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# Moseley Braun calls Trump 'insane' after assault on National Black Museum

Stephanie Gadlin April 10, 2025 4:13 pm



*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

Continuing to make good on his promise to rid the nation of "wokeness," diversity, inclusion, equity; political gains made during the Civil Rights Movement; and alleged federal waste, President Donald Trump set his sights on the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) in Washington, D.C.

On March 27, 2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order titled "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History," which directly impacts the NMAAHC. The order criticizes the museum for promoting narratives that the administration deems "divisive" or "anti-American." Specifically, it references the museum's alleged past assertion that attributes such as "hard work," "individualism," and "the nuclear family" are aspects of "White culture."

Executive Order 14253, "Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History, " directs Vice President J.D. Vance, a member of the Smithsonian Board of Regents, to work towards eliminating what the administration considers improper ideologies, such as exhibits chronicling chattel slavery in the U.S., from the Smithsonian Institution which oversees the museum. This includes ensuring that future funding "does not support exhibits or programs that "degrade shared American values" or "divide Americans by race," according to the White House.

Sixty-two percent of the museum's funding is supplied by the federal government.

Kevin Young, the museum's director, stepped down from his role on April 4th, the anniversary of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., after four years in that role. The museum offered little public comment about his departure, though he had been on leave since March 14th of this year. Shanita Brackett, the museum's associate director of operations, serves as interim director.

The **Crusader** reached out to NMAAHC officials but did not receive a response by its deadline.

On the same day of Young's resignation, Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, joined 20 other attorney generals in filing a lawsuit against the Trump Administration to stop the elimination of the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), which allocated more than \$11 million to museums and libraries in Illinois.



*Carol Moseley Braun*

The April 4th lawsuit, which also cites defunding of the Minority Business Development Agency, the Community Development Financial Institutions Fund and the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, among others, claims the president's Executive Order is unconstitutional and violates the Administrative Procedure Act by cutting programs the agencies are statutorily required to administer.

In addition to Illinois, the coalition of Democratic attorney generals includes New York, California, Michigan, Washington, Delaware, Colorado, Wisconsin, Maryland, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Nevada, Minnesota, New Mexico and Oregon.

NMAAHC has drawn record crowds since its opening eight years ago. The institution has collected more than 40,000 artifacts exclusively dedicated to documentation and commemorating African American life, history, and culture. Its most recent exhibit, "In Slavery's Wake: Making Black Freedom in the World," opened this past December and will run through June 8th of this year.

Artifacts under the control of the federal government include Nat Turner's bible; Harriet Tubman's hymnal; Emmett Till's casket; several of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s clerical robes, along with the jail cell door from his incarceration in Birmingham, Alabama; Rosa Parks' dress, bible and handbag; an original slave cabin from South Carolina; A P-51 Mustang airplane used by Tuskegee Airmen, the legendary all-Black fighter pilot squadron during WWII; and, several personal rare and priceless mementos from historical figures spanning sports, entertainment, science, law, education, activism and overall society.

The Trump administration also removed an image of and a quote from Tubman from a National Park Service webpage about the Underground Railroad. Other edits on federal pages eliminated a passage about the legacy of anti-slavery abolitionist John Brown and mentions of systemic racism and historical bias. Language and stills related to the Civil Rights movement and the Civil War have also been restricted.

The President's executive order also impacts other Smithsonian museums, including the forthcoming American Women's History Museum, by mandating that exhibits celebrate women's achievements without recognizing transgender individuals as women. The directive may also restrict grants to cultural institutions across the nation, including Chicago.

Former U.S. Senator and Ambassador Carol Moseley Braun told the **Crusader** that President Trump is "insane" as he continues to wreak "devastation and significant harm" across the federal government and the nation in general. She served in the U.S. Senate from 1993 to 1999.

"This is the only office—not the legislature, not the judicial—that can wreak this kind of havoc on a community as a whole and that's what he's doing," she said. "It is the most powerful office in the country and Trump is just wreaking havoc. We are right to be alarmed about the dissembling of all the work that has gone in by people trying to get our history told because it is American history at the end of the day.

Moseley Braun was recently named chair of the Board of Trustees at the DuSable Museum of Black History and Education Center, located at 740 E. 56th Place in Washington Park. She has been on board since 2018 and will take on a more direct role in guiding its mission and ensuring its longevity. She said the museum is bracing itself for cuts in funding and the board is currently working to insulate the impact of defunding.

"We're up against a worldview that does not take into account our interests," she said. "Challenge number one is to hang on to our funding and not thrown into reliance on private donations, which is kind of where we're headed, she told the **Crusader**. "Unfortunately, I don't know what the true impact of Trump's nonsense is going to be on the finances of DuSable at this time—it's an open question, and not a happy one, because we just don't know what he's going to do. He's just the guy is so erratic he has to be crazy."

