country, sharing our content to celebrate our achievements and help us grapple with contemporary issues, all of which helps us to come together and to work toward a better shared future.

Our educational programming is becoming more crystallized as we establish strategic collaboration with organizations like the 4-H club, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, and PBS. We are hosting students to Washington for facilitated learning experiences with Smithsonian educators centered around civic engagement.

At the same time, we're bringing our content to others through these partnerships. For example, we are currently developing a pilot program aimed at the Boys and Girls Clubs, focusing on civics and history, which we hope to take nationwide in 2026.

As you've mentioned, our world-class scientific endeavors also continue, with efforts as varied as helping the first image—capturing the first image of a black hole, to running a century-long reforestation project. Not only does our science provide an incredible return on investment to the American people, it's work that can only happen at the Smithsonian, and it's work that researchers around the world rely upon. As I look ahead to the future of this institution, I'm excited by what lies ahead for the world's largest museum, education, and research complex.

The nation's 250th anniversary will be launching point for the transformation of the Smithsonian into an institution that better meets the needs of the nation. That pivotal event will not only serve as a celebration of where we've been, but also give us a glimpse at a more nimble, more relevant, and more effective institution, proving that the Smithsonian matters today, tomorrow, and every day and in every part of the country.

To coincide with that event, we have programming that will both celebrate and contemplate who we are as a Nation and the Smithsonian's place in it. We will invite Americans to explore all corners of our complex histories and find ways of moving forward together in our shared future.

The renovated Air and Space Museum should be fully open to the public in time for the commemoration. I have asked my team to work toward temporary opening of the Castle, so the public can explore and celebrate that as part—as we look to the 250th.

The world is rapidly changing and, with it, so are the needs and expectations of the American people. As we look ahead to the next 250 years, the Smithsonian will need to adapt. We want to become a more digital institution that uses tools like AI in a responsible way. We want to provide resources to help communities understand challenges, like the challenge of climate change. We must help our citizens become more engaged and help them become better informed and have civil discourse on important topics that affect us all. Building the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum and the National Museum of the American Latino will help us tell a more robust, expansive version of the American story.

As impressive as these museums will surely be when they rise on the National Mall, they will only represent a fraction of the Institution's transformation in years to come. With your support, we will build on our resources, our expertise, and our trust. We will restore our aging facilities while creating new ones. We will take advantage of technology and partnerships to reach more people than ever, and we will chart a bold, new course for the Smithsonian that strengthens our shared future.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today, and I'm now happy to answer any questions you have.  
[The prepared statement of Mr. Bunch follows:]

**Written Statement of Lonnie G. Bunch III, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution  
Oversight Hearing, Committee on House Administration U.S. House of Representatives  
December 12, 2023**

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

I originally joined the Smithsonian in 1978 as an educational specialist at the National Air and Space Museum. Subsequently, I served as associate director of curatorial affairs at the National Museum of American History and as founding director of the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). In 2019, I became Secretary of the Smithsonian, the same year I was last able to testify to this committee.

I have been so gratified by the continued support of Congress, the Administration, and the American people. At the Smithsonian, we honor the crucial responsibility we have in advancing the civic, educational, scientific, and artistic life of this nation. The broad support we receive enables us to engage and educate people on important topics like the essence of the American experience, the diversity of the world's cultures, the sustainability of the planet, and the nature of the universe.

Our founder James Smithson never set foot in the United States, but he wanted to give a gift to the nation he admired for its spirit of discovery, democracy, and dynamism. The clarity and simplicity of his vision of an institution "dedicated to the increase and diffusion of knowledge" still propels us today.

During the decade of Congressional debate to decide how Smithson's vision should be realized, many ideas were suggested: to make the Smithsonian Institution a national university, a scientific institute, an observatory, a library, or a museum. Ultimately, Congress would take the idea of a national university off the table, but those initial ideas—education, scholarship, scientific research—are all still deeply embedded in what the Smithsonian is and does. Our educational programming is becoming more formalized, with widespread efforts underway to reach every home and classroom across the country. And our scientific endeavors are as varied as helping capture the first image of a black hole to running a century-long reforestation project. Not only does our science provide incredible bang for the buck to the American people; it's work that can only happen at the Smithsonian, work that researchers around the world rely upon.

As I look ahead to the future of this indispensable institution, I'm excited about what lies ahead for the world's largest museum, education, and research complex. The nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2026 will be a launching point for the transformation of the Smithsonian into an institution that can better meet the needs of the nation. That pivotal event will not only serve as a celebration of what we've been, but also give a glimpse of all we can be: a nimbler, more relevant, and more effective institution, proving that the Smithsonian matters today and tomorrow, in everyday life and in every corner of the country.

To coincide with that event, we will have programming that both celebrates and contemplates who we are as a nation and the Smithsonian's place in it. And we will invite Americans to explore all corners of our complex histories and find ways of moving forward together into our shared future. The renovated National Air and Space Museum should be fully open to the public in time for the commemoration, and I have asked our teams to work toward the goal of temporarily opening the Castle to the public for the celebration as well.

Since I last appeared before this committee, a stretch of historic events has challenged us all. We have endured a deadly pandemic, racial and social strife, more extreme weather related to a rapidly changing and more volatile climate, and instability around the globe. As did the entire nation, the Smithsonian has had to navigate these events.

When the pandemic hit, it proved what I already knew when I became Secretary: our talented and dedicated people were up to the task, providing resources and expertise in a time when it was needed most. The moment was an inflection point. In response, we have become a more effective, responsive, and representative Institution, a tremendous reservoir of knowledge for the American people to dip into, even—or I would argue, especially—in moments of crisis.

To take the lessons learned during the pandemic and apply them to every aspect of the Smithsonian, I introduced a five-year Strategic Plan in the winter of 2022 that dovetailed on previous plans and progress. It outlines our aspirations, priorities, and planned impact as we continue our transformation to better serve the public and meet the challenges and opportunities of a rapidly changing world.

Today, I'd like to tell you a little about how far the Smithsonian has come since I last testified, how your support has helped us achieve much on behalf of the American people, and where I think we are headed.

One of my goals as Secretary was for the Smithsonian to increase our reach in education, in scholarship, in scientific research. I believe we should be in every home and classroom in the country. It is an ambitious goal, but one I think is possible.

One of the main ways to reach more people is to continue becoming a more digitally adept institution. Nothing replaces the authentic objects we display, but we need to reach millions who cannot visit us in person, using all the digital tools available to us. One of the main areas in which we can most readily apply technology is through the digitization of our collections.

Our Digitization Program Office is leading the way with efforts like the collaboration between NMAAHC and the Getty Research Institute to digitize 4 million items from the Johnson Publishing Company Archive, one of the most extensive photographic collections documenting African American life from the 1930s onward. A pilot project digitizing 9,000 items from this collection has just been completed, and we will digitize the remaining collection over the next couple of years.

We have also digitized 3.8 million specimens in the US National Herbarium housed at the National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), making it the first fully digitized herbarium in the



United States. Using a digitization conveyor system, the project created 2.8 million new label transcriptions and revealed 80,000 new taxonomic names that the museum did not realize were represented in the collection.

With more than 157 million specimens and artifacts in our collections and more than 2.3 million library holdings, digitizing them is a massive undertaking, which is why we are exploring the use of artificial intelligence and optical character recognition to increase the pace at which we can transcribe collections information from analog records.

We also created the Office of Digital Transformation, the first Smithsonian office dedicated to developing and implementing an Institution-wide digital strategy. By leveraging state-of-the-art resources and innovative internal and external collaborations, the Smithsonian can help more people everywhere experience our scholarship, research, and collections in new and exciting ways.

Although digital technology can greatly enhance our reach, we can also use no-tech and low-tech approaches, taking advantage of existing networks and cultivating partnerships to invite new audiences to use Smithsonian resources. We are determined to build trust with Americans from all walks of life, including those who are unable to visit the Smithsonian in Washington, D.C. One example is our rural initiative, which is working to reach communities often overlooked in the national conversation.

By exploring current, relevant issues in rural America, we are providing resources to help those communities build resilience. In the years ahead, we will expand our programming and services to collaborate with and learn from rural and Tribal communities in the United States. Through this initiative, the Smithsonian will provide space for dialogue, prioritize diversity, help identify and root out bias in our collections and programs, and form partnerships around the country.

