



THE WHITE HOUSE
HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

New Episode of *The 1600 Sessions*: The Decorator-In-Chief

September 9, 2020 (Washington, D.C.) – Today, the White House Historical Association has released the September episode of *The 1600 Sessions* podcast, [“The-Decorator-In-Chief.”](#) In this episode, host and Association President Stewart McLaurin talks with Michael S. Smith, chief decorator for President Barack Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama, about his new book, [Designing History, the Extraordinary Art and Style of the Obama White House.](#)

“People traditionally think the White House, in particular the Oval Office, it’s a static thing, that it never changes,” Smith reflected. “If you look at images for example of the George Bush Oval Office and then the Clinton Oval Office and then the Obama Oval Office, of course it always changes. I think that it is such a beautiful space, such a historic space - it’s a television studio, it’s an office, it’s a meeting room, all of these functions that have to be considered, and I think that that was something that we tried to balance.”

Speaking to the importance of interior design in the White House, McLaurin commented: “It’s home to the president and the first family, reflecting the unique personalities and the styles of those who live there for a time. And the White House also serves as the people’s house. It’s an accredited museum, it’s open to the public, and documenting our country’s history through showcasing American art and furnishings through those wonderful state floor and other rooms of the White House. So it takes a very talented interior designer to balance all of those competing needs. We’re delighted to have on the podcast Michael S. Smith, who was chosen by President and Mrs. Obama to be their chief decorator as they entered the White House.”

Buy *Designing History, the Extraordinary Art and Style of the Obama White House* by Michael S. Smith [here](#).

The 1600 Sessions

In this podcast series, White House Historical Association President Stewart McLaurin interviews luminaries, historians, and eyewitnesses to history about America’s most famous residence and office—the White House. Each episode includes a prominent guest or guests to

discuss varying facets of White House history, including insights from former staff and many other topical issues.

The 1600 Sessions is available on iTunes, Google Play, Spotify and Stitcher. To hear the full episode, visit The1600Sessions.org.

For media inquiries, please contact press@whha.org.

About The White House Historical Association

First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy envisioned a restored White House that conveyed a sense of history through its decorative and fine arts. In 1961, the White House Historical Association was established to support her vision to preserve and share the Executive Mansion's legacy for generations to come. Supported entirely by private resources, the Association's mission is to assist in the preservation of the state and public rooms, fund acquisitions for the White House permanent collection, and educate the public on the history of the White House. Since its founding, the White House Historical Association has contributed more than \$50 million in fulfillment of its mission. To learn more about the White House Historical Association, please visit www.whitehousehistory.org.