



JOHN LEWIS

July 14, 2020

Mr. Lonnie G. Bunch, III  
Secretary  
The Smithsonian Institution  
1000 Jefferson Drive, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20560-0008

Dear Secretary Bunch,

I hope and trust this finds you well. I write to express my support of *The American Road*, a proposed national history and civics education and engagement program.

*The American Road* project is an initiative that was close to the heart of former Congressman Amo Houghton (R-NY), a great American who recently passed away. In 1986, we were elected to the House of Representatives in the same class, became close friends over the years, and both served on the House Committee on Ways and Means. Together, we co-chaired the Board of Directors of the Faith & Politics Institute, whose work is familiar to you. We traveled around the world and strongly supported the democratic transition in South Africa. Congressman Houghton's historic accomplishments included authoring the law that resulted in the awarding of the Congressional Medal of Honor to President Nelson Mandela.

Congressman Houghton's son-in-law, Mark Grayson, is working to advance one of Amo's unfinished tasks, which may fit well within the mission and programs of the Smithsonian Institution. *The American Road* would leverage the social power of music to strengthen civic education. The program would explain how important American songs captured, inspired, and reflected the major social movement. I know firsthand how art – and especially music – can frame and translate the lessons of the past to encourage future generations to become active participants in our democracy and in their respective communities.

In particular, it is my understanding that Amo believed that the Smithsonian Institution's involvement in *The American Road* was integral to its potential success. In the current digital age, the Smithsonian's existing Folkways Recordings could offer an unparalleled opportunity to bring these primary resources to more Americans and schools across the country. The Smithsonian Folkways' status as home to the nation's largest repository of historically important American songs seems to be an obvious and natural connection.

Secretary Bunch

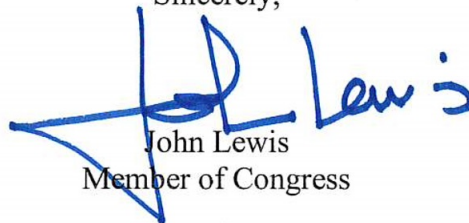
July 14, 2020

Page 2

I also understand that a bipartisan, bicameral group of Members of Congress are supporting a fiscal year 2021 appropriations request for the Smithsonian Institution's outreach efforts in order to improve and amplify the existing digital infrastructure and educational reach. The requested funding would also support collaborations with outside agencies and programs like *The American Road*, which would serve both the Smithsonian and the nation by advancing the digital elementary and secondary educational initiatives that are particularly important during the current pandemic.

I greatly appreciate your full and fair attention and consideration of this correspondence and public service to our nation. As we approach the 250<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United States, I believe that this civic education initiative would bolster and restore the understanding and faith in the long and complicated challenge of maintaining and improving our democracy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Lewis". The signature is stylized, with a large, sweeping initial "J" and "L" that cross each other. The name "Lewis" is written in a cursive script to the right of the initials.

John Lewis  
Member of Congress