

The National Museum of African American History and Culture

and

The Kwanzaa Now Campaign

Meeting Background

1. November 16, 2018 Kwanzaa Now Campaign begins circulating a petition informing the public Kwanzaa has been excluded from the National Museum of African American History and Culture and our ***request for a permanent Kwanzaa exhibit in the museum displaying the holiday significance in African American history and culture.***
2. December 21, 2018 before Kwanzaa begins, Kwanzaa Now Campaign reissued the petition with more details of the exclusion.
3. December 21, 2018 the museum's Office of Curatorial Affairs email us acknowledging receipt of our petition and stated: "the Museum is not able to accept exhibition proposals from external organizations."
4. Kwanzaa Now Campaign continues promoting our petition during Kwanzaa, received great support and encouragement.
5. April 30, 2019 NMAAHC museum Senior Curators of Culture and History invited Kwanzaa Now Campaign representatives to the museum for a meeting to discuss our concerns. Their invitation stated: "Your proposal will be reviewed by Museum staff." Furthermore, "We fully understand Kwanzaa's significance as a part of American and diasporic history."

Participants

Kwanzaa Now Campaign: Wautella ibn Yusuf, DC Kawaida Study Group and Baba Lumumba, United Black Community/DC Kwanzaa Planning Committee. **The National Museum of African American History and Culture:** Elaine Nichols, Senior Curator of Culture and William (Bill) Pretzer, Senior Curator of History



Upon arrival Elaine Nichols, Senior Curator of Culture, received us warmly and spoke highly of Kwanzaa, also informed us she observes the holiday in her home. We could clearly see she love African American culture and history, and was proud to work for the museum.

Kwanzaa Now Campaign Main Meeting Goals:

1. Give the museum a chance to respond to Kwanzaa Now Campaign petition and acknowledge Kwanzaa is not represented in the museum.
2. Give the museum a chance to agree and commit to working with us to correct this serious omission of African American history and culture in “The National Museum of African American History and Culture.”

Museum Response to Kwanzaa Now Campaign Goals:



William Pretzer, Senior Curator of History, appear to be the main decision maker in excluding Kwanzaa and its' history from museum. He certainly spoke and presented himself as the person.

1. William Pretzer, answered “yes” to our question “does the museum believe Kwanzaa is adequately represented in the museum given its significance in our history and culture?”
2. William Pretzer’s answer made it clear he did not call us to the museum to discuss our concerns, i.e. “create a meaningful permanent exhibit in the National Museum of African American History and Culture.”

Meeting Summary:

1. The museum tried to use the meeting to assess Kwanzaa Now Campaign strength and limit public image damage the campaign is creating.
2. The museum tried to appease us with statements like: exhibits change from time to time; Kwanzaa may be exhibit in the future, their teams of experts will look into our concerns. Refused to commit in any way to a Kwanzaa exhibit of any kind.
3. Early in the meeting we understood their intent was not to address our petition so we shifted from calm diplomacy (Dr. King) to righteous resistance and insistence (Malcolm X). We refused to allow them to continue restating their rehearsed public relations lines, which we had read prior on the museum website.
4. After losing control of their meeting they tried to regain control by sending in Shrita Penn Hernandez their “media specialist” forty minutes into the meeting, although she was not included in the original meeting invitation. She tried to give us the same public relations spill, we quickly shut her down.

What Was Learned and Achieved:

1. Established Kwanzaa omission was not an oversight, but deliberately omitted from the museum. A deliberate attempt to revise and reduce our history and culture.
2. We confirmed the word “Kwanzaa” is only mentioned once in the museum by citing Dr. Maulana Karenga “created the Afro-centric holiday Kwanzaa.” This reference is for Dr. Karenga’s achievements, not about Kwanzaa.
3. Three Kwanzaa seasons have passed since the museum opening without any Kwanzaa activities or information in the museum. Shrita Penn Hernandez did mention last Kwanzaa she sent something out over twitter. Note: that is not representing Kwanzaa in the museum and furthermore anyone can send out a tweet on Kwanzaa at any time.
4. They agreed to partner with us to promote Kwanzaa this year during Kwanzaa season and they would get back with us regarding it.