



# The SCRIP

Quarterly Newsletter Fall 2014 Vol. 9 No. 1



## AAAM On The Move

A letter from AAAM President, Samuel Black. He informs us of three additional board members, the important partnerships and collaborations this past year, a recap of the 36th annual meeting held in Birmingham, AL, the recipient of the 2014 Dr. John E. Fleming award, and how he looks forward to the 2015 AAAM Conference to be held in Memphis, TN and hosted by the National Civil Rights Museum on August 4-7.

Read [more](#)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### [2015 Call for Proposals](#)

Session Proposal Deadline:  
January 16, 2015

E-mail  
[bandrews@civilrightsmuseum.org](mailto:bandrews@civilrightsmuseum.org)

with Subject Line:  
AAAM 2015

Or via FAX:  
901.527.1229  
ATTN: Barbara Andrews

Forms available [here](#)

### [Reserve Your Room at The Peabody Memphis](#)

Hotel Reservations  
Deadline:  
July 13, 2015

Hotel Rates:  
\$135/night (single/double)  
\$145/night (triple)  
\$155/night (quad)

Reserve [here](#)

Hotel Phone #:  
901.529.4000

## #FERGUSON\_SEA: A 10 Day Study in Social Media and Responsive Programming

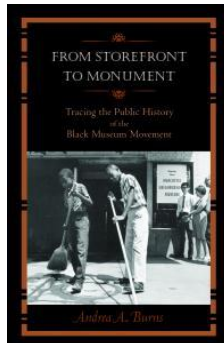
Chieko Phillips and Leilani Lewis write about journalist Charles Mudede as a featured speaker at #Ferguson, a collaborative [PechaKucha 20x20](#) held at Seattle's Northwest African American Museum (NAAM) in response to the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and the subsequent social unrest.



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## Book Review by Dr. Redell Hearn: *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum*

In *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement*, Andrea Burns traces the history of four black museums established in the 1960s and 1970s with the intent to show "ties to the Black Power movement" (14): the DuSable Museum of African American History, Chicago (1961), the International Afro-American Museum, Detroit (1965), the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, Washington, DC (1967), and the African American Museum of Philadelphia (1976). The outcome is a thoroughly documented book of value to anyone interested in the intersections of black history, public history, and museums.



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## Old School vs. New School: Cross-Generation Perspectives on AAAM Conference 2014

AAAM Board Member Marion McGee interviewed two AAAM members, one from the "old



## [Museums Advocacy Day](#)

Washington, DC  
February 23-24, 2015

[Register Now!](#)

Museums Advocacy Day is a national effort to share the message that museums are essential.

school" (seasoned museum founder/executive director) and one from the "new school" (a recent graduate/emerging museum professional) to share their perspectives on the professional development experience offered during the 2014 conference in Birmingham, AL (August 2014).

Read [more](#)

Association of African  
American Museums  
PO Box 23698  
Washington DC 20026

<http://www.blackmuseums.org>



## ***AAAM on the Move***

By Samuel W Black  
President

It has been a busy year for AAAM as the organization continued to evolve and grow as an advocate for Black museums and museum professionals. In July 2013 the Internal Revenue Service re-authorized the non-profit status of AAAM setting the stage for a new development of protocols and policies by the AAAM board to protect the fiscal welfare of the organization. The board has been busy meeting the obligations of the IRS and planning a major fundraising and research initiative for 2015. AAAM member Jeff Heyward and the board are in the planning stages of conducting a new survey of African American museums. You may recall the last such survey in 2008 is still being used today but needs to be updated to reflect the current status of museum nationwide.

With the addition of three new board members the AAAM board now stands at fifteen, the number allowed under its By-Laws. Each board position is strategically important and each new member adds skills and constituencies that will help AAAM broaden its influence and presence. The class of 2017 include: Myrtis Bedolla, director of Gallery Myrtis; Tee Jones, CFO of the National Civil Rights Museum; and Dr. Kheli Willetts of Syracuse University. Many thanks go out to Rico Chapman who served as the nominating committee chair for the last two years for which the last seven board members were recruited.