Since I last spoke to this committee in 2019, one of the consequential developments for the Institution was the passage and enacting of bills to establish the National Museum of the American Latino (NMAL) and the Smithsonian American Women's History Museum (SAWHM). After an extensive almost two-year site selection process, we are awaiting legislative action on the optimal sites we identified.

NMAL and SAWHM will help the Smithsonian further reimagine what new museums look like in a post-pandemic world, incorporating a digital mindset from their inception, applying efficient processes in design and construction, and developing a comprehensive funding model to carry the museums through the next decade. They will also expand the meaning of the American story and help us better serve all audiences by adopting an audience-focused approach to program development.

Highlighting the stories of American women and Latino Americans is vital to fulfilling the Smithsonian's purpose. Based on the success of NMAAHC, we know that visitors to our museums and websites are best served by seeing American history through many lenses.

When we were building NMAAHC, we created a gallery in the National Museum of American History (NMAH) to demonstrate the value of the museum and give us a chance to test out ideas and get feedback from the public. The same principle underpins the Molina Family Latino Gallery at NMAH.

Recently the gallery has received criticism for one of its exhibitions. As a museum, education, and research complex, we strive to create educational experiences and programming based on scrupulous scholarship that considers multiple points of view. Meeting this standard is a challenge we continually strive for.

Our exhibits are made stronger when they incorporate diverse points of view, and we value the feedback we have received from Congress and the public. Constructive criticism only helps make the museum better in the long run. That is why I had the founding director of NMAL, Jorge Zamanillo, conduct listening sessions and visit Latino communities across the United States to understand how best to portray the full picture of Latino history and culture, one inclusive of the diverse geographies, backgrounds, political viewpoints, and generational differences that comprise the American Latino experience.

It is essential to the Smithsonian's mission that we help the nation have informed and civil discourse on important topics, and that means confronting controversial topics. As long as what we offer is driven by rigorous and diverse scholarship, I will always support inspiring dialogue, not inhibiting it.

I am confident in Jorge's leadership and the expertise we have at the Smithsonian to accurately tell a robust story of the American Latino. For more than twenty years, we have strived to increase the Latino presence and tell their stories throughout the Smithsonian's museums, collections, research, and programs. Those efforts have expanded with the addition of the Latino Gallery and will do so even more when NMAL opens its doors.

This is a moment of self-reflection for all institutions, including cultural ones. When we consider the objects in our collections and the ways we present narratives based on those objects, we must think about our ethical and moral obligations.

As the United States' national museum, education, and research complex, the Smithsonian seeks to set a standard for ethical practices. That is why we adopted a formal policy for ethical returns and shared stewardship with communities represented in our collections. Building on the decades-long work of the National Museum of Natural History and the National Museum of the American Indian, it authorizes Smithsonian museums to return collections to their communities of origin based on ethical considerations, including how they were originally acquired.

It is also why we put together a Human Remains Task Force to determine the best way to repatriate the human remains in our collections. The majority of these were amassed decades ago, many of them unethically. The task force's recommendations are expected at the end of the year and will guide our policy, the first of its kind. It will set a new standard not only for

repatriation, but for interrogating the problematic museum practices that drove these collections in the first place.

If we are going to continue our transformation into a truly modern, nimble institution capable of meeting the expectations and needs of our audiences, we must also consider the state of the buildings and collections spaces that house the nation's iconic artifacts and scientific specimens.

With your support, we are nearing completion of the revitalization of the National Air and Space Museum. About half of the building is currently open to the public with brand new exhibitions. We anticipate principal construction to be completed this summer. From there we will begin reinstalling artifacts and gradually increase public access to the building as the refreshed exhibits are completed. Just as the building originally opened its doors for our Nation's Bicentennial celebration, we will welcome visitors celebrating our 250<sup>th</sup> commemoration.

We continue to make progress on other Mall buildings. We have awarded a contract to revitalize the Hirshhorn Sculpture Garden and the Smithsonian Castle closed earlier this year for its much-needed revitalization. These three buildings represent a significant portion of our maintenance challenges, and their revitalization will address many of our most pressing maintenance needs.

The overall maintenance backlog continues to grow as inflation increases our cost assumptions, Capital projects are ongoing, and our buildings continue to age. Managing our facilities needs is an ongoing challenge, and we are on the right path. Since becoming Secretary, the President's Budget request for the Smithsonian has steadily increased maintenance funding and addressed our most critical needs through Capital projects. Additionally, I have insisted on a thorough building by building analysis to precisely target our resources.

It is our responsibility and priority to ensure that our museums, research centers, libraries, and educational centers are maintained and cared for at a level worthy of these national landmarks.

As I look to the future of this hallowed Institution, I think we are positioned to do great things. I am more confident than ever because I have seen the resilience, determination, and creativity of the Smithsonian community.

As we approach the nation's 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2026, it is a chance for us to celebrate all the dimensions of the Smithsonian that make it such a quintessentially American institution. But it is also an opportunity to recognize that what began as a gift to the United States and has been sustained by the support of so many is really a gift to the American people. This milestone will be a fitting occasion to give back by launching a host of new initiatives, programs, and exhibitions that show our value to the country. It will also be a momentous occasion not only to look to the nation's past, but to what I am confident will be a brighter shared future in which the Smithsonian will be indispensable.

With your support, we will build on our resources, expertise, and trust. We will restore our aging buildings while bringing two new museums to life, expanding the American story. And we will chart a bold new course for the Smithsonian that strengthens our shared future.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify before you today. Now I am happy to answer any questions you have.

###

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Secretary Bunch. Thanks for being here today. I'll recognize myself for 5 minutes for the purpose of asking you questions.

I'd like to drill down a little bit into the broader spending request of the Smithsonian and, in particular, balancing the backlog of maintenance with the two new museums that are coming online in the not too distant future. So as I understand it, with the Smithsonian there is about \$2 billion in backlog for maintenance of current facilities. Is that accurate?

Mr. BUNCH. That's correct. I think we've done a new program that gives me more assessments, but I think it's a little more than 2 billion.

The CHAIRMAN. Inside of that, is the Smithsonian request for funding to Congress, it seems that it's only half of the broader recommended range of 2 to 4 percent of the physical plan's aggregate current replacement value, meaning are we falling further behind on deferred maintenance if we fulfilled the Smithsonian's request?

Mr. BUNCH. The plan would be that we want to make sure that we can utilize all the resources you give us. Part of what I'm trying to do now is be more strategic in terms of how we utilize our capital budgets as well as our building maintenance budget. Therefore, we've done things like, when we built—redone the Air and Space Museum, it's allowed us to reduce our current backlogs.

I think the reality is we need the support that you will give us, and any dollars that you give us we do use toward building, to make sure we can handle the backlog as effectively as we can.

The CHAIRMAN. In the funding request, is the amount of funds as requested sufficient to not fall further behind in the backlog or do you feel that that's the sufficient amount to not fall behind?

Mr. BUNCH. I think it'll help us move forward, but we're going to continue to ask for more moving forward in the future.

The CHAIRMAN. Okay. The reason I ask, right, is we have the two new museums that we're looking to bring online. I think you're uniquely qualified in that role of your previous work on the African American History Museum. As we look at that, the broader focus here on the strategic planning and your efforts to bring that forward and whether or not we're prepared to move that forward, could you give color as to where you're at in the broader strategic planning process for the two new museums, in particular, the location of those two new museums?

Mr. BUNCH. So the challenge with the two new museums are that we have to make sure that we get the site selection resolved, because there's very little we can do without the site selection. We have been very successful with fundraising, and we have raised over \$60 million for each museum already, but that will really only grow once we can point toward here's where these museums would be.

Part of what we've done, though, is recognize that we don't want to wait until these museums are up. They may be 10, 12 years away. So we've already begun to do things like more online work to give people that history about women or about the Latino community. We've also created a new Latino exhibition gallery that will allow us to demonstrate to the public, here's the stories we can tell, and get people excited about it.

The bottom line is that we are ready to move forward. We're going to need, however, more support to be able to build the staffs for those museums, to be able to make sure that we can get the ultimate decisions about site and ultimately construction. What I will say, though, based on my experience, is that we are able to—as we build the new museums, we're able to get funds that'll pay for construction and HVAC and a lot of things that we normally have to ask Congress for. So it's really a crucial moment in the history of these museums to see where we are going to be over the next year.

The CHAIRMAN. In the time that I have left, let me shift topics, if I can. I had my nieces and nephews out to D.C. recently. They got to see the pandas before they departed. I can tell you for our—kids love the pandas. But as we dive in, we think about what's called panda diplomacy, if you will. There's a policy side to this as well.

