



ADRIAN M. FENTY
MAYOR

Edmund C. Moy, Director
United States Mint
801 9th Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

June 19, 2008

Dear Director Moy,

On behalf of the residents of the District of Columbia, it is with great pride that I forward to you the choice of the District of Columbia to represent the nation's capital on the reverse of the U.S. Quarter Dollar coin: **Washington DC native, Edward Kennedy "Duke" Ellington** (US Mint design DC-03).

To arrive at this selection, we asked the residents of the District to vote for their favorite of the three designs. Ellington was the clear winner, but the vote was close. I am proud to report that the selection process enjoyed wide participation by approximately one percent of the District of Columbia's population. The three designs ignited much discussion among our residents, faced with choosing among a 20th Century Washington, DC native and creative genius, a 19th Century lion of the abolitionist movement, and an 18th Century scientific genius who played an integral role in the physical design of the nation's capital.

Eventually, over the four week period the poll was open, 6,089 District residents cast online, mail, or telephone votes. Ellington received 36%, the design with Frederick Douglass received 33%, and the design with Benjamin Banneker received 31%. It is testament to the Mint's artists and their excellent design work that the vote was so close.

As you know, the overwhelming majority of Washingtonians who participated in the entire process requested that the District quarter include the phrase "Taxation Without Representation" to help to educate the country about our historical and continued status as unequal citizens. We were disappointed by your decision to disallow this phrase, as it is a condition with which we live every day. It was because of this decision that we selected as an

inscription the English translation of the official motto of the District of Columbia "Justice for All," which you did approve.

Be that as it may, should the Secretary of the Treasury accept our recommendation that the District of Columbia be represented by the Ellington Quarter, it is a design that will help to educate the public about the incredible diversity of residents who call the nation's capital home, and who continue to fight for full voting rights in the United States Congress.

Stephanie D. Scott, Secretary of the District of Columbia, will continue to be your liaison for this program. Please contact her with any questions you may have at stephanie.scott@dc.gov or 202-727-6306.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Adrian M. Fenty". The signature is stylized with a large initial "A" and a long, sweeping tail.

Adrian M. Fenty

About Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington:

Duke Ellington is among the most famous native Washingtonians of the 20th century. Born on April 29, 1899 at 2129 Ward Place NW (the home of his maternal grandparents), Ellington received the nickname “Duke” from friends who were impressed by his confident and regal bearing. Young Ellington attended District of Columbia Public Schools, eventually leaving Armstrong High School without a diploma to pursue his music.

“As a teenager, Ellington’s natural ability for composition was apparent. But his lack of formal training makes his outstanding accomplishments as a composer all the more incredible,” according to NPR Jazz.¹

Although Ellington moved to New York City to further his career, his youth in Washington, DC greatly influenced the artist he would become. Ellington returned to perform in Washington, DC often, and owned at least one home in the District.

PBS describes Ellington’s importance to the United States²:

Edward Kennedy “Duke” Ellington was the most prolific composer of the twentieth century in terms of both number of compositions and variety of forms. His development was one of the most spectacular in the history of music, underscored by more than fifty years of sustained achievement as an artist and an entertainer. He is considered by many to be America’s greatest composer, bandleader, and recording artist.

...

This elegant representative of American culture was born in Washington, DC, on April 29, 1899. Ellington studied piano from age seven and was influenced by stride piano masters such as James P. Johnson, Willie “the Lion” Smith, and Fats Waller. By 1923, he had moved to New York City and had his own band, the Washingtonians. He later formed the Duke Ellington Orchestra, which by 1930 had grown to include 12 musicians and achieved national prominence through radio broadcasts, recordings, and film appearances.

“Over a period of 50 years – from the ‘20s to the ‘70s – Ellington led one of history’s finest performing ensembles and established himself as one of America’s most powerful musical forces. He encountered jazz in its infancy and expanded it into a sophisticated, internationally celebrated art form,” says NPR Jazz.³

By the time of his death in 1974, Ellington earned 13 Grammy Awards and was bestowed with numerous honorary degrees and awards throughout the world, including the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1969.

¹ <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16054497>

² http://www.pbs.org/jazz/biography/artist_id_ellington_duke.htm

³ <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=16254195>