

# 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, 2007 – 2010) Mack has served since 2005 on the Scholarly Advisory Committee for the planned National African American Museum of History and Culture, the Smithsonian Institution. ([http://nmaahc.si.edu/section/about\\_us/view/68](http://nmaahc.si.edu/section/about_us/view/68)). She earlier served on 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 served as lead curator of *Western Legacies*, a 7,000 sq. ft permanent exhibition on the African American presence in the West, as part of the Blair-Caldwell Library (Denver Public Library system) that opened in spring 2003. In 2002 she 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 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 efforts, institutional collaborations and development of 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 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 serves as guest faculty in museum studies at SCAD (Savannah College of Art & Design)/Savannah and Bank Street Program in Museum Education/New York. 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 organizational development planning and strategic planning, interpretive and exhibition development, and cultural tourism issues with organizations nationwide and internationally.

A Fulbright Senior Specialist in 2010, Mack is an active member of several professional organizations, among them the Association of American Museums (AAM), Association of African American Museums (AAAM), AFRICOM (International Council of African Museums), the International Committee on Museums (ICOM), the Southeast Museums Conference (SEMC) and the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience. Mack served two three-year terms on the advisory Smithsonian Council from 1999 – 2005, serving as Council Chair in 2002. She has served the Association of African American Museums, as consultant, board member, nominating committee chair, conference program committee member, and served as Program Chair for the AAAM 2009 annual conference. Mack is a member of the Association of American Museums 2011 and 2012 conference National Program Committee. She 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.

## **2010-2011 Client List**

### **Master Planning**

- alMansour Kourey House Museum. Timbuktu, Mali
- Commissioner (State of Georgia), the Gullah-Geechee National Heritage Corridor. National Park Service, Department of the Interior (term 2008 - 2010)
- Florida African American Heritage Network (a professional development network of some 20 cultural institutions statewide). Tallahassee FL
- Louisiana Civil Rights Museum. New Orleans LA (client representative; project in development)
- Mitchelville Preservation Project. Hilton Head Island SC
- New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Foundation. New Orleans LA

### **Interpretive Planning**

- African Burial Ground Interpretive Center (National Park Service). New York, NY (opened February 2010)
- African Burial Ground Memorial and Commemorative Park, Portsmouth NH (in development)
- Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. Baton Rouge LA
- Miami University. Oxford OH
- Museum of African American Music, Art & Culture, Nashville TN
- National African American History & Culture Museum, Smithsonian Institution. Washington D.C.
- New Orleans Center for Creative Arts/Riverfront. New Orleans LA
- Ossabaw Island Foundation. Savannah GA Tuskegee Airman National Historic Site. (National Park Service)
- River Road African American Museum. Donaldsonville LA.
- Tuskegee Airman National Historic Site. (National Park Service)
- York W. Bailey Museum, Penn Center. St. Helena Island SC

### **Strategic Planning**

- Association of African American Museums
- B. B. King Museum and Delta Heritage Center. Indianola MS
- Théodore Monod African Art Museum / Musée Théodore Monod d'Art africain (2010 Fulbright Senior Specialist)

### **Heritage/Cultural Tourism Consulting/Lecturing**

- Discovery Tours International. Chicago IL
- Louisiana Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism. Baton Rouge LA
- Travel Dynamics International. New York NY

### **Teaching**

- Visiting Faculty. Bank Street College Leadership in Museum Education (2011)
- Guest Faculty, Museum Studies. Savannah College of Art & Design (2010, 2011)