One is, as I understand it, the National Zoo paid China \$10 million to loan the giant pandas for 10 years. Is that accurate?

Mr. BUNCH. That's correct.

The CHAIRMAN. Then that loan was extended throughout that time, beginning from 2000 all the way through until this year?

Mr. BUNCH. We negotiate every year, yes, to extend the loan.

The CHAIRMAN. Is there a consideration to extend that if the pandas came back then? Is that an ongoing negotiation?

Mr. BUNCH. We would like to have the pandas back, and we would like to negotiate with the Chinese to do just that.

The CHAIRMAN. At any time has the Smithsonian ever changed or compromised any public content to appease or accommodate China or any other foreign government?

Mr. BUNCH. Definitely not.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you have policies in place to ensure that wouldn't happen during the negotiation?

Mr. BUNCH. We do. Then we also make sure that as part of the negotiations, the staff recognizes that this is really about the science and the pandas and not basically compromise our status in working with the Chinese.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

I now will recognize the ranking member for 5 minutes for the purpose of asking questions.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, thank you, Mr. Secretary, for being here. I do want to—in just the few minutes I have, I do want to, as I mentioned in my testimony, just focus for a moment or two on the Smithsonian's past practice that I mentioned of taking human brains from deceased Black and indigenous people for study without their knowledge or consent.

You mentioned in your testimony the formation of the Human Remains Task Force, which has been tasked with determining the best way to return and repatriate human remains. So I wonder if you could just talk a little bit about how the members of the task force were selected, whether or not their representatives from those impacted communities are part of the task force? If you can give us a timeline for what you think is a reasonable period when the remains will be repatriated, and sort of how you measure the suc-

cess of this effort given that timeline and given the task in front of you.

Mr. BUNCH. Like you, I was very upset when I learned about these human remains. My goal was, very quickly, to really have a new policy that allows us to understand how we were going to return remains, what kind of research we should still do. Therefore, I put together a committee of people—the best scholars, some community people, both internal and external to the Smithsonian—to help us think these issues through; to ask fundamental questions as, what is the role of human remains at the Smithsonian? What's the difference between human remains that we have consent versus that we didn't have consent? How do we return these human remains? How do we work with communities?

So my goal is to get this report and to use that report to then reshape the Smithsonian policies. My goal would be that, over the next year, we'll be able to frame the policies, understand what the resources are needed to be able to return material, but also to be able to make clear that if we're doing any research on human remains, here's the limit, here's what's possible, and here's what we're not going to do.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you. That's important. So, obviously, consent would be a big part of that. And I'm assuming that would be a mandatory minimum that people give consent prior to their demise, and that the family members be at least aware of, or if it's posthumously, that the family would give consent. So as we go forward, I would love to continue to be kept abreast of your efforts over the next year.

How are you dealing with the—I don't know how many remains you still have. I know some had been returned, but I think a relatively small number. I think the amount, the number was well in excess of 200—

Mr. BUNCH. Yes.

Mr. MORELLE [continuing]. brains and human remains that you said. I just wonder what the status of repatriation is.

Mr. BUNCH. So the status of repatriation is that there's probably over 20,000 remains in the Smithsonian.

Mr. MORELLE. Oh, wow.

Mr. BUNCH. Most are of Native American, but we're also now looking at other communities. What we're doing is, by this task force, is to help me understand what do we need to put in place to return that material, to reach out to communities. My goal would be that material that we do not have consent for, we should really work toward either returning or reburying this material.

So my goal is to get an understanding of what it's going to take to do all of that, and this task force will help me do that. And then I'll make some determinations how we move forward.

Mr. MORELLE. Your expectation on when you believe that will be done?

Mr. BUNCH. Well, I expect to get the report in the next week or two. I want to use, then, the next 6 months of the year figuring out exactly what we're going to do, what policies get changed, what are the financial needs to do this, and begin to move forward on returning materials.

Mr. MORELLE. Gotcha. Thank you for that. I look forward to continue being updated on that.

I want to switch topics with my remaining minute that I have. I know that you've expressed your support for building both the Latino and the Women's Museum on the National Mall. I just wondered if you could give us a sense of why you believe it's important for them to be there as opposed to being in other places?

Mr. BUNCH. You know, building the National Museum of African American History and Culture on the National Mall was transformative not just for the museum, but for the country, because the National Mall is where the world comes to learn what it means to be an American. And there's something powerful about having these museums on The Mall, so that people can understand that they're part of the American story.

Also, being on The Mall ensures they get the visitation they deserve, that millions of people will come explore these questions. Because the great strength of the Smithsonian is people will come and wrestle with questions that they won't in their hometowns. So we want people to do this. I think it's really important that we build these museums on The Mall so that they can be symbols of America for the world to see.

Mr. MORELLE. Very good.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. I yield back my time.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

Mr. Loudermilk is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. So thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Bunch, good to see you again.

Mr. BUNCH. Good to see you again.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Appreciate you being here. Appreciate some of what was just said regarding the American story. It's very important that we preserve the history and the heritage of our Nation. One of those just being who we are as a people, as well as our government. Our rights that we have, being especially First Amendment right comes up quite often these days. As I explain to people that the First Amendment doesn't exist to only protect the speech you're comfortable with, but the things you're uncomfortable with.

It brings me to—one of my favorite museums that you have as an Air Force veteran, as an aviator, and aviation enthusiast, and it's one of the closest museums to Capitol Hill, which is one that I tend to visit frequently. Especially when you do the movie nights or the IMAX, I think there's a lot of great things that goes on there. But earlier this year at the Air and Space Museum, you had to settle a lawsuit that was filed against the museum when students were kicked out for wearing pro-life hats. It was a huge concern. Still a large concern. Especially when you talk about the American story, these young people have their rights to express their political beliefs as well.

Now, we've been assured that this was a mistake on the part of the security guards being misinformed, but is this reflective of a broader bias by the Smithsonian or was this an isolated incident?

Mr. BUNCH. This is clearly an isolated incident. Because think about that day, the March for Life, there were hundreds of people that went to different parts of the Smithsonian and were accepted, no problem at all. It was a mistake where we have a policy that



says you cannot bring in posters and placards. But other than that, you're entering in. A new security man made a mistake. That, in essence, what we do is as soon as we found out, we corrected it that day.

I also then made sure that we had new training. We have a policy that any time there's a demonstration on The Mall, that morning, all security are briefed on what the rules are to be able to make sure that people's First Amendment rights are not challenged by the Smithsonian.

So this was a mistake, and I think we've corrected it. We've not had any other problem since that moment.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Okay. So are any other changes other than the ones you just outline that you have made, increased training, and better communication?

Mr. BUNCH. Yes, I think that's what's really important to make sure that works. Then we test to make sure—I give a briefing after every demonstration if anything happened. So we're on this as part of the process of improving the Smithsonian communications.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. But even if there was a demonstration, somebody shows up wearing a, you know, Life Matters shirt.

Mr. BUNCH. Yes.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. They're fine? Okay.

Mr. BUNCH. No problem.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Move on to another subject. In 2022, Smithsonian hosted an annual folk life festival with the United Arab Emirates Ministry of Culture and Youth as the headline sponsor. This followed an announcement in 2017 of an agreement between the Smithsonian and the UAE to collaborate on cultural content and capacity development programs.

It opens the question as to why a foreign nation would be allowed to sponsor an American folk life festival in the first place or, as you said, the American story, and what, if any, influence UAE had on the curatorial decisions for the folk life festival. Months after this festival, The Washington Post reported that U.S. intelligence officials had compiled a classified report on the UAE's attempts to influence domestic American politics.

So my question is, does the Smithsonian accept money from foreign nations to fund its exhibits and events?

Mr. BUNCH. The Smithsonian—the folk life festival is one of those moments where we do a domestic program and an international program.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Okay.

Mr. BUNCH. And that the Smithsonian has received support from nations that are being part of the festival. What we made clear, however, is that support has nothing to do with content. They're not involved in the decisions about what is actually shown. It really is a support to bring performers and scholars over. But we're very clear that money from anyone really does not get to tell the Smithsonian what the interpretations, what the work that we're trying to do.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. So what policies do you have in place or programs in place to ensure that foreign investment will not influence in one way or the other what you display or what goes in the museums or what you highlight?

