

## **The Honorable Kendrick B. Meek**

**U.S. Representative of Florida (2003–2011) and Son of Representative Carrie P. Meek of Florida**

### **Special Exhibit: A Century of Women in Congress**

#### **“Rooted to Communities of Struggle”**

Representative Meek describes the legacy of slavery and the unique experience of black legislators it creates.

*Interview recorded March 19, 2019*

But because of the black experience in America, being the only group of Members of Congress that were enslaved by the very country that we're legislating on behalf of, really takes you from, you know, the bottom to what one may say the top—the very government that endorsed slavery but at the same time outlawed it, which is an experience that you just don't shake. When I was coming up my mother would say, “Fold the washrags.” That's a slavery thing. Of course she knew it was a washcloth. But her mother said that to her, and her mother, mother said that to her. Because all you had was a rag, it wasn't a washcloth, to wash yourself with. So there's still things that are lingering in the legislative black experience that keep you rooted to communities of struggle.