

## Fath Davis Ruffins

### **Current Position: Curator of African American History and Culture, Division of Home and Community Life, National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution.**

(hereafter NMAH) I have worked as a historian and curator at NMAH since 1981. Between 1988 and 2005, I was the head of the Collection of Advertising History at the Archives Center.

**Current project:** I am the project director and chief curator for **Our American Journey: Many Voices, One Nation**. National Museum of American History. Opening-Summer, 2016 and a co-principal investigator for the pan-Smithsonian project: *Our American Journey: The Smithsonian Immigration/Migration Initiative*.

### **Selected Publications:**

*"The Paradox of Preservation: Gullah, Culture and Imagery"* in **Grass Roots: African Origins of an American Art**. Dale Rosengarten, Theodore Rosengarten, Enid Schildkrout, eds. Museum for African Art, 2008.

*"Money Makes a Difference: The Impact of Rising Prices on African American Collecting Since 1968."* in **The International Review of African American Art**. Volume 21. Number 4, January 2008. Special Issue: Connecting the Three C's: Collecting, Conservation, and Collaboration.

*"Revisiting the Old Plantation: Reparations Reconciliation, and Museumizing American Slavery."* **Museums Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations**. Ivan Karp and Corrine Kratz, eds. Duke University Press, 2006. Originally presented at the conference in Bellagio, Italy on "Museums and Global Public Spheres" Rockefeller Foundation, July, 2002.

*"Four African American Women on the National Landscape"* in **Restoring Women's History through Historic Preservation**. Gail Dubrow, ed. Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002.

*"Sites of Memory, Sites of Struggle: The 'Materials' of History"* in **Major Problems in African American History. Volume 1: From Slavery to Freedom, 1619-1865**. Thomas Holt and Elsa Barkley Brown eds. Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999.

*"Reflecting on Ethnic Imagery in the Landscape of Commerce 1945-1975"* in **Getting and Spending: American and European Consumption in the Twentieth Century**. Charles McGovern, Susan Strasser, and Matthias Judt, eds. Cambridge University Press, 1999. (Reprinted in the on-line Journal of the Advertising Education Foundation, 2002.)

*"Culture Wars Won and Lost: Ethnic Museums on the Mall,"* in **Radical History Review**. Two-part article. No. 68, Spring, 1997 and No. 70 Winter, 1998. (Part One: The Holocaust Memorial Museum and the National Museum of the American Indian. Part Two: The African American Museum on the Mall Project.)

*"'Lifting As We Climb': Black Women and the Preservation of African American History and Culture."* in **Gender and History**. Vol. 6, No. 3. November, 1994.

*"Mythos, Memory, and History: African American Preservation Efforts, 1820-1990."* **Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture**. Ivan Karp, Christine Mullen Kreamer, and Steven D. Lavine, eds. Smithsonian Institution Press, 1992.

“*A Faithful Witness: Afro-American Public History in Historical Perspective.*” Co-author with Jeffrey Stewart. **Presenting the Past: Critical Perspectives on History and the Public.** Susan Porter Benson, Stephen Brier, and Roy Rosenzweig, eds. Temple University Press, 1986.

### **Selected Exhibitions:**

Chief Curatorial Consultant. Tavis Smiley: **America I AM: The African American Imprint.** Opened at the National Constitution Center in Philadelphia, [Opened January, 2009. Still touring.]

Curator, **Ralph J. Bunche: Statesman, Activist, Peacemaker.** The National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. [2004-2005]

Guest Curator. Historical exhibition: “**From Slavery to Freedom**”. Inaugural “permanent gallery National Underground Railroad Freedom Center. [Opened- August, 2004.]

Exhibition Co-Curator. **A Collector's Vision of Puerto Rico.** National Museum of American History, Smithsonian. [1998-2000]

Exhibition Co-Curator. **1848: New Border, New Nation.** National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. [1998-1999]

Exhibit Developer. The African Voices Project. National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. (Planning phases 1993-1995)

Guest Curator. Section on the **African Diaspora in British North America**, for the Ghana-Smithsonian Exhibition Project. Cape Coast Castle in Cape Coast, Ghana, West Africa [Opened Spring 1995, still up.]

Guest Curator. **From Victory to Freedom: Afro-American Life in the Fifties, 1945-1965.** National Afro-American Museum and Cultural Center, Ohio Historical Society. Inaugural exhibition. Wilberforce, Ohio [Opened 1988, Still up]

Project Director. **After the Revolution: Everyday Life in America 1780-1800.** Permanent installation. National Museum of American History. [Opened 1985, Closed 2001]

### **Education:**

Harvard University, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences  
ABD (All but dissertation) for Ph.D. in the History of American Civilization 1976-1979

A. B. Magna cum laude--Radcliffe College, Harvard University  
American History and Literature 1976 (Phi Beta Kappa)

National Cathedral School for Girls--Valedictorian, Washington, D. C. 1972