

Smithsonian Institution

(Washington, DC)

Close Up in Black Exhibition

Total Award: \$15,000 over 6 Months

Presidential Authority Grant

To support *Close Up in Black*, an exhibition that documents the slow penetration of Black American themes, narratives and characters into the fabric of Hollywood motion pictures. Composed of ninety posters dating from the 1920's to those from contemporary blockbusters, the exhibition is a rich trove of African-American movie making. This exhibition uses striking graphic art to explore the themes of racial uplift, triumph against incredible odds, the flight from the rural south and migration to the urban north, racial backlash and the stories of uneasy assimilation. Posters from World War II mark a significant turning point for representations of African-Americans in film. Hollywood united against the viciousness of Hitler's anti-Semitism and produced films that were intended to combat racism. The Smithsonian will be one of the final venues for this traveling exhibition. Public programs will explore the challenges of making independent popular and documentary films; they will examine the history of the making, distributing and presenting of early films; works by local film students will be showcased and discussed; a program of "race movies" will be presented to, and discussed with seniors citizens; and there will be a retrospective showing of the works of award-winning film maker and professor, Haile Gerima. The exhibition will also be the subject of a panel discussion at the annual meeting of the Association of African-American Museums which will be held in DC.

Program Contribution Breakdown:

\$15,000 Arts and Culture Program: *Objective I, Strategy 1*