AAAM has developed a number of important partnerships and collaborations over the past year. The AAAM collaboration with the National Museum of African American History and



Culture-Smithsonian Institution (NMAAHC) has worked to advance the programming and training opportunities for AAAM members. The NMAAHC established the John Kinard Scholarship Fund that provides support for AAAM members to attend the JIMI, Jekyll Island Management Institute in Georgia. In addition, as a member of the US- Africa Cultural Heritage Strategic Partnership Initiative (USACHSPI), a collaboration of: AFRICOM; Michigan State University Museum; Smithsonian museums including, the National Museum of African American History and Culture, National Museum of African Art, National Museum of Natural History, and Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage; African Studies Center and Matrix: Center for Digital Humanities and Social Sciences, Michigan State University; the Institute of Museum and Library Services; and the American Alliance of Museums, AAAM helped launch the AFRICOM survey and supported the establishment of the Professional Mentoring/Exchange Program. The Mentoring/Exchange Program seeks to expand opportunities for exchanges of cultural heritage professionals between Africa and the United States. The selected museum partnerships include Hampton University Museum & Archives, Hampton, Virginia - Ghana Museum and Monument Board, Accra, Ghana; B.B. King Museum & Delta Interpretive Center, Indianola, Mississippi - Kenya National Museum, Nairobi, Kenya; Weeksville Heritage Center, Brooklyn, New York - Moto Moto Museum, Mbala, Zambia; and Michigan State University Museum, East Lansing, Michigan - Morocco Telecom Museum, Rabat, Morocco. This pilot mentoring/exchange program will build the capacity of African museums professionals to develop exhibitions.



The 36<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Association of African American Museums was an opportunity to further develop the new long-term relationships and welcome new ones for many members and especially for the organization. The theme for 2014 was “Partnerships and Collaborations in the Digital World” and many panels and the keynote addressed the topic. The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute was the host institution. Over 225 people were registered and heard the keynote address delivered by Dr. Johnetta B. Cole, director of the Smithsonian National Museum of African Art. The AAAM awards luncheon speaker was retired director of the Amistad Research Center, Lee Hampton.

The 2014 Dr. John E. Fleming award was bestowed upon former AAAM board member and president, Juanita Moore, director of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit, MI. It was my pleasure to announce the Museum Service Award to former AAAM board secretary and treasurer, Nona Martin. A new award was announced by the awards committee recognizing a young professional of less than 10 years in the field is the Pace Setter Award. The first recipient of the Pace Setter award was Danielle Burns of the Houston Public Library. Danielle has served on the AAAM membership committee and is truly worthy of this inaugural award.

The AAAM looks forward to convening in Memphis, TN, August 3-7, 2015 and hosted by the National Civil Rights Museum. The theme for 2015 is “**Milestones in History: African American Museums and the Story of African American Progress.**” There are so many anniversaries and commemorations in 2015 that impact how museums address the African American experience. The theme for 2015 will give an opportunity for museum professionals to



address their approaches to propagating milestones of the African American experience.

Registration, hotel and program information will be posted soon. Bring your protest, dance shoes, and napkins as Memphis promises to be a blast of African American culture.





## **#FERGUSON\_Sea: A 10 day study in social media and responsive programming**

**By Chieko Phillips and Leilani Lewis**

“How Did a Historical Institution Get with the Current Moment So Quickly?” Journalist Charles Mudede posed this question in his complimentary article, “Northwest African American Museum Just Became a Lot More Relevant” published on September 10, 2014, in Seattle’s weekly newspaper, *The Stranger*.<sup>1</sup> Two weeks prior, Mudede was a featured speaker at #Ferguson, a collaborative PechaKucha 20x20 held at Seattle’s Northwest African American Museum (NAAM) in response to the murder of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri and the subsequent social unrest. A PechaKucha is a simple presentation format where presenters are given 6 minutes to speak and show 20 images, each for 20 seconds. The images advance automatically and the presenter talks along to the images. NAAM’s goal for the PechaKucha program was to bring activists, scholars, lawyers, and artists together with an audience as an act of learning, healing, protest, and community.<sup>2</sup> Mudede deemed the program a “success” and worthy of generous print space in *The Stranger*.

With the designation of success also came a label of relevance, “The success of this event represented the growing relevance of NAAM on the city’s shifting cultural landscape.” Relevance is the golden egg of the museum field, so to be called relevant in a major publication is a huge honor and also forces, as the event organizers, to think about how we would answer the question: “How Did a Historical Institution Get with the Current Moment So Quickly?” While pondering this question, we arrived at three answers that help explain how the event developed, the lessons we learned, and practical advice for others to replicate its success.

