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Quilts for Obama: An Exhibit Celebrating the Inauguration of our 44th President

Roland L. Freeman, Guest Curator

Opening Reception is 2:00pm-5:00pm, Sunday, January 11, 2009

January 11 – January 31, 2009

The Historical Society of Washington, D.C.

801 K Street, NW (at Mount Vernon Square); Washington, DC 20001 202.882.7764

Gallery Hours: 10 AM-5 PM, Tuesday-Sunday (Closed Inauguration Day, 1/20/09)

In celebration of the inauguration of Barack Obama as the 44th President of the United States, the Historical Society of Washington, D.C. and the Women of Color Quilters Network have partnered with The Group for Cultural Documentation (TGCD) to present **Quilts for Obama: An Exhibit Celebrating the Inauguration of our 44th President**, an exhibition opening Sunday, January 11, 2009, and continuing through January 31, 2009.

The exhibit contains approximately 60 art and interpretive quilts made to celebrate the inauguration and welcome the Obama family to Washington: 44 by master quilt makers from across the US, along with others honoring the Obama family from Kenya, Hawaii, Kansas (a quilt from the historical society of El Dorado, KS), and South Carolina (a quilt from Georgetown, SC made by Mrs. Carrie Nelson, the oldest living member of Michelle Robinson Obama's family). There will also be quilts and Textiles from Ghana, Liberia and South Africa. Many of the quilt makers will attend the exhibit opening.

Guest curator Roland L. Freeman is a folklorist and photo-documenter whose career began during the Civil Rights movement. For more than 40 years he has been documenting the continuity of traditional African-American cultural practices, and is currently a research associate at the Smithsonian Institution's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage.

Freeman has a special passion for quilts and quilt makers, and over the past four decades has crisscrossed the US, being the first to document the world of African-American quilters, culminating in a national tour and book called *A Communion of the Spirits*, published in 1996. He described the genesis of this exhibit as follows:

This past November 4th, I was glued to the television watching the election returns, as were millions in this country and around the world. Around 11 pm, when it was announced that Barack Obama was the President-Elect of the United States, my emotions overwhelmed me. I could hardly speak. Then came the amazing images of worldwide jubilation. Almost immediately, my mind started drifting back to other seminal events that for me were just as emotionally life-changing: my participation in the voting rights march from Selma to Montgomery; the 1963 March on Washington and Dr. King's "I have a Dream" speech; and my joining the Poor People's Campaign as a photographer to cover the Mule Train caravan as it traveled from Marks, MS, to Washington, DC. In my lifetime, I've known three black men whose message of peace, love, and racial harmony profoundly moved the masses: Martin Luther King, Jr., Nelson Mandela and Barack Obama. King said, "We shall overcome;" Nelson Mandela forgave his oppressors; and now Barack Obama has inspired Americans to come together for change for a better tomorrow. I asked myself what I could do to help celebrate this victory and it occurred to me that a commemorative quilt exhibit was just the thing. And so it is.

For more information on Roland Freeman and the exhibit please visit The Group for Cultural Documentation's web site, www.tgcd.org, or call TGCD at 202-882-7764.