Smithsonian exhibition inspires with history of revolutionary African American men, opens in Tacoma on Dec. 21

A new traveling exhibition from the Smithsonian opens at the Washington State History Museum in Tacoma on December 21, 2019. Visitors will be immersed in the narrative of our nation through the stories of revolutionary, iconic African American men. *Men of Change: Power. Triumph. Truth.* educates visitors about more than two dozen known and unknown men, past and present, illuminating their historic contributions through story and art.

“We are honored and thrilled to feature *Men of Change: Power. Triumph. Truth.* As of now, we’re one of only two museums on the West Coast that will host this phenomenal exhibition. It will be on view at the History Museum through March 15, 2020. We encourage everyone to come see it and to learn about these change-makers,” said Jennifer Kilmer, Washington State Historical Society’s director.

“Many of these men’s contributions have often not been explored in the history books, as other narratives have been favored. For me, the most compelling aspect of this exhibition is the way that it shifts and sheds light on these lesser known narratives in a way that brings them to the forefront where they belong,” said Mary Mikel Stump, the Historical Society’s audience engagement director.

*Men of Change* highlights men such as Muhammad Ali, James Baldwin, Ta-Nehisi Coates, W.E.B. Du Bois and Kendrick Lamar, whose journeys altered the history and culture of our country through politics, sports, science, entertainment, business, religion and more. Each biography is paired with original artwork by noted artists. These contemporary artworks accentuate each individual’s legacy. Participating artists include Nina Chanel Abney, Derrick Adams, Robert Pruitt, Hank Willis Thomas, Tariku Shiferaw, Devan Shimoyama and others.

The exhibition weaves a collective tapestry of what it is to be an African American man and the shared experience of African American men across generations.

Created by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES), *Men of Change* is made possible through the support of Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services with local support provided by Alaska Airlines.

“We hope that by experiencing ‘Men of Change’ visitors will see a lesson for us all, regardless of gender, race or nationality,” said Myriam Springuel, director of SITES and Smithsonian Affiliations. “In these men we see an absolute ideal and a well of inspiration that encourages us to become our best selves.”
A diverse group of artists, advisors, academics, curators and museum professionals determined the men chosen as “Men of Change.” From Carter G. Woodson to Ryan Coogler, these men have changed entire fields, fought for justice, revolutionized art and touched millions of lives directly and indirectly. These men serve as metaphor, representing the many more men and the broader community that shaped them into important change agents. *Men of Change: Power. Triumph. Truth.* also incorporates the names and language of others—men and women—that signify the power of the African American journey in the American story.

Along with this exhibition, the Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services is investing in the Tacoma community with the Men of Courage initiative. The most visible component of this initiative is the Men of Courage Barbershop Challenge. Barbershops are encouraged to apply by 5:00 PM, November 22, and share their ideas for uplifting their community. Application assistance is available through Tacoma Urban League. Two finalist barbershops will be chosen, and each will receive a Men of Courage shop makeover. Based on engagement and effectiveness of their outreach programs, the winning barbershop will receive a $10,000 prize to use toward their business and community improvements, and the second place shop will receive a $5,000 grant to contribute to the organization of their choice. The Men of Courage initiative also includes a free leadership training seminar for men in Pierce County, to take place at the History Museum on January 17.

“Ford and the Smithsonian have a shared commitment to honoring people and achievements that make our world a better place,” said Jim Vella, president of Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services. “We are proud to partner with them on this innovative exhibition.”

Opening day for *Men of Change. Power. Triumph. Truth.* is Saturday, December 21. Check the History Museum’s website for related programs and details at WashingtonHistory.org/MOC.

*A press tour will be held on January 7, 2020, at 11:00 AM.* Members of the press can contact WSHS Marketing and Communications Director Julianna Verboort to RSVP or to schedule an alternative time, at jverboort@wshs.wa.gov or 253-798-5902.

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About The Washington State Historical Society
The Washington State Historical Society partners with our communities to explore how history connects us all. The Society’s most visible activity, the Washington State History Museum (WSHM) is located in Tacoma’s downtown along Pacific Avenue among a thriving cultural scene. The museum features interactive permanent exhibitions about Washington’s past in the Great Hall, unique rotating exhibitions highlighting the Society’s collections, and dynamic feature exhibitions.

Address: 1911 Pacific Avenue, Tacoma, WA 98402
Hours: 10:00 AM–5:00 PM Tues.-Sun. Third Thursday of each month, 10:00 AM–8:00 PM.
Admission: Free for members; Adults $14; seniors (age 65+), students (age 6-17) and military (with ID) $11; free for children 5 and under; family rate $40 (up to two adults and four children under age 18). Patrons with a Washington Quest card and licensed Washington Foster Parents can attend for $1 per person or $2 per family.

About Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service
SITES has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for more than 65 years. SITES connects Americans to their shared cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science and history, which are shown
wherever people live, work and play. For more information, including exhibition descriptions and tour schedules, visit sites.si.edu.

**About Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services**

As the philanthropic arm of Ford Motor Company, Ford Fund’s mission is to strengthen communities and help make people’s lives better. Working with dealers and nonprofit partners in 63 countries, Ford Fund provides access to opportunities and resources that help people reach their full potential. Since 1949, Ford Fund has invested more than $2 billion in programs that support education, promote safe driving, enrich community life and encourage employee volunteering. For more information, visit fordfund.org.