Founded by Dr. Margaret Burroughs in 1961, the institution has received federal funding through grants from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Notably, in fiscal year 2024, the museum was awarded a \$100,000 grant under the Museum Grants for African American History and Culture program.

DuSable, which was the nation's first independent museum of its kind, is also funded through a mix of federal, state, local, and private sources.



Reportedly, there are over 35,000 museums in the United States, and of those, approximately 15,000 to 17,000 are categorized as history and cultural museums. According to a survey by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), 63 percent (or 22,050) of these institutions reported receiving federal grants, awards, or contracts, either directly from federal agencies or through state or local entities.

In 2024, NMAAHC operated with an annual budget of approximately \$51 million, combining federal funding, trust funds and private donations. Following its establishment by an Act of Congress in 2003, construction began in 2012, and the museum officially opened to the public on September 24, 2016. The museum's total construction cost was about \$540 million, with approximately \$270 million provided by federal funds and the remaining \$270 million raised through private donations.

The Smithsonian Institution, established in 1846, is a unique entity known as a "trust instrumentality" of the United States. A significant portion of the Smithsonian's funding comes from the federal government. For fiscal year 2024, the Institution received approximately \$1.09 billion in federal appropriations, accounting for about 62% of its total funding. These funds are allocated to support operating expenses, including salaries, educational programs, and maintenance of facilities.

The remaining 38 percent of the Smithsonian's budget is derived from non-federal sources. This includes private donations, trust fund endowments, memberships, and revenue-generating activities such as retail operations, licensing, and concessions. Included among Smithsonian's governance is the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, erected in 1971 on the banks of the Potomac.

In February, Trump removed all 18 board members appointed by President Joe Biden and appointed himself as chairman. He said the move was part of a broader initiative to align cultural institutions with his administration's ideological perspectives.

If Americans have any doubts about what the president's ideological perspectives entail, they might look no further than his vow to remove unwanted, illegal migrants and revoke U.S. protections for Haitians, Cubans and other people of color who recently entered the country while simultaneously decreeing political asylum for white South African farmers or Afrikaners due to "racial discrimination." The executive order directed the U.S. Secretaries of State and Homeland Security to prioritize the resettlement of these individuals under the U.S. refugee program.

"He doesn't have any appreciation of the arts; he just doesn't," Moseley Braun said. "We have a tyrant, and we have someone who has, quite frankly, abandoned everything that was good about the United States in terms of the arts and culture."

Moseley Braun has had a long and storied career in local, state and city politics since 1978. She entered politics after serving as Assistant U.S. Attorney in Chicago and joining the Illinois House of Representatives, becoming the first Black woman to serve as assistant majority leader in the Illinois legislature.

In 1988, she became the Cook County Recorder of Deeds and served for five years before winning the historical U.S. Senate race in the 1992 election. She served one term in the U.S. Senate and was later appointed U.S. ambassador to New Zealand and Samoa by President Bill Clinton. She served in that role from December 1999 to March 2001. As the first African American U.S. Senator, the trailblazing Democrat faced racist attacks from colleagues, including Sen. Strom Thurmond (R-SC) and Jesse Helms (R-NC).

Moseley Braun was appointed chair of the United States can Development Foundation and assumed the role in 2024. In 2011, she ran for mayor of Chicago, aiming to succeed Richard M. Daley. She told the **Crusader** she had no interest in returning to politics.

In her expanded leadership role at DuSable Museum, stabilizing the struggling institution is now her top priority. "I meet with the CEO next week," she said. "We will examine our options, as I am sure other museums and cultural institutions are also doing (in the wake of Trump's executive order)."



*DuSable Museum*

National Endowment of the Arts former chair Jane Alexander told National Public Radio that Trump's cuts will hurt arts programming across the nation. "The thing we have to remember is the endowment was founded to decentralize the commercial art centers of the United States and bring the arts across the country to areas that did not have real accessibility to it. It was a noble dream, and it came to fruition in 1965 under Lyndon Johnson," she said.

"I'm not surprised that it has happened under this administration," she told NPR, which has also been threatened by the Trump administration. "They were looking at absolutely everything. I'm appalled. I don't think it's a wise decision, particularly since the arts are really for everyone, and we know that people love the arts in their community. So, I don't think it's wise, but it's here. And we have to challenge it."

