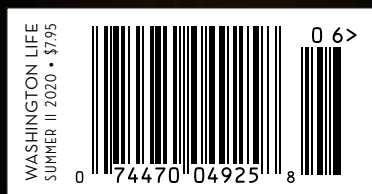


WASHINGTON LIFE

THE INSIDER'S GUIDE TO POWER AND SOCIETY SINCE 1991

THE 2020 **POWER 100**

WASHINGTON'S HEAVIEST HITTERS,
TOP INFLUENCERS AND KEY DECISION MAKERS





MY WASHINGTON

LONNIE BUNCH

Secretary, Smithsonian Institution

INTERVIEW BY KEVIN CHAFFEE



MY TOP SPOTS



Great Falls is a special place to walk on both the Maryland and Virginia side of the falls. It's hard to believe it is so close to the city.



I love theater almost as much as I love movies, and **Arena Stage** (1101 6th St. SW) has a great range of shows from comedies to drama.



I began visiting the **Clover Adams Memorial** statue in Rock Creek Cemetery (201 Allison St. NW) years ago. The person shrouded in grief gives a sense of what it means to lose the love of your life.



The **African American Civil War Memorial** (1925 Vermont Ave. NW) I love the idea that we have a monument dedicated to black soldiers from the Civil War. One of my wife's ancestors is listed among the 200,000 names inscribed on it.

HAS THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AFFECTED THE SMITHSONIAN WITH REGARD TO OPERATIONS AND FUNDING?

Our operations continue with select essential workers on the front line and many people working remotely. We've been able to weather the financial storm thanks to the tremendous support we receive from Congress and our donors. Some units are more dependent than others on the revenue our visitors bring in, so it is a challenge the longer this goes on. We're doing our best to mitigate it with existing funds.

ARE THERE ANY MAJOR NEW PROJECTS THAT HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED OR FACE CANCELLATION?

We're still determining that. So many projects are collaborative in nature, so they are dependent on the availability of others, leaving a finite window to execute them. There are several big exhibitions that have been postponed like "Girlhood! (It's Complicated)" at the National Museum of American History and the landmark Alexander von Humboldt exhibition at the Smithsonian American Art Museum that I'm personally excited to see.

WHICH ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO GETTING BACK ON TRACK?

It's impossible to choose a favorite from the breadth of projects we have. I am in awe of our talented museum staff who sprung into action to create robust digital exhibitions during the pandemic, and we've seen how important that is. But the in-person experience is unique. They each go hand in hand, so I look forward to being able to open safely so our visitors can enjoy everything we have to offer.

WHAT IS YOUR PLAN TO REOPEN ALL FACILITIES IN VARIOUS STAGES?

Our phased reopening strategy began with the Zoo and the Udvar-Hazy Center. They were chosen based on several factors: crowd management and social distancing, the ability to maintain a hygienic environment and parking availability. The limited reopening allows us to refine the

new processes and learn from the visitor experience. Our goal is to open additional museums in upcoming months when the latest information from medical experts deems it safe.

THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE FILLS A GAP IN THE RACIAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE NATION. IN TERMS OF THE SMITHSONIAN AS A WHOLE, IS IT ENOUGH?

No, but it's a good start. Limited space means you can only tell so many stories. The African American museum allows us to fill that gap, but the stories of African Americans, just like those of women, Latinos, Indigenous people and every other group, are ultimately American stories. We must continue to weave a more complete narrative through all our museums and education centers.

WHAT AMERICAN MUSEUM OUTSIDE OF WASHINGTON, D.C. PARTICULARLY IMPRESSES YOU? WHAT ABOUT A MUSEUM OUTSIDE THE U.S.?

I tend to like small history museums that tell local stories in a national context, but I can't narrow it down since there are so many I enjoy and others I haven't yet had the chance to visit. My favorite international museum is Te Papa, the national museum of New Zealand.

MANY PEOPLE WANT TO REMOVE THE CONTROVERSIAL STATUE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND THE FREED SLAVE FROM LINCOLN PARK. OTHERS WISH TO KEEP IT. WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Individual communities and cities and society at large should reexamine memorials and monuments to determine if they still represent our values and if the people and ideas they depict are worth venerating. Generally, little context or background accompanies statues, so they're not very good at teaching history. When statues go away, it doesn't erase history; there are tons of great books and museums where people can learn about the past. **WL**

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