

John L. Ford, Sr.

Biography

John is a native of Pittsburgh, PA with family roots in Charlottesville, Virginia. He believes in strong family ties and proclaims firmly that knowledge equals courage, dignity and vision. He recently retired from the John Heinz History Center as a director in the museums Education Division. The Heinz Center is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution. Previously, for more than 30 years, John excelled in management positions with Mellon Bank National Association, Parke-Davis and Company, 3M Corporation and was the first Black to work at the corporate offices of Harbison and Walker Refractories Company during the Civil Rights era of the 1960's. While at Mellon Bank NA, he completed bank management curriculums with the American Institute of Banking.

Throughout his professional corporate career, he independently studied and researched African and African-American history. His studies progressed further and examined areas of genetics and anthropology that give a more full understanding of African or indeed, Cushite history. Enlightened by these studies and works, he aggressively pursued and procured collections of coins, documents, maps and other artifacts that authenticate the essentials of ancient as well as contemporary Black history. Many artifacts in his collection date back to 2,500 BCE and he maintains reference materials documenting Black history for more than 2.5M years. His collection is known to be one of the largest in the nation.

John's retirement from the Heinz Center was short lived. He was immediately asked to join the Education team at Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Hall and Museum in Pittsburgh as a part-time consultant and historian. He has taught African American history at two Pittsburgh universities and continues to lecture and create exhibits for museums, universities, government and community organizations. John also partners with major law firms that need his experience examining artifacts that are involved in litigation.

John is the recipient of many local and national awards including those from Community College of Allegheny County, Pittsburgh Public Schools Gifted Center, United States Housing and Urban Development, United States Postal Service, United States Army Corps of Engineers, NATO (International History and Education Division), National Education Association, Henry Highland Garnet Society, African American History and Genealogical Society and the Pennsylvania State Education Association. He has also received media awards and is frequently asked to speak on radio and television to address all aspects of African and African-American history. John was a consultant and commentator for the nationally released movie documentary about slavery and the Underground Railroad called, "Safe Harbor".