



# Alexandria Times

*Established in 1797 as The Alexandria Times and Advertiser*

## Out of the Attic

### The Moss Kendrix Collection at the Black History Museum

*Alexandria Times, January 14, 2021*

*Image: A letter from and photograph of former Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey, part of the Moss Kendrix collection at the Alexandria Black History Museum.*

Voting is still open until Jan. 20 in the Virginia Association of Museums' Top 10 Endangered Artifact competition and a collection at the Alexandria Black History Museum is in the race. The artifact that receives the most public votes will win the People's Choice Award and \$1,000 toward the conservation of the artifact.

The entry from the Alexandria Black History Museum is not a single object, but a vast trove of approximately 41 linear feet of archival material, including more than 900 photographs, some unpublished, of African American political leaders, celebrities and athletes.



The collection charts the career of Moss Kendrix, known as the “Father of Black public relations” and bears witness to the African American experience of the mid-20th century. It includes photographs of famous people who promoted Coca-Cola and Carnation, two of Kendrix’s biggest clients, and documents publicity stunts, such as the creation of an enormous “bunburger” using Carnation Milk that could feed 80 people.

It also includes photographs and documents relating to other public relations work by Kendrix, such as Cola-Coca’s corporate sponsorship at sporting events and competitions, like the 100% Wrong Club Annual AllSports Jamboree. The Jamboree was held in Atlanta by the Atlanta Daily World and Coca-Cola provided sponsorship, including the donation of trophies and plaques.

Among Kendrix’s documents are examples of advertisement copy crafted to appeal to African American consumers, with positive and aspirational images featuring African American models and stars drinking Coke. The documents also include press releases, written by Kendrix, reporting on conferences, conventions and sporting events related to his clients, large and small, and the organizations with which he was affiliated.

Other documents include correspondence, his radio show scripts, programs, reports and magazines. Kendrix also created a large archive of newspaper clippings from around the country, including Virginia, that document the African American experience, the civil rights movement, international politics, national affairs, sports and much more.

Unfortunately, a considerable amount of the documents and photographs have been damaged by prior water and mold exposure and affected by previous mold activity. Many are curled, stained, warped,



## Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

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and have surface losses, making them difficult to store and unsuitable for exhibition. Additionally, the materials used in their creation and organization have also affected many items. There is significant acid burning and staining from paperclips, staples, glue, and inherently acidic documents and folders.

With this award, the Museum could provide much needed conservation treatment to stabilize them and prevent further damage or loss to this remarkable collection. The Museum is also planning to digitize the collection to increase public access and to display items from the collection in a future exhibition, currently planned for Spring/Summer 2023.

At the time of writing, the Moss Kendrix Collection is in the lead, but we need to keep up the momentum. Show your support by voting once a day every day now through Jan. 20 at this direct voting link: <https://vamuseums-org.wishpond.com/virginia-s-top-10-endangered-artifacts-2020/entries/193779991>

The current voting tally of all 10 artifacts can be found at this link: <https://vamuseums-org.wishpond.com/virginia-s-top-10-endangered-artifacts-2020/> Learn more about the Moss Kendrix Collection and its current condition needs at: [www.alexandriava.gov/119620](http://www.alexandriava.gov/119620)

*"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.*

*These articles appear with the permission of the Alexandria Times and were authored by staff of the Office of Historic Alexandria and invited guests.*