Mr. BUNCH. We have written policies to do that. We also have several opportunities to vet these things. So that when issues are brought forward at a festival, for example, first it's the responsibility of the festival director to make sure that his or her staff is following the rules. Then we bring it up to a higher level within the central administration that we make sure that there aren't those moments where funding really reshapes the kind of work we want to do.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Alright. Well, thank you. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

Ms. Sewell is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL. Well, welcome, Secretary Bunch. It's a pleasure to see you again.

As the Representative of a Alabama civil rights district and a daughter of lifelong educators, I am committed to doing the work to ensure that we preserve, protect, and tell the complicated story of our Nation.

Every day visitors from across the globe come to the Nation's Capital to explore exhibits that inform the events that shape the foundation of America.

In your testimony, you mention that one of the goals that you have in the 15-year strategic plan for the Smithsonian is to increase their reach in education, scholarship, and scientific research, because I know that you believe, as I do, that every home and every classroom should have the advantage of understanding and knowing our great American history.

I also believe that knowledge should be accessible for everyone, not just those who can afford to come to the Nation's Capital. This is why I am excited that the Alabama Humanities Alliance and the Smithsonian Museum on Main Street Program collaborated to host a traveling exhibit called Crossroads: Change in Rural America. The exhibit explored ways that rural communities have evolved over the 20th century. In fact, one of the five stops along the way was the Selma to Montgomery trail, which has been a project of mine from the moment I got into Congress. This exhibit highlights the Black Belt of which Selma is considered the Queen City. You've had many chapters that have had an opportunity to really play a role.

Since 1997, the Alabama Humanities Alliance has partnered with the Smithsonian Museum on Main Street to bring 11 national exhibits to Alabama, and it covered 57 communities across our state. I want to encourage those collaborations and hope that you will continue to make sure that, in your strategic plan, that you carve out resources so that the Smithsonian exhibits can really travel to every classroom in every corner of America.

In your testimony, you mentioned several ways in which you've tried to expand the Smithsonian's reach, both through high-tech digitalization as well as low-tech means like the Rural Initiative.

Another way the Smithsonian reaches more people is through the Smithsonian affiliate's program. The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Alabama, is a Smithsonian affiliate, and a phenomenal teaching experience for those of us who live in Birmingham and who frequent Birmingham and want to learn the civil rights history.

How do you think affiliates benefit from the Smithsonian's central? I also want to get to the importance of your curated independence when it comes to, you know, when it comes to your curation. I think it sort of gets to my friend's concern about foreign influence. I would also suggest that you should have independence in telling the story so that we get the full story and not just part of a story.

So can you start with the affiliation program, and then talk about what your definition of curated independence is?

Mr. BUNCH. I am convinced that the Smithsonian has to really have relationships in rural communities throughout the United States, and we're looking at all the resources we have to do that. Some is digital, of course. But others are the kinds of inexpensive traveling exhibitions that can be in many parts of the country. We also want to bring more of our staff, making presentations, that basically created a rural initiative to say that the Smithsonian needs to make sure that it's paying attention and it's learning from rural communities. So making sure the Smithsonian is beyond Washington is one of my major commitments. But the other point that you've touched on is really important to me as a former curator, is that the Smithsonian's greatest strength is its scholarship, is its curatorial integrity, is its opportunity to bring the best thinking from around the world to shape what the Smithsonian does. There are always disagreements over the subjects that we explore, the interpretations. But the Smithsonian is never a place that is really about from the left or from the right. It's really a place that says, what is the best scholarship, what are the things we can explore? That means that there are times that we're going to raise issues that not everybody is going to be excited about or that not everybody is going to understand. But I think the great strength of the Smithsonian is that its job in some ways is to use our scholarship to define reality and give hope. I think that's what we do when we have the independence to do the work we try to do.

Ms. SEWELL. Well, congratulations on your tenure so far, and we look forward to your continued success.

Mr. BUNCH. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlewoman yields back.

Mr. Griffith is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Secretary. I truly appreciated in your opening when you said you wanted to explore all corners of our complex history. I think that's where it sometimes can get dicey. But I will tell you, I think the affiliate program is very good. Ms. Sewell mentioned it. In my district, in Bristol, Virginia—of course, it's the split city, Bristol, Virginia, Tennessee—we have the birthplace of country music, which is also an affiliate and giving another view of rural America. Just like in Ms. Sewell's district, there's a view of that history. It's important that we study all of these, and I agree with that.

Now, you're already planning for our Nation's 250th anniversary. I'm excited about it. I appreciate you mentioning that in your opening.

I assume that the pillars of your strategic plan—digital, nimble, trusted source, science, and education—will be critical in guiding those efforts. Am I correct in that?

Mr. BUNCH. That's absolutely right.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Yes. As a part of that complex history and all corners, there are certainly things we can highlight that are not positive, but I'm hopeful that for our 250th anniversary you will be depicting things that I think we can all be proud of: the patriotic and proud depiction of our Nations founding and of the Founders and their contributions. Not perfect. We need to focus on all of it. I agree with that as well.

But we do need, I believe, to include the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution as showcasing those in our anniversary events because, while not perfect, those documents laid the groundwork, not just for the United States and our ability to create a more perfect union, but as guideposts for the world as we move to a better world; again, not just here but worldwide.

Can you share some of your thoughts on that and where you're going with that 250th anniversary and what you plan to highlight?

Mr. BUNCH. I believe that it's crucially important for the Smithsonian to be part of the glue that helps hold the country together. And part of that is really celebrating our history, is exploring the fact that the Founding Fathers and Mothers, the Founding documents shape not just who we are, but who the world is. So we want to be able to celebrate that.

We also want to be able to talk about America is a work in progress, that what you see are many of those challenging moments, that there are people that are really trying to say, how does America live up to those ideals? How does America really build on the declaration of the Constitution? So we want people to understand that we are going to celebrate a country. We're also going to commemorate. Because we want them to understand that, by looking at the past, looking at the full past, it doesn't mean that we're running away from difficult things, nor does it mean that we're really being critical of the country. We're really saying is that America's a place that has changed over time, and part of that change has been trying to live up to those ideals. So we want to celebrate that by telling the full story of the country.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Well, I do believe that what happened was exceptional—not perfect, but exceptional—and truly has changed the world. I think we should celebrate it. So I appreciate hearing those comments.

I'm going to switch gears a little bit and give you a gimme. I'm interested in all kinds of things, particularly the natural sciences, but can you describe some of the biggest and most impactful scientific research projects that the Smithsonian is currently working on?

Mr. BUNCH. Oh, my goodness.

Mr. GRIFFITH. I know there's a lot.

Mr. BUNCH. I mean, for me, I'm excited about the work that we're doing in space. I think the discovering image of the black hole, really doing the work on the sort of material that's in space has been amazing for us. I think that we really are doing things that are going to allow us to continue to sort of educate the public but also challenge science to do more.

I'm also really taken by the work that we're doing at the Tropical Research Institute, the kind of hundred-year-old study that helps us understand climate change and reforestation.

In some ways what I think is wonderful about the Smithsonian science is that it really is science, but it's also science contextualized. We help people understand what this means for the broader society, what it means for culture. So for me, science has always been one of the pillars of the Smithsonian, and I'm so proud that it is.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Well, and I'm glad. I really hope that you all continue to do good work.

What percentage of your budget is dedicated to pursuing scientific research?

Mr. BUNCH. I would say that I'm not sure exactly the number, but I would say at least a third.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Just because I'm curious, because I said I love the natural sciences, do you use the creatures at the zoo to see—you know, to check into things like animal intelligence? Do you do research there?

Mr. BUNCH. We do a lot of different kind of research. A lot of our work with the zoo is about animal conservation. The work with the pandas or trying to make sure they were no longer endangered. We do a lot of work with cheetahs and a variety of animals. So I think that we do a lot on conservation. And then our research is used by those scientists that are exploring other aspects of animal intelligence. So in some ways the Smithsonian is foundational to what other scientists are also doing.

Mr. GRIFFITH. Alright. I thank you.

My time is up. I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

Dr. Murphy is recognized for 5 minutes.

Dr. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you for coming and visiting with us today. I've always been a great, great lover of museums. Wherever I travel, I'll always go to a museum because I just—I'm a lover of history. I'm a lover of the human experience.

A few months ago, I took my 26-year-old son, we went—he's in NASCAR, and we went over to look at some of the exhibits there. And it's wonderful to see such joy that he had in a field that he's now fully immersed in.