### **Answer 1: We lay the groundwork for collaboration in real-time**

We place a high value on our ability to collaborate and have worked diligently, and sometimes clumsily, for six years to improve our practice and solidify our reputation

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<sup>1</sup> Read article at: <http://www.thestranger.com/seattle/northwest-african-american-museum-just-became-a-lot-more-relevant/Content?oid=20547537>

<sup>2</sup> Definition taken from: <http://www.pechakucha.org/faq>  
<http://slog.thestranger.com/slog/archives/2014/08/27/20447860-radical-church-for-ferguson-at-northwest-african-american-museum>





as a collaborative institution. As a young museum opened in 2008, we are still shaping our identity and practice of actualizing our mission. Our identity and survival is dependent on reciprocal participation with our audiences and communities. Our passionate, professionally trained, multicultural, and multigenerational staff of twelve advances our mission with a mutual understanding of the vitality of relevancy and collaborative practices. We develop multidisciplinary programming with the explicit intent to create a safe space where all can come to understand new issues and concepts.

The above commitment sounds nice, right? But it is certainly not easy to implement. Our past attempts at response programming were generated without authentic collaborations and fell short of the program goals. These efforts did, however, help us to publicly establish ourselves as a viable partner willing to create responsive programming. This is undoubtedly one of the ways we caught the attention of Ana Pinto da Silva of PechaKucha Seattle who reached out to Leilani Lewis of NAAM, and Davida Ingram, of Seattle People of Color Salon (SPoCS), to create a programmatic response to the murder of Mike Brown. Without this real-time commitment to collaboration, our three organizations could not have brought together 14 speakers and hundreds of people in ten short days. Collective mobilization of networks through word of mouth and social media were vital elements of our program's success. We were able to galvanize the Seattle community, bring them to the Museum and present them with a number of opportunities to engage and act. We spent several days reaching out to potential speakers, each taking an equal role in the effort to provide a high quality program to speak out against injustice and cruelty.

### **Answer 2: We are plugged into social media**

We know, we know, you don't have time to sit around and track what is trending on Twitter during the workday. But you must try. The concerted effort between NAAM and its collaborators involved tapping into the stream of conversation that was already taking place online, so that we could work on a program that would contribute to the social digital dialogue. We aimed to engage with our audience in real-time in the museum, while scaffolding audience participation in the existing social media conversations.

We used the hashtag as a tool to expand the reach of the conversation. Without a formal question and answer session incorporated into the PechaKucha format, we knew social media would be an outlet for dialogue about the topics presented by our speakers. The audience was going to tweet so we established suggested guidelines to facilitate conversation online as well as in our museum space. PechaKucha Seattle builds audiences strictly through social media and online channels, and presented #Ferguson as the title, and #Ferguson\_SEA quickly emerged as the hashtag associated with the event. In addition to naming our event after a hashtag, we clearly posted the event's hashtag, #Ferguson\_SEA, at the beginning of the event as a main component of the event. We gave the audience a vehicle to connect the conversations from our Legacy Hall with the existing conversations both in our area and outside it. Multiple attendees compiled the tweets from the event and



curated them to illustrate the night, which expanded the reach of the conversation for those unable to attend. Quotations, photographs, doodles, reactions, and opinions were recorded and filed under #Ferguson\_SEA that could be followed in real-time or searched for the following morning or even today. Interacting with social media as a part of our workday, helps us to understand how it works, grasp what it is capable of, and use it as a tool in our programming and our success.

### **Answer 3: We're ok with being a conduit for connectivity rather than claiming the spotlight**

14 people, 6 minutes, 20 slides, 20 seconds, no formal Q&A—the PechaKucha format was appropriate for facilitating Seattle's response to this murder. The format lends itself to the democratization of museums by creating space for multiple voices to be heard. The pluralistic nature of responses to tragedies like Brown's murder also partners well with the PechaKucha's ability to host multiple disciplines and genres of presentations. Understanding this flexibility, Leilani Lewis and Davida Ingram collaboratively developed a roster of community members, scholars, artists, lawyers and activists who delivered compelling thoughts on Mike Brown's murder, police brutality and ways to combat multiple forms of racism.

We carefully decided how the audience would experience these ideas by determining the order of speakers, much like the way museum staff think how visitors move through their exhibitions. This allowed us to focus on selecting speakers that would feed the conversation, and steer it toward a constructive path. In the end, we had 14 presenters, ranging in ages, disciplines, and identities, each with a unique perspective on the topic of focus. Some used video as their short presentations, while others tightly timed rolling images to a practiced speech.

