*John W. Franklin*

John W. Franklin has specialized in the history and culture of Africa and its Diaspora for the past 50 years. He has lived in Senegal and worked and traveled extensively in Africa, the Caribbean, Brazil, Canada and Europe.  Franklin’s focus has been on France, its role in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, French Colonization, and the contemporary French-speaking world, from Louisiana to Mauritius. Fluent in French, he is a sought-after speaker in the US, the French-speaking world and beyond.

John Franklin studied Cultural Anthropology at Stanford University. Franklin’s career at the Smithsonian Institution began in Dakar, Senegal, while he was teaching English for the Senegalese Ministry of Higher Education. He served as the Africa-based researcher for the Smithsonian’s 1976 Bicentennial Folklife Festival and presented the African and Caribbean delegations in Washington and across the United States.  From 1987-1992 he organized seminars and symposia for the Smithsonian’s Office of Interdisciplinary Studies.  From 1992-2005 he served as curator for the Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage’s festivals on the Bahamas (1994), Cape Verdean Culture (1995), Washington, D.C. (2000), and Mali (2004).

In 2005 Franklin was among the first staff members of the Smithsonian’s 19th museum, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, which opened in 2016. As Senior Manager in the Office of External Affairs, he built partnerships for the museum with universities and museums in the United States, Canada, Brazil, The United Kingdom, France, West, East, and Southern Africa and the Caribbean.

For ten years Franklin served on the Board of Directors of the West Africa Research Center, based in Dakar. He served on and chaired the Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture, during which he was a member of the team which built the $3 million expansion of the Banneker-Douglass Museum in Annapolis, Maryland and the $30 million Reginald Lewis Maryland Museum of African American History and Culture in Baltimore, Maryland. Franklin also served on the Board of Governors of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a think tank. He edited “My Life and an Era: The Autobiography of Buck Colbert Franklin,” with his father, John Hope Franklin. He has lectured for the U.S. Department of State at the State Department, to its visitors to the US, and at universities and museums in Brazil and France, as well as virtually around the world.

Since his retirement from the Smithsonian in 2019, John Franklin established Franklin Global LLC, to continue to lecture on cultural issues and consult with cultural and educational institutions. He currently serves on the French President’s Advisory Commission for the Foundation for the Memory of Slavery and the Slave Trade. He works closely with UNESCO’s Slave Route Project, developing conferences on the contemporary impact of slavery. For the past several years, he has focused on the legacy of slavery at American universities and advising Davidson’s College’s Race and Slavery at Davidson Commission. He is engaged in preparations in Tulsa, Oklahoma on facets of the commemoration of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, which his grandfather survived.