

# Deborah L. Mack

## Biographical Summary

Dr. Deborah L. Mack is an independent museum consultant with some twenty years of experience in developing public programs, exhibits, curricula and publications for well-known cultural institutions in the U.S. and abroad. Appointed a Commissioner for the Gullah-Geechee National Heritage Commission, Department of the Interior (National Park Service) in 2007, Mack has served since 2005 on the Scholarly Advisory Committee for the planned National African American Museum of History and Culture, the Smithsonian Institution. She earlier served as a member of the Executive Director search committee for the proposed museum, and as an advisor to the Smithsonian Institution on planning and development of the museum under authorizing legislation H.R. 3491. In 2002 – 2003 Mack served as a consultant to the Presidential Commission, National Museum of African American History and Culture, producing for the action plan report a preliminary national survey on the availability of significant cultural history collections. Mack most recently curated *Western Legacies*, a 7,000 sq. ft permanent exhibition on the African American presence in the West, as part of the Blair-Caldwell (Denver Public Library) that opened in spring 2003, and was lead curator of *The Art of African Women: Empowering Traditions* for the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (New York Public Library). The 2002 exhibition, an unprecedented survey of more than 100 photographs taken by photojournalist Margaret Courtney-Clarke over a period of twenty years combined with selected objects from Courtney-Clark's personal collections, pays tribute to African women's vernacular and architectural arts. A traveling edition of the exhibit began touring national venues in 2006.

From 1998 through 2000 Mack served as Manager of Exhibits and Education Programs at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center, a 150,000 sq. ft. museum and learning center that opened in Cincinnati, Ohio in 2004. Mack led the Freedom Center's effort to conceive, plan and implement interpretive and educational programs, including exhibitions, curricula, public programs, publications, and related special events. She also directed the Freedom Center's historic preservation collaborations and museum collections. Mack joined the Freedom Center from Northwestern University, where she was Research Associate and Curator at the Program of African Studies for three years. At Northwestern University, Mack curated the 1998 exhibition *Living Tradition in Africa and the Americas*, a multimedia exhibit celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Program of African Studies, the first in the United States. Her responsibilities included fund raising, development, programming, creating the exhibition catalogue, and organizing an affiliated international conference.

Prior to working with Northwestern, Mack was the project director for Chicago's Field Museum's 15,000 sq. ft. *AFRICA* exhibit, a major permanent installation on the biology, cultures and environments of Africa.

She curated a second edition of the original exhibition that traveled nationally from 1996 through 2001 under the title **AFRICA: One Continent, Many Worlds**. A third traveling edition of the exhibition premiered at the Cincinnati Museum Center in January 2003 and is currently traveling nationally under the title *Inside Africa*.

Mack has also taught anthropology and African Studies at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, Lake Forest College in Lake Forest, Ill., and at Northwestern University. She has conducted museum collections, film production and anthropological research - primarily in Africa and the U.S. - for more than 20 years. Mack has similarly independently developed, led and lectured for heritage tourism programs in both the U.S. and in Africa.

Mack consults extensively on museum development planning, exhibition development, interpretive, academic and cultural tourism issues with organizations nationwide and internationally. Recent and current clients include:

- African Burial Ground Interpretive Center (National Park Service).  
New York, NY
- African Burial Ground Memorial and Commemorative Park (in planning).  
Portsmouth NH
- AlMansour Kourey House Museum. Timbuktu, Mali
- Association of African American Museums
- August Wilson Center for African American Culture, Pittsburgh PA.
- Birmingham Civil Rights Institute. Birmingham, AL
- B.B. King Museum and Delta Heritage Center. Indianola MS (opens in 2009)
- Mississippi Blues Heritage Commission Greenwood MS
- Brown v. Board of Education Interpretive Center (National Park Service).  
Topeka KS  
Center for Civil and Human Rights. Atlanta GA
- Florida African American Museum Exchange (FAAME) Project. Tallahassee FL
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Washington D.C.
- IFAN Museum, Dakar, Senegal (as a Fulbright Senior Specialist in 2008)
- International Expeditions. Helena, AL
- National African American History & Culture Museum, Smithsonian Institution.  
Washington, D.C.
- Old Slave Mart Museum (City of Charleston). Charleston SC
- Ossabaw Island Foundation. Ossabaw Island, GA
- Owens-Thomas House (Telfair Museum of Art). Savannah, GA
- Penn Center Inc. St. Helena Island, SC.
- Public Housing Museum. Chicago IL (in planning)
- River Road African American Museum. Donaldsonville, LA.
- Science Museum of Minnesota. Minneapolis, MN
- Travel Dynamics International. New York, NY

Named a Fulbright Senior Specialist in 2006, Mack is an active member in a number of professional organizations, among them the Association of African American Museums (AAAM), ICOM, AFRICOM (International Council of African Museums), CECA-ICOM (Committee for Education and Cultural Action), ICEE - ICOM (International Committee for Exhibition Exchange), NAME (the National Association of Museum Exhibitors) and the Southeast Museums Conference (SEMC). Mack served two three-year terms on the advisory Smithsonian Council in from 1999 - 2005. She has served as a consultant to the Association of African American Museums, as well as a board member, chair of the nominating committee, conference program committee member, and is program co-chair for the AAAM 2009 annual conference. Mack also serves as a peer and field reviewer for the National Endowment for the Humanities [NEH] and the Institute of Museum and Library Services [IMLS]. Mack is a member of The Museum Group ([www.museumgroup.com](http://www.museumgroup.com)) - an association of senior museum consultants.

Deborah L. Mack holds a Ph.D. and an M.A., both in anthropology from Northwestern University, and a B.A. in geography from the University of Chicago.

**References and samples of work available upon request**