I will tell you, I loved my experience, but a couple of things bothered me there. You said earlier that you don't believe partisanship and everything. Let me ask you again about partisanship. Where does that belong in our Smithsonian?

Mr. BUNCH. Smithsonian really is a place that shouldn't be partisan. It's a place that's driven by scholarship. It doesn't mean there aren't interpretations that people don't always agree with, but we're really driven by scholarship.

Dr. MURPHY. What bothered me—what really actually just kind of stiffened me up because I didn't understand, I didn't expect it from this institution is that there was an exhibit on Nixon. It wasn't a cartoon that was put up. It was something put up by Smithsonian staff that described nasty Nixon, boom, boom, boom. Then they said something also pejorative about Ronald Reagan on

a written placard from the Smithsonian, and it took me back. That's not the Smithsonian I remember.

So, you know, delving into this a little bit more, I found, contrary to what you said, a lot of partisanship. You guys have this wonderful exhibit praising the super czar Dr. Fauci. Because amidst a cacophony of misinformation and denial, the advice of Dr. Fauci, the Nation's leading epidemiologist, rang true. Well, we found out since that time that Dr. Fauci lied. There's point-blank evidence that he covered up the fact that the virus did come from Wuhan's lab. So I don't think he's a superstar. I don't think he was praised. He absolutely lied to the American public. As a physician, he's damaged the reputation of the institutes of medicine across this country. So this was something taken by the left, praising somebody who actually lied to the country. I'm hopeful that there'll be some revision of what's gone back and actually truth be told that he was praised, but then he really was shown that he lied to further his own interest.

Let me get something back to really—you know, I want you to succeed because I think when everybody talks about the Smithsonian, they talk about greatness. This is all something when you live from a kid, when you make the visit to Washington, DC, it's all about going to the Smithsonian. You get in the Air and Space Museum, and you marvel at things.

But I will tell you, when I saw this exhibit in 2020 that talked about whiteness, whiteness in 2020, here we are, we are trying to have a society that rather than having all these silos and everybody being told that you're in privilege, you're in this, you're in that, and trying to pull things together, partisan politics is now trying to divide us. I'm going to go through this, and this is just baffling to him.

This is in the Smithsonian, assumptions about White culture. It says, Rugged individualism, family structure, emphasis on scientific method, history, Protestant work ethic, religion, no tolerance from deviation from a single God concept. This is absolute anti-racial propaganda. Why would anything like this be in the Smithsonian Institute?

Mr. BUNCH. Now, it's my understanding, what I think you're seeing—I can't really see it—is—

Dr. MURPHY. You should be very well versed in this. You were the head of the Smithsonian at this time.

Mr. BUNCH. No, let me explain. What it is is there was a document that is the whiteness document that was put up online that I took down immediately, because I think that the document itself was wrong and flawed. I do think, however, it's important for the Smithsonian to help the country grapple with questions of race. So I'm not going to run away from that. But I agree with you very much that that document is not the kind of document that should be at the Smithsonian. If it's what I think it is, I pulled that down.

Dr. MURPHY. How does this help us with race?

Mr. BUNCH. That's why I pulled it down.

Dr. MURPHY. All it does is divide us. This is divisive language saying that White people, we don't tolerate any deviation except a single God concept.

Mr. BUNCH. Like I said—

Dr. MURPHY. How is that helpful? I don't understand that. I wish someone could explain that to me.

Mr. BUNCH. I pulled that down.

Dr. MURPHY. It's not White people, it's not Black people, it's not Latino people. We're Americans. I just—this is really—it hurts my heart, because I think instead of us coming together in the last several years, we have poured more silos based upon the amount of melanin in our skin than has ever been seen in our history. It is just—it is pathetic that the site, the bastion of history in our Nation that sits on the Institution is reinforcing those things. So I am just sad about that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

Mrs. Bice is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Secretary Bunch, for being with us this morning. In your opening statement, you wrote that you believe we should be—the Smithsonian should be in every home and every classroom in the country. You also stated in your testimony a few minutes ago that the Smithsonian should never come from a place of left or right.

Secretary, are you familiar—do you know the number of drag shows that the Smithsonian has hosted in the last 3 years?

Mr. BUNCH. No, I don't.

Mrs. BICE. Six. Four of those were targeted at children. That going back to June 27 of 2020, an online event at the American Art Museum, listed under the kids and families category, a virtual drag queen story time, Ruth brings fun for the whole family as she reads classic nursery rhymes and tales for children, June 5, 2021. June 18, 2021, a virtual drag queen art, bingo night. June 4 of 2022, another event targeted at children.

My question is this: You know, how does hosting drag shows for children help the Smithsonian achieve their mission of catalyzing public engagement and sparking curiosity by learning the connection—sorry, learning by connecting the knowledge, resources, and expertise of the Smithsonian with vital network of cultural and educational organizations? What culture is exposing children to overly sexual material appropriate?

Mr. BUNCH. I think it's not appropriate to expose children to drag shows. I'm surprised, and I will look into that.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you. I appreciate that. This recent one was actually June 23rd of 2023, at the American—

Mr. BUNCH. But that was geared not to children at all, is my understanding, in New York City.

Mrs. BICE. But how is that actually relevant at the education aspect? I mean, even if it's not to children, why are we talking about that issue?

Mr. BUNCH. I think it's important—

Mrs. BICE. I think there's many other things that we should be looking at.

Mr. BUNCH. We are doing so much more. That is a small part of whatever we do. The reality is that the Smithsonian is trying to make sure that it embraces the totality of who we are as Americans. But this is not the major part of what we do at all.

Mrs. BICE. Well, while I appreciate that it's not a major part, thankfully, I recognize—I think that certainly the targeting of children is completely inappropriate. I appreciate your opportunity to look into that, and I look forward to hearing a followup framing on that.

Now, to pivot—well, let me also ask one last question. Were there any taxpayer funds used for those shows, that you're aware of?

Mr. BUNCH. I have to look into that. I know that Smithsonian resources are used in a variety of ways, but I'm not sure.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you for that.

Pivoting now, how does the Smithsonian plan to ensure that the Women's History Museum represents a wide diversity of thought and perspectives among American women and avoid engaging in progressive identity politics? And what are the sort of specific plans or initiatives that you're looking forward to?

Mr. BUNCH. The goal of the Women's Museum is to explore the history of women by helping people recognize in new ways the names they know, to find new stories that they don't know anything about, but to basically say that we want to use women's history as a lens to understand what it means to be an American, to see it through the eyes of women. I think that we are clear that, as we move forward, we'll hire scholars and curators and begin to develop what are the ideas we will explore. That's in the future.

My goal is to recognize that we have to tell a broader story. But my goal is to make sure that this is a story shaped by scholarship that helps us understand the story of women in this country.

Mrs. BICE. Do you believe that you will have some of these particular initiatives included in the potential exhibits that also reflect the Christian community and the conservative women's organizations that has sort of shaped—and you actually brought some items from the suffrage movement, which I appreciate. Some of that was very much sort of a Christian-based focus. Do you plan on including this as well?

Mr. BUNCH. Absolutely. The Smithsonian will explore a diversity of opinions and that—in essence, one of the things that the Smithsonian's done is really made sure that issues of religion are central to part of the interpretations we're doing throughout the Smithsonian.

Mrs. BICE. Well, and as a followup—if I may, Mr. Chairman—I would say that Alice Mary Robertson was the first woman ever to serve in the state of Oklahoma in U.S. Congress. She was also the first woman to provide—I'm sorry—preside over the United State House of Representatives. So I hope that she will be included in your museum in the future.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentlewoman yields back.

Mr. Carey is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CAREY. Well, I thank the chairman. I want to thank the ranking member for having this hearing.

Mr. Secretary, it's a pleasure to be here with you today. I appreciate your testimony. I'm going to go into a couple things. I know the ranking member and I have had this discussion, as well as the chairman. Are you familiar with the Arts and Industry Building?



Mr. BUNCH. Yes, I am.

Mr. CAREY. What is that building currently being used for?

Mr. BUNCH. The Arts and Industries Building is probably my second favorite building on The Mall, and that the Arts and Industries Building is being used for activities and events right now. The challenge of the arts and industry is that when it was created in 1881, it was a state-of-the-art museum. Unfortunately, it's not now, and that there's millions of dollars to turn that into a more formal museum.

Mr. CAREY. Well, let me ask you, so were there any concrete plans for the museum in the next 3 to 5 years, that you know of.

Mr. BUNCH. At this stage we want to use the museum as part of the celebration for the 250th anniversary, and we're developing what those plans can be.