The primary federal agencies that fund the nation's museums and cultural institutions include the Institute of Museum and Library Services Office of Museum Services, which in 2024 awarded approximately \$54.6 million through 293 grants to museums, educational institutions, and related organizations; the National Endowment for the Arts; the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) and the National Science Foundation which supports museums, particularly science centers and natural history museums, through grants for research and educational programs.

Governors and elected officials aligned with Trump's ideology have also moved to ban books written by Black authors, historians, and poets—particularly with a focus on slavery, civil rights, the anti-apartheid movement, or racial bigotry. These combined efforts have many African Americans believing their history and culture are being erased. The former senator shares the sentiment.

"Yes, there is an effort to erase our history, parts of American history," she said. "You know, this is not new. This has happened before, and our ancestors were able to survive it. They stayed true to what they believed in their principles and what the possibilities were. We just have to encourage people to just kind of hold fast and do what you can do; to stay the course on, on that which is true, you know that which is right."

Moseley Braun acknowledged there is little Congress can do because the president's party controls both houses, as well as the judiciary. She said Sen. Cory Booker's (D-NJ) historic 25-hour filibuster provided a shot of adrenaline to those fighting for democracy. In retrospect, the former senator referred to this era as another teachable moment of the power of voting. "I think the first and most important thing we can do is communicate to our community the importance of voting. Because people, a lot of people, still think my vote doesn't matter," she said. "This is what comes with that." And quite frankly, it's not blaming our people for this...

"We live in a blue state. I think a lot of us just took for granted that (Vice President Kamala Harris) was going to win and that was a mistake because you never know in an election," Moseley Braun explained. "Having stood for election, you never know what's going to happen until the last vote is counted. ...What we're seeing now with this is that if you let anything slide, you wind up, actually screwed, because (Trump got in) and this guy is insane."

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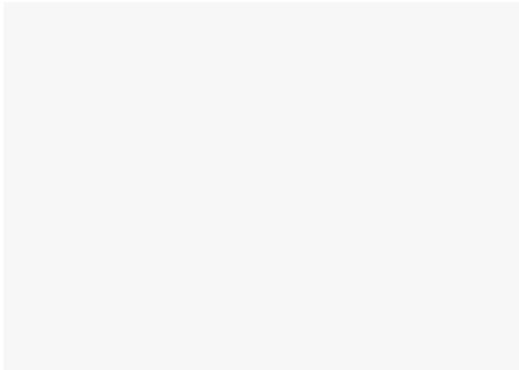
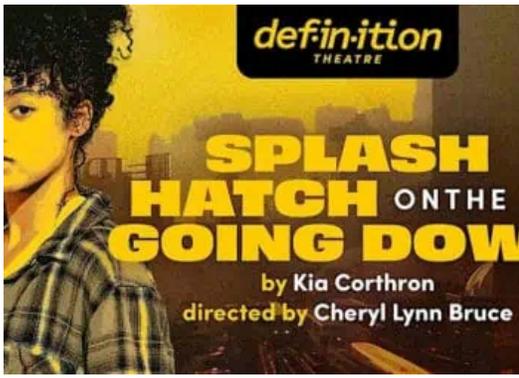


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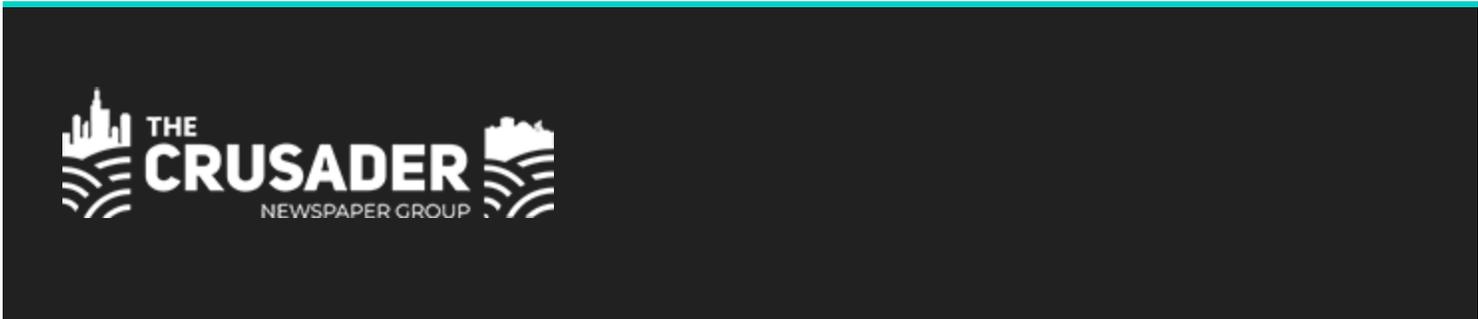
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