

# AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Organized 1884

Incorporated by the Congress 1889

June 17, 2014

Jonathan Jarvis  
Director, U.S. National Park Service  
1849 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Mr. Jarvis:

We are writing regarding the decision to relocate the National Archives for Black Women's History collection from the Mary McLeod Bethune Council House National Historic Site to the National Park Service's Museum Resource Center in Landover, Maryland.

The American Historical Association appreciates the competing interest between housing the archive in its historic context and storing sensitive archival materials in a location with appropriate environmental controls. As you said in your February 28 letter to the *Washington Post*, "The Bethune archives belong at the Bethune House, but not at the expense of losing them." The safety and physical integrity of irreplaceable historic documents is vital. However, there is also a compelling interest in maintaining the connection between the collection and this important National Historic Site dedicated to preserving and interpreting the struggle for civil rights and the history, lives, and contributions of African American women. Ideally, the collection should be housed on the site of the first headquarters of the National Council of Negro Women and Bethune's Washington, DC residence as envisioned in the authorizing legislation.

We note with encouragement that the web site indicates that that NPS is continuing to assess whether the Carriage House "is a proper structure to protect the archives, what modifications would be required, and whether it is financially and structurally feasible." We strongly urge NPS to move as quickly as possible to complete the Historic Structures Assessment Report and secure the necessary resources to renovate the Carriage House to a standard adequate to the preservation of the records and to utilization of the collection by researchers.

The American Historical Association is a nonprofit membership organization founded in 1884 and incorporated by the United States Congress in 1889 for the promotion of historical studies and the dissemination of historical research. As a disciplinary association representing over 14,000 historians, we support and encourage NPS efforts to be a responsible steward to this important historic resource. If there are ways in which the AHA can be of assistance as the Park Service considers the future of the site, please get in touch.

Respectfully,



Jan Goldstein  
President



James Grossman  
Executive Director