Mr. CAREY. Well, one of the things that I—and your staff has been great to work with. I actually got a tour of that facility. I have three children, but big age difference. I have a 22-year-old, and I have a 4-year-old and a 2-year-old. So we came to—so they came to visit me here in D.C. with the 2-and the 4-year-old. And it had been a while since I had been looking at museums, children's museums, to be honest with you.

I noticed that we do have a National Children's Museum, but right now it's currently occupying what was space that was for other federally—a federal building. I'm actually the lead sponsor for the National Children's Museum Act, which is going to require GSA to actually pay the rent for that facility.

But after going through that building, I truly believe that that would be a perfect location for a national children's museum. I understand because of the windows, and I know that there's been a lot of—there was a model—a remodel done in the 1940's that took some of the space. And I know it would require a lot of work.

I think that the Children's Museum is doing a fantastic job right now. But as you said, and I think your point was really well clear, the National Mall is where people come to learn about the American story. I truly believe, like you, that's probably one of my favorite buildings on The Mall. But I think it would be a great way for our children to have a place to go and to learn. You don't have to worry about historical documents, and make this more of a hands-on type of museum. Not to mention then, of course, it's located right in front of the carousel, which I believe that you guys just sent to my home state of Ohio to be reserviced. So I think it'd be a wonderful location.

Any thoughts on what it would take to remodel, in terms of financing, a facility of that nature to make it a children's museum? I know I'm hitting you out of the blue on this, but just roundabout numbers?

Mr. BUNCH. It's hard to get you an exact number. For example, we spent almost \$300 million just to stabilize the roofs.

Mr. CAREY. Yes, I saw that.

Mr. BUNCH. So I think it's millions of dollars to do this to make sure that it can be used in any way for—effectively for the public. I think if congress says to us, explore that question, we will.

I agree with you very much that there is almost nothing more powerful than a good children's museum. I think that while the

Smithsonian does a nice job with young people in various stages, I think the children's museum is a very powerful and important thing to happen, and we'd love to have you help us talk about what's possible.

Mr. CAREY. Well, and I appreciate that, Mr. Secretary, because, I will tell you, I was very impressed with—and I've gone to a lot of children's museums, as you can imagine now. And we have a wonderful facility in Columbus. It's called COSI. It's a hands-on facility. I know that Indianapolis does a wonderful job. And I think the one that we have here in D.C., with the limited funds that they have, they do a remarkable job.

But it was surprising to me that we don't have something like that on The Mall. I truly believe, just looking at the building, the majesty of that building, the history of that building, looking at some of the pictures, I do believe it's the type of facility that could be a very—it could be utilized for hands-on for children in the learning of our country.

I'm going to pivot real quick because I know that there's some other questions. I only have 40 seconds. But what is the Smithsonian's long-term plan to address deferred maintenance? And if you can do that in 30 seconds, you'll be a miracle worker.

Mr. BUNCH. The plan is, first of all, be much more strategic; to have an understanding of exactly what we have, put in new systems in place to do that. Then to look at how we can make the most impact based on the capital money that we've been given to do this. So I think that this is one of my No. 1 priorities. As you know, anybody's got an aging building, you're going to have problems with deferred maintenance. So we're working on this every day.

Mr. CAREY. Mr. Secretary, I'm going to give you a pass. Since you did send the carousel to Ohio, I won't give you a lot of pushback on the fact that we've got Wisconsin cheddar sitting on the desk there.

So, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman will be reminded there's nothing better than Wisconsin cheddar. He does yield back.

Mr. D'Esposito is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary, good morning. So my mother and my grandparents traveled from Puerto Rico to the United States in a pursuit of a better life. Something that I am deeply proud of. My family's story has been one of success. My mom came to the States at the age of one with her seven brothers and sisters.

The American Dream of hard work and the freedom to pursue economic opportunity has been fulfilled for many American Latinos, and we want a museum that can proudly reflect this point of view and this journey.

With that in mind, I am a little concerned with what I've read in the news about the Molina Family Latino Gallery and the exhibits that it produces, which some say depict Hispanics as victims, as Army deserters, as traitors, and as people not fully invested in this great country and all it has to offer.

I have many constituents back home and in New York and in the Fourth congressional District who are of Latin-American descent,

some of whom fled this country due to violence, political, and economic turmoil inflicted by communist governments and insurgents.

Is the National Museum of the American Latino committed to telling the experience Latin Americans faced and their contributions to our Nation.

Mr. BUNCH. There is no doubt that is our priority. The best way I can explain that to you is that the Molina Gallery really ought to be a testing place, that it should be a series of eight or nine or 10 exhibitions that happened before the building is up so that we actually make sure that we've made the mid-course corrections we need to tell the stories we want to do.

I really think that if you look at the example of the African American Museum, which really tells both difficult stories and stories of resiliency and hope, you'll find the same thing in the National Museum of the American Latino.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. So in the authorization for the National Museum of the American Latino, it's written that the board of trustees is responsible for ensuring, and I quote—this is the mission—that the exhibits and programs of the museum reflect the diversity of the political viewpoints held by Latinos of the United States on the events and issues relating to the history of Latinos in the United States of America.

Does the Smithsonian take this provision seriously?

Mr. BUNCH. It is one of the most important things we do, to find the diversity of opinions and diversity of stories. And I can assure you that museum will do just that.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Okay. You mentioned that this specific exhibit, I guess, is a test. So as a former museum director yourself, how will you address concerns about political bias in exhibits?

Mr. BUNCH. Part of it is by putting together a diverse group of scholars that will help shape what the museum will do. Second, I've created a process where we vet exhibitions. Traditionally, we vet exhibitions early in the process conceptually. What I've done is add a second bounce. It allows us to look more concretely at exhibits, the artifacts you use, the words that are written. So it will also help us ensure that we're making sure that the museum is telling the story from a nonpartisan point of view.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Well, I hope that that continues. I really hope that that is the mission, because I don't believe that exhibits should be used as tests. I think we should vet them properly and make sure that when the Smithsonian, which is an institution people travel throughout the world to visit, and we shouldn't have exhibits that are test cases. They should be tried and true and vetted so that you are living out the mission of what we're supposed to be doing there.

Mr. BUNCH. Let me—if I can correct that. What I mean by test, it's not that we're just trying anything willy nilly; it's to see how the public engages around certain ways we interpret history. So for me, that was really the key to the success of the African American Museum, to actually take examples over a period of 8 or 9 years and say, here's where we can do this better, here's where we can do this differently, here's where the public engaged, here's where we need to teach the public better.

So for me, it's really just one of the tools to make sure that that museum will be what we want it to be when it opens.

Mr. D'ESPOSITO. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

The CHAIRMAN. The gentleman yields back.

We've concluded our formal questions here, Secretary Bunch. But in consultation with the ranking member, we know you brought five items out of a collection of about 137 million items. And one of them, of course, has caught my attention, because I'm told it's the original Cheesehead. I'd love to yield you 5 minutes or more, if you need, just so you can walk through the five unique items you brought before us, because the history and the richness that the Smithsonian Institution has in its collection is just so incredibly unique. If you will, we'll give you a few minutes just to describe the five items before us.

Mr. BUNCH. Well, the Smithsonian has 155 million objects in its collection, so we wanted to give you a few that you could look at. I mean, I think that, obviously, the Wisconsin Cheesehead from 1990, crucially important because it really is a symbol of Wisconsin. It's a symbol of the Green Bay Packers, which my Giants defeated, but it is—what it is—it is really an example of the—

The CHAIRMAN. I did consider reclaiming my time in that moment, but continue on.

Mr. BUNCH. You know, so that's really important.

I think the other thing is that, here you have is an M1 helmet. This was really used by a Puerto Rican brigade who really won sort of valor fighting in the Korean war, and we wanted to be able to use that to tell that story.

Also, you have pins here that are "Jailed for Freedom" pendants, which were really about women's suffrage, women demanding that they had the right to vote, and they were then sort of arrested, and these are pins to commemorate that.

We also have Mary Todd Lincoln's mourning watch. So when Abraham Lincoln was assassinated, Mary Todd Lincoln, as you would expect, was devastated, and this watch was given to her as a way to always make sure that she kept Abe Lincoln close. So we have an array of things that really give you a different story.

The last piece is a piece of trench art from World War I. As you know, during the war, there were these moments of real terror and moments of boredom, and many of the soldiers created art. This is a piece that was created out of shells that is in the shape of a book that was really used to store material. But, again, it just demonstrates the array of things that are part of the Smithsonian collections.

