



MUSEUM STUDIES PROGRAM

“The Unvarnished Truth”: Reframing the National Narrative at the National Museum of African American History and Culture

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The Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture opened on the National Mall in Washington, DC, in September 2016. More than six million individuals have visited the museum in its first three years of operation.

The Presidential Commission created in 2001 directed the museum to “give voice to the centrality of the African American experience and make it possible for all people to understand the depth, complexity, and promise of the American experience.”

From the beginning, Founding Director Lonnie G. Bunch III and his staff heeded the exhortation of historian John Hope Franklin, chair of the museum’s Scholarly Advisory Committee, “to tell the unvarnished truth.” That principle energized an exhibition plan informed by public conversations, a collecting program relying on individual and family legacies, a narrative format balancing the personal with the social, and a funding strategy emphasizing the “African American experience as the lens through which we understand what it is to be American.”

This presentation demonstrates the impact of these foundational principles and strategies through an illustrated tour of the inaugural exhibitions.

**University of Michigan Museum of Art
Helmut Stern Auditorium
Tuesday, October 22, 2019, 7:00pm**
525 State Street
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Co-sponsored by the **University of Michigan Museum of Natural History**

