



For Immediate Release: November 15, 2011

Contacts: Lydia Sermons, AAEF; 301-526-0374; LSermons@nationalparks.org
Priscilla Clarke, Clarke & Associates, 202.723.2200, pclarkepr@aol.com

Lifestyle Icon B. Smith Announces Role as the First National Spokesperson for the National Park Foundation's African American Experience Fund

B. Smith Hosted First Annual Masquerade Ball Benefitting AAEF

(Washington, DC) - Restaurateur and lifestyle icon B. Smith announced her commitment to increasing public understanding of the African American footprint on American history and culture, as the first national spokesperson for the [African American Experience Fund](#) (AAEF) of the [National Park Foundation](#) (NPF), the official charity of America's national parks.

In this role, B. Smith will help increase public awareness of the significant roles of African-Americans in our nation's history through educational, volunteer and community engagement programs at AAEF historic parks and sites, which includes the Martin Luther King, Jr. National Historic Site and Monument, among other national sites. She will also serve as the Honorary Chair of AAEF's 2012 Annual Gala, to take place in March 2012, in Washington, DC.

"We're pleased to join forces with B. Smith as AAEF's first national spokesperson and we welcome her support of our efforts to better educate youth and adults on the significant contributions and achievements of African Americans to our nation's history and culture," said Lydia Sermons, Executive Director of the African American Experience Fund. "Her voice will serve as a major instrument in AAEF's efforts to amplify untold and under-told stories about legendary African Americans who are honored in our national parks, such as Maggie L. Walker, the first woman to charter a bank in the United States." See this amazing story at: www.nps.gov/mawa.

"I am honored and excited to be the first national spokesperson for the African American Experience Fund of the National Park Foundation. I look forward to visiting all the sites and bringing more awareness about our important historical sites. There are 25 AAEF sites around the country and it is critical that people learn more about AAEF, our history and visit these important historical landmarks, so we can better educate ourselves and future generations to understand the importance of our history," said B. Smith.

B. Smith's first appearance as AAEF's spokesperson took place on Friday, October 28, 2011 during a black-tie, first annual Masquerade Ball, which she hosted at her historic restaurant in Washington D.C., [B. Smith's](#), to benefit the AAEF and to increase support for AAEF's new Internship Scholarship Grants; a new program in partnership with the National Park Service to increase student internships at AAEF sites and career opportunities for minority students. Through this program, the AAEF will help develop future generations of African American history story-tellers, archivists and preservationists, and potential employment opportunities to increase diversity in our nation's parks.

-more-

About the African American Experience Fund

The African American Experience Fund (AAEF) of the National Park Foundation was established in 2001 with a mission to connect all Americans to the considerable contributions of African Americans throughout our country's history by raising private funds to support educational, volunteer and community engagement programs in National Parks and Historic Sites that celebrate and tell the story of African American history and culture. These sites include; Martin Luther King, Jr. National Memorial, (Washington, D.C.), African American National Civil War Memorial, (Washington, D.C.); Brown V Board of Education National Historic Site (Kansas, MO.); George Washington Carver National Monument (Missouri); Little Rock Central High School National Historic Site (Arkansas); and Tuskegee Airmen National Historic Site (Alabama), Frederick Douglass National Historic Site (Washington, DC), the Mary McLeod Bethune National Council House and National Historic Site (Washington, DC), the New Orleans Jazz National Historic Park (New Orleans, LA and the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom sites, just to name a few.

Since it was established in 2001, AAEF has provided more than \$1.3 million in grant support for projects and programs at 20 national parks and historic sites supported by AAEF. AAEF parks and sites welcome more than two million visitors annually. More information is available at www.aaexperience.org. Find us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/AfricanAmericanExperienceFund>.

About B. Smith

B. (Barbara) Smith; Entrepreneur, Restaurateur, Lifestyle Expert and Author is a trailblazer in business and entertainment. A native of Pennsylvania she began her career as a fashion model, going on to grace the covers of 15 magazines including Mademoiselle Magazine, making history becoming the first African-American woman on its cover in 1976. Today she is the face of several brands including Betty Crocker and Pillsbury products, and featured in a TV commercial for Mercedes-Benz. B. Smith made history with her B. Smith with Style Home Collection debuting at retail giant Bed Bath & Beyond as the first line from an African-American woman to be sold at a nationwide retailer. She is also best known as the owner of 3 popular restaurants in Washington, D.C., New York and Sag Harbor.

Aside from her success, closest to her heart is the philanthropic work she does with the Military and various non-profit organizations such as the American Diabetes Association and the African American Experience Fund (AAEF). In an effort to give back to the community, B. Smith has also created a series of weekly competitions (B. Discovered & B. Talented) for up and coming talent (artists, musicians, poets) to allow them the opportunity to showcase their talent. www.BSmith.com/about_b

###