So I would say to you that anytime you want to come and have me give you my tour of Smithsonian collections, please let me know.

The CHAIRMAN. We thank you. Maybe the ranking member and I can take you up on that. It is a cherished institution. It's one that, as noted by I think almost all of our members, that we enjoy being able to visit. We appreciate your testimony here today and for you joining us.

Members of the committee may have some additional questions for you and we ask that you please respond to those questions in writing.

Without objection, each member will have 5 legislative days to insert additional material into the record or to revise and extend their remarks.

If there's no further business, I thank the members for their participation. Without objection, the meeting stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:40 a.m., the committee was adjourned.]

TALKING ABOUT RACE | NMAAHC


ASPECTS & ASSUMPTIONS OF

WHITENESS

& WHITE CULTURE

IN THE UNITED STATES

White dominant culture, or **whiteness**, refers to the ways white people and their traditions, attitudes and ways of life have been normalized over time and are now considered standard practices in the United States. And since white people still hold most of the institutional power in America, we have all internalized some aspects of white culture—including people of color.




**Rugged Individualism**

- The individual is the primary unit
- Self-reliance
- Independence & autonomy highly valued + rewarded
- Individuals assumed to be in control of their environment, “You get what you deserve”

**Family Structure**

- The nuclear family: father, mother, 2.3 children is the ideal social unit
- Husband is breadwinner and head of household
- Wife is homemaker and subordinate to the husband
- Children should have own rooms, be independent




**Emphasis on Scientific Method**

- Objective, rational linear thinking
- Cause and effect relationships
- Quantitative emphasis

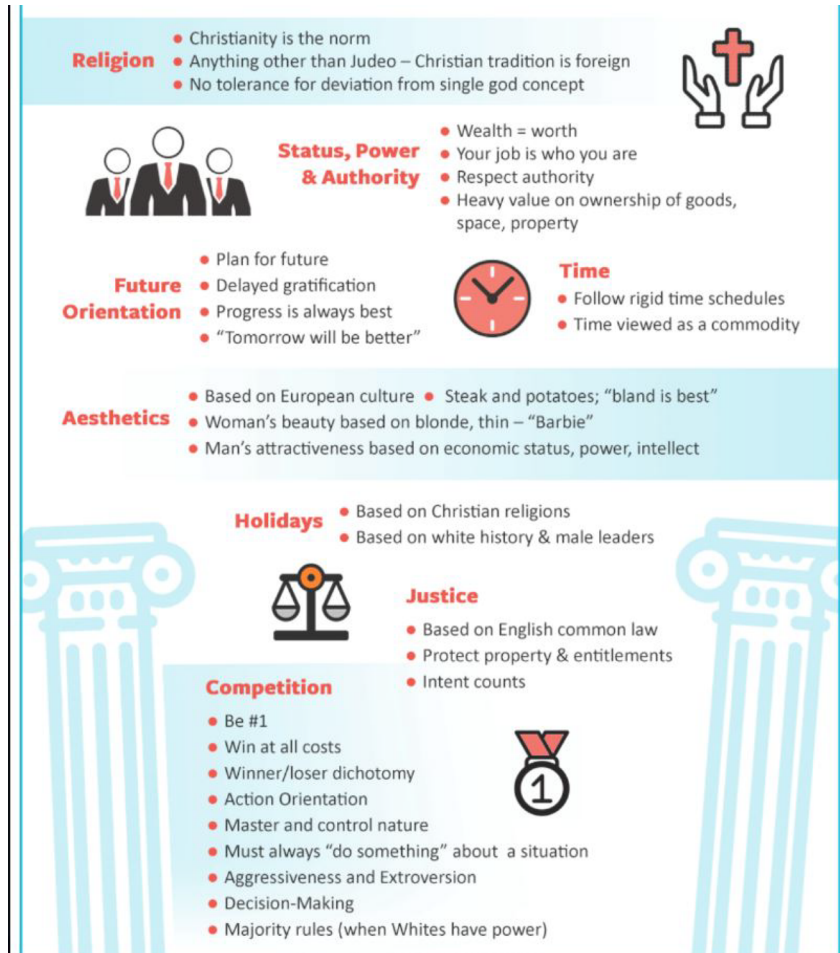
**History**

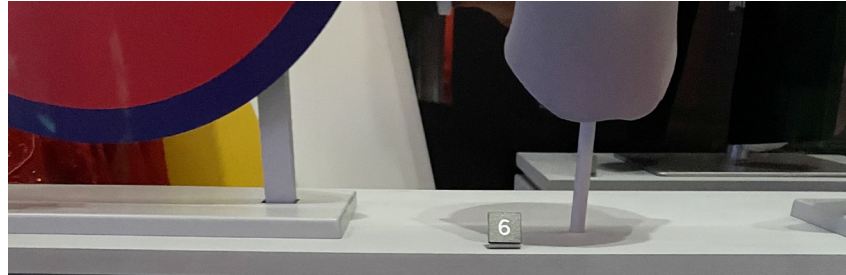
- Based on Northern European immigrants’ experience in the United States
- Heavy focus on the British Empire
- The primacy of Western (Greek, Roman) and Judeo-Christian tradition



**Protestant Work Ethic**

- Hard work is the key to success
- Work before play
- “If you didn’t meet your goals, you didn’t work hard enough”





6 Facemask with the logo of the Washington Nationals baseball team, autographed by Dr. Anthony Fauci, 2020

**Infectious disease superstar Dr. Anthony Fauci threw the first pitch of major league baseball's COVID-disrupted 2020 season.**

As a deadly pandemic ravaged the nation, major sports leagues found themselves at the center of a debate over "reopening" the country. Amidst a cacophony of misinformation and denial, the advice from Dr. Anthony Fauci, the nation's leading epidemiologist, rang true: make the decision about resuming play "based on scientific evidence and public health judgment." When baseball became the first league to retake the field, Fauci threw the ceremonial opening pitch—wearing a facemask in a stadium empty of fans.

6 Mascarilla con el logo del equipo de béisbol Nacionales de Washington, firmada por el Dr. Anthony Fauci, 2020

**La superestrella de las enfermedades infecciosas, el Dr. Anthony Fauci, lanzó la primera bola de la temporada 2020 de las grandes ligas de béisbol, interrumpida por el COVID.**

Mientras una epidemia mortal asolaba la nación, las grandes ligas deportivas protagonizaron un debate sobre la "reapertura" del país. En medio de la cacofonía de desinformación y negación, los consejos del Dr. Anthony Fauci, principal epidemiólogo de la nación, sonaron acertados: tomar la decisión de reanudar los juegos "considerando la evidencia científica y la salud pública". El béisbol fue la primera liga que se reincorporó y Fauci hizo el lanzamiento inaugural... usando mascarilla en un estadio desierto.

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## Drag Queen Story Time



<b>When</b>	Saturday, June 27, 2020, 10 AM EDT
<b>Sponsor</b>	Smithsonian American Art Museum
<b>Venue</b>	American Art Museum
<b>Event Location</b>	Online
<b>Cost</b>	Free   Registration required Tickets available via Eventbrite on Monday, June 22.
<b>Get Tickets/Register</b>	<a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/...">www.eventbrite.com...</a>
<b>Categories</b>	Kids & Families, Webcasts & Online
<b>Accessibility</b>	ASL-interpreted program

**Details**

June is National Pride Month, when we celebrate the strength, dignity, and achievements of LGBTQ+ communities and continue to make a stand for inclusivity and equality.

Join us online to celebrate with DC drag queen **Ruth Allen Ginsburg**. Ruth brings fun for the whole family while reading classic nursery rhymes and tales for children at this special story time presented by SAAM. Registration required via Eventbrite starting Monday, June 22. Check out our series of [online Pride activities](#) that are fun for the whole family, including crafts, coloring pages, videos, and more.

Media sponsorship provided by the *Washington Blade*.

