

An American family, their American dream and a shared American story

1/31/2019

When Bernard and Shirley Kinsey married at Florida A&M University in 1967, they had a goal to visit 100 countries together. They've accomplished that goal, and much more, while flying millions of miles with American Airlines. For years, the couple has collected cultural art and artifacts as memories of their travels. Today, those pieces have grown into The Kinsey African American Art & History Collection — a family business led by Bernard, Shirley and their son, Khalil — that tours internationally as an award-winning museum exhibition. In celebration of Black History Month, members who visit select U.S. Admirals Club lounges between Feb. 6 and Feb. 20 will have a unique opportunity to view pieces from the collection.

When Khalil was a child, Bernard and Shirley wanted to instill their same sense of worldly appreciation in their son. But it was not until his third-grade family tree assignment that they realized much about their own heritage was unknown. "I was confused," he said. "Most of my classmates could directly trace their lineage for many generations. We could only trace a few. Our roots are cut off due to how families were split up and sold during slavery."

And so sparked the family's interest in seeking a deeper understanding and connection to their own African-American roots. For more than 40 years, the Kinseys have collected items that highlight achievements and contributions of African-Americans dating from 1595 to the present. The collection comprises master artworks, documents, first-edition books, photographs and more. Since 2006, the Kinsey Collection has visited 26 U.S. cities and is the first private collection to exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History and Walt Disney World's Epcot. Recently, the collection made its international debut in Hong Kong with travel and cargo support from American. It has been translated into Chinese and Spanish, nominated for a National Humanities Medal and has impacted the lives of the 14 million visitors who have seen it.

“At the heart of The Kinsey Collection narrative is that African-American history is American history,” said Khalil, who serves as curator and general manager of the family business. “It is a history that all Americans share in and can draw inspiration from. We feel that the more we know of each other’s struggles, achievements and contributions, the more we can move towards better understanding and appreciation.”

Through the Kinsey Foundation, both the Florida and California departments of education have developed curriculum utilizing resources from the Kinsey’s art collection. “During Black History Month, people normally get the same limited information year after year, in school and out,” Shirley said. “We are sharing a fuller story of a people that have made marvelous contributions to this country and the world. African-American history is American history, and we are working to ensure it is taught throughout the year and with greater context.”

Throughout the month of February, the Kinsey family is also sharing a part of that history with American Airlines customers and team members. Visitors to the Admirals Club lounges at Dallas Fort Worth International Airport, Los Angeles International Airport and Miami International Airport will have a chance to view select items from The Kinsey Collection, as will team members at the company’s Fort Worth, Texas, headquarters. A more complete view of the collection will be available through streaming video in all U.S. Admirals Club lounges.

To learn more The Kinsey African American Art & History Collection, visit theKinseyCollection.com

From left: Khalil Kinsey, Shirley Kinsey, Bernard Kinsey; photo courtesy of Kent Phillips.

Black History Month at American

American Airlines is committed to celebrating and recognizing inclusion, diversity and equality during Black History month — and throughout the year. Other outreach efforts include:

- For nearly 20 years, American has sponsored the American Black Film Festival (ABFF). ABFF is the nation’s largest gathering of black film and television professionals and enthusiasts. We’re proud to partner with ABFF as it celebrates black culture and continues to create opportunities for people of color to achieve success in the entertainment industry.
- This month, American will feature African-American film and TV shows on board as we pay tribute to the efforts of African-American actors, directors and producers.
- The airline’s African American Diversity Network (AADN) will host a series of team member events in February, including a panel discussion on the significance of historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) and black Greek-Letter organizations (BGLOs) in our workplace and community.
- Through sponsorships and mile donations, American supports the Thurgood Marshall College Fund,

National Urban League, Black Enterprise TechConneXt and others.



The Kinsey

African American Art & History

Collection

THEKINSEYCOLLECTION.COM

THE CULTIVATORS, 2000
SAMUEL L. DUNSON
OIL ON CANVAS



01:01

