



Media only: Marcia Baird Burriss (202) 633-4876; bairdburrism@si.edu

Sept. 1, 2006

Public only: (202) 633-1000; <http://anacostia.si.edu>

PRESS PREVIEW DATE CHANGE: Sunday, Sept. 10, 1:00 p.m.

The Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum trumpets the opening of "Banding Together: School Bands as Instruments of Opportunity"

What do former President Bill Clinton and Robert "Dyke" Reed, founder of the D.C. go-go band, Trouble Funk, have in common? They both played in their high school bands. While playing the saxophone may not guarantee you'll be elected president, research has shown that young people who are involved in school-based music and art programs do better academically and are often high achievers in life.

The history, beneficial impact and gradual decline of instrumental music programs in Washington, D.C. schools—specifically band programs—are the focus of the exhibition "Banding Together: School Bands as Instruments of Opportunity" opening Sept. 10 and on view until May 14, 2007 at the Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum. The exhibit highlights the heyday of the band programs at D.C. public schools, including Evans, Kelly Miller, Shaw, Hine to Cardozo, Anacostia, Armstrong, Ballou, Roosevelt, Dunbar and H.D. Woodson.

The exhibition examines the development of cadet and marching band programs in junior high and high schools and the benefits of music instruction to both the students and their communities. A timeline traces the separate but concurrent evolution of white and black bands beginning in the late 1800s and the eventual dominance of African American marching bands in Washington after school integration.

Interviews with former band members, directors and boosters recall the wonders of band participation in the exhibition which, through photographs, band artifacts, instruments and video and audio recordings, recreates the environment, exhilaration and pride of the band experience.

"Marching bands became the signature musical expression of the schools, first as the cadet drill bands of the early 1900s through 1960s and then later as the "show" style marching bands so popular in the 1970s through the 1990s," says Gail Lowe, exhibit curator and senior historian at the

SI-323-2006

museum. “‘Banding Together’ relates the challenges and the triumphs of music teachers, parents, students and community advocates to provide quality educational and cultural opportunities for young people.”

Several interactive displays make the band experience accessible in “Banding Together.” A panoramic band room tableau, including background audio of musicians tuning up and receiving direction from the band director, provides glimpses into the sights and sounds of performance preparation. Aspiring drum majors can try the uniform on for size by taking a photo behind a life-size cut out of the band’s “field general.” A bandstand featuring life-sized musicians allows push-button selection of instruments typical of the woodwind, brass and percussion sections with explanatory commentary. Other displays include audio and video performances, reminiscences by current and former band directors, musicians and community members as well as frank discussions about the current decline in music programs and how to reverse the trend.

More than 100 photographs provide historical and current images of bands documenting significant occasions such as the Rose Bowl, presidential inaugurations, Howard University homecoming parades and other events at which local bands had the opportunity to showcase their skills.

In conjunction with the exhibition, a variety of public programs are being offered and the schedule can be viewed online. All programs are free and will be held at the Anacostia Community Museum unless otherwise noted. Reservations are recommended and can be made by calling (202) 633.4844.

The newly renamed Anacostia Community Museum opened in southeast Washington in 1967 as the nation’s first federally funded neighborhood museum. Today, it is recognized as a national resource creating critically acclaimed exhibitions and engaging public programs. The museum’s collection features significant holdings in African American art, religion and photography focusing on community and family history. Located at 1901 Fort Place S.E., Washington, D.C., the museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily, except Dec. 25. Admission is free. For more information, call (202) 633-1000 and for tours call (202) 633-4870. Web site: <http://anacostia.si.edu>.

###

Note to editors: The 160-piece Howard University “Showtime” marching band will kick off the exhibition opening with a parade through the community beginning at 2 p.m., on Sept. 10 at Skyland Shopping Center at Naylor and Good Hope Roads to the Museum. The public is invited.