Photo credit: Ruth Allen Ginsburg

## Virtual Drag Queen Story Time with Ruth Allen Ginsburg



<b>When</b>	Saturday, June 5, 2021, 10 AM EDT
<b>Sponsor</b>	Smithsonian American Art Museum
<b>Venue</b>	American Art Museum
<b>Event Location</b>	Online
<b>Cost</b>	Free   Registration required via Eventbrite
<b>Get Tickets/Register</b>	<a href="https://www.eventbrite.com...">www.eventbrite.com...</a>
<b>Categories</b>	Kids & Families, Webcasts & Online

**Accessibility**

ASL-interpreted program

**Details**

Join the Smithsonian American Art Museum online for our annual Pride festivities and celebrate inclusivity and love for all. Enjoy a lively story time performance with beloved DC drag queen **Ruth Allen Ginsburg**. Ruth brings fun for the whole family as she reads classic nursery rhymes and tales for children. Then, continue the party by checking out craft activities, coloring pages, video performances, and more on our [Pride Family Zone](#).

Media sponsorship provided by the Washington Blade.

Image credit: Joshua Hall

## Virtual Drag Queen Art Bingo Night



<b>When</b>	Friday, June 18, 2021, 7 PM EDT
<b>Sponsor</b>	Smithsonian American Art Museum
<b>Venue</b>	American Art Museum
<b>Event Location</b>	Online
<b>Cost</b>	Free   Registration required via Eventbrite
<b>Get Tickets/Register</b>	<a href="https://www.eventbrite.com...">www.eventbrite.com...</a>
<b>Categories</b>	After Five, Webcasts & Online
<b>Accessibility</b>	ASL-interpreted program, Captioning

**Details**

Celebrate Pride with the Smithsonian American Art Museum and DC drag diva **KC B. Yoncé**. Grab your favorite festive beverage and join us for a lively evening of drag bingo, American art, and more. Register now and request 1 to 4 printable bingo cards featuring artworks by American artists who are part of the LGBTQ+ community. We will host two rounds of bingo during this program. Tickets available starting June 1. Space is limited.

DC-area registrants are eligible to get 10% off [Red Bear Brewing's](#) official 2021 Pride Helles lager, *Smash Me With A House*. This offer is available for pick up only while supplies last. Must be 21+ with proper ID and show SAAM coupon to Red Bear Brewing staff to apply the discount. Offer void after 6/18/2021.

## Celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride Month

*June is National Pride Month*



Join the Smithsonian in commemorating National Pride Month with events, resources, and podcast episodes that tell a diversity of Pride stories.

### Upcoming Pride Events



## In-Person Pride Family Day



<b>When</b>	Saturday, June 4, 2022, 11:30 AM – 3 PM EDT
<b>Sponsor</b>	Smithsonian American Art Museum
<b>Venue</b>	American Art Museum
<b>Event Location</b>	F Street Plaza
<b>Cost</b>	Free   Registration encouraged via Eventbrite
<b>Get Tickets/Register</b>	<a href="https://www.eventbrite.com/...">www.eventbrite.com...</a>
<b>Categories</b>	Kids & Families, Performances
<b>Accessibility</b>	Wheelchair accessible
<b>Details</b>	Celebrate Pride with your chosen family at SAAM! Join us outside the museum on the F Street plaza and proudly march to the beat of <b>DC's Different Drummers</b> . Enjoy a dance party with <b>DJ Rosie Hicks</b> , followed by an age-appropriate drag show featuring some of DC's finest performers, including <b>Ruth Allen Ginsburg</b> , <b>Desiree</b> , <b>Tippa</b>

**Buckley, and Molasses.** Create your own to-go Pride craft: Pride flag-inspired jewelry (ages 8+), a multi-colored weaving (ages 5+), or a cloud and rainbow streamer craft (ages 3+).. When you're ready to cool off, head inside the museum for a scavenger hunt for all ages. Throughout the month, visit our [Pride Family Zone web page](#) for coloring pages and craft instructions.

*Please note that this in-person program is weather-permitting. Craft kits are one per child, while supplies last. Registration does not guarantee a craft kit.*

#### **Schedule of Performances**

11:30 a.m. – Noon - DC's Different Drummers

Noon – 12:30 p.m. - DJ Rosie

12:45 – 1:15 p.m. - Lip Sync Drag Show

1:20 – 1:50 p.m. - DJ Rosie

2:00 – 2:30 p.m. - Lip Sync Drag Show

2:30 – 3 p.m. - DC's Different Drummers

Image: Karen Savre

## **Pride Resources**



Smithsonian Sparks

### **Marsha Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, and the History of Pride Month**

The first Pride parades marked the anniversary of the Stonewall uprising.



Smithsonian American Art Museum

### **Pride Family Zone**

Visit this page throughout June for craft activities, coloring pages, video performances, and more.

## Celebrate LGBTQ+ Pride Month

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### Upcoming Pride Events

## Family Program | Drag Story Hour | Session 2



**When** Saturday, June 3, 2023, 12:30 – 1:15 PM EDT

**Sponsor** Cooper Hewitt Museum

**Venue** Cooper Hewitt Museum

**Event Location** 2 E. 91st Street New York, NY 10128

**Cost** Free

**Get Tickets/Register** [www.cooperhewitt.org...](https://www.cooperhewitt.org...)

**Categories** Kids & Families

**Details** Celebrate Pride Month with Cooper Hewitt! At Drag Story Hour, an artist and educator will read a picture book, get you singing, and moving to your own beat. This fun and fabulous program will celebrate all forms of difference and give you confidence to express yourself. Dress up, dress comfortably

or dress as you are every day. After the story hour, design a wearable button to take home inspired by a symbol that expresses who you are.

#### ABOUT THE STORYTELLER

Professor Lionel Longlegs (fae/faer, it/its, & they/them) uses stories, gestures, dances, and silly voices to comprise its "lectures." Often found at the tech booth when out and about, fae has as much fun making everyone on stage look great as being up there faerself. It loves when drag can be communal and wants you to get in on the fun too! Dress up, make funny sounds, and be your truest self!

#### ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Program Length: 45 min. for the story time

Interactivity Level: Medium

Intended Audience: Youth ages 3-8 with their adult guardian/family. Children of all abilities are welcome.

Family Programs are designed for youth and their adult guardian/caregivers. This program includes museum admission. Adults must stay with their youth during the activity and are encouraged to participate. Activity located

## Pride Resources



Smithsonian Sparks

### **Marsha Johnson, Sylvia Rivera, and the History of Pride Month**

The first Pride parades marked the anniversary of the Stonewall uprising.



Smithsonian American Art Museum

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### Upcoming Pride Events



## NY | Native Pride Extravaganza



**When** Friday, June 23, 2023, 7 – 9 PM EDT

**Sponsor** American Indian Museum

**Venue** American Indian Museum NY

**Event Location** Diker Pavilion

**Cost** Free. No registration required; first come, first served.

**Categories** Celebrations, Performances

**Details** This year's NYC Pride theme is "Strength in Solidarity." To celebrate, the museum is presenting an evening of dynamic and fun performances that showcase the rich diversity of the Indigenous LGBTQIA+ community. Landa Lakes (Chickasaw) hosts an extravaganza of dance, music, and humor featuring fellow Indigenous drag performers Lady Shug (Diné), Sage Chanell (Shawnee/Ponca/Otoe/Lakota Sioux), and Papi Churro (Coahuiltecan/Nahua-Otomi). The evening's events will be soundtracked by DJ Jonray (Laguna/Acoma Pueblo).

No registration required; first come, first served. Doors open at 6 PM ET.

**Landa Lakes** is a Chickasaw writer, activist, and artist. Since 2004, she has founded several drag performance groups in San Francisco, including the Two-Spirit Native American Drag Troupe and Brush Arbor Gurlz. She uses art to combine contemporary ideas with Indigenous history and traditional stories to convey the shared experiences and understanding of human nature outside the Western perspective. Lakes was a co-chair of the Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits (BAAITS) and now serves on the board. She was an original founder of the BAAITS Two-Spirit Powwow, the first public two-spirit powwow, now in its 13th year. In 2019, she co-founded the annual two-spirit festival Weaving Spirits. Lake's film and television credits include RuPaul's Drag Race (S1E7) and I've Been to Manhattan.

**Lady Shug** is a proud Indigenous drag artist, born for the Diné (Navajo) Nation, raised in the Four Corners area of New Mexico. She has been entertaining audiences for more than 10 years, beginning her career with nightly performances on the Las Vegas Strip. Recently, she felt called to return home to the Navajo reservation and now lives along the Arizona-New Mexico border. As a community activist, Lady Shug works with grassroots collectives to fight for equal rights for her 2SLGBTQ+ Indigenous relatives living in rural areas and on reservations that have long denied them equal treatment. She uses her platform to connect her passions for drag and activism to raise awareness and stand in

## Pride Resources