One presenter moved the audience with a poetic expression of grief and hope. The program was not always clean--it was raw, uncensored, and deviated from the standard "stand and talk" productions that some in the audience might have expected to see at a museum. There was movement, call and response, stream of consciousness, and pure personal reflection at the podium. It was the variety of presenters and their rapid and raw performances that made the program so compelling. From the moment guests heard the first presenter, they knew that they would experience a program that would enlighten and inspire. Each presenter was given license to form and lend their interpretations (in 6 minutes) to an exhibition of ideas that audiences could experience online, at the museum or both simultaneously.

*"I'm reaching out to you my white friends, because the words of people of color have been consistent and direct. We need to use*



*our relations and power and privilege to help end the genocide of black and brown people.” Diana Falchuk, #Ferguson Presenter*

*“If we want unjust deaths to end, we need more than black people calling out for our beauty and humanity... I wish a mother would be able to sleep at night knowing her children are safe and valued in society.” Davida Ingram, #Ferguson Presenter*

As we as a staff continue to think about responsive programming, we understand that crises will be different and so will the resultant programs. We are certain, however, that people are growing to expect these types of programs and the PechaKucha format is a successful and easily replicated format for them. #Ferguson reinforced NAAM’s commitment to social justice, and actively listening to the collective, and individual voices of our community, so that the Museum continues to inspire change.

□ and 1 other retweeted

**Naomi Ishisaka** @naomiishisaka · Aug 26

Grateful to organizers of tonight's [#Ferguson\\_SEA](#) @PechaKucha. It was beautiful and much-needed. Thanks [@LeilaniLewis2](#) [@naamnw](#) [@idebelle76](#)



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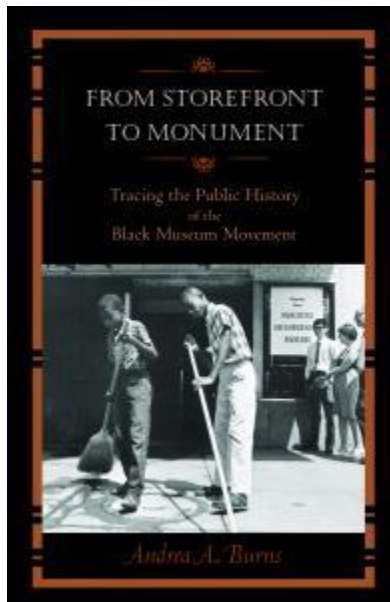
C Davida Ingram retweeted

□ @Lar206 · Aug 26

really really grateful for tonight's [#Ferguson\\_SEA](#) event at [#NAAM](#). to all the presenters, organizers and listeners: thank you.



*From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement* by Andrea A. Burns. Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013. x p 249 pp.; illustrations; notes; index; clothbound, \$80.00; paperbound, \$24.95.



The 1960s and 1970s were decades of tumultuous civil unrest in the United States. In addition to the Civil Rights movement, the Black Power movement, a global undertaking of the African Diaspora, gained a solid foot- hold. Newly established black museums of this era echoed the sentiments of both movements in their exhibitions, educational programs, and community outreach events.

In *From Storefront to Monument: Tracing the Public History of the Black Museum Movement*, Andrea Burns traces the history of four black museums established in the 1960s and 1970s with the intent to show “ties to the Black Power movement”(14): the DuSable Museum of African American History, Chicago (1961), the International Afro-American Museum, Detroit (1965), the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, Washington, DC (1967), and the African American Museum of Philadelphia(1976). The outcome is a thoroughly documented book of value to anyone interested in the intersections of black history, public history, and museums.

Burns begins her narrative in 1969, at a critical juncture where mainstream museum professionals and black museum professionals collided at what was intended to be a conference



on how “traditional museums could remain relevant in the context of recent social and political upheavals,” and whether opening “small branches in neighborhoods historically neglected by these institutions” would aid them in this endeavor. The expected attendance of twenty to thirty participants swelled to more than two hundred, including a “militant minority” that drove attendees to the realization that discussions of decentralization were “premature until more basic issues that concern minority groups [had] been dealt with” (1,2). The voices of the conference’s “militant minority” echoed the “often combative discourse of the Black Power Movement” (3), and cautioned attendees that “[m]erely setting aside a room or a portion of an exhibit hall for artifacts related to black history would not suffice if the institution continued to blindly (or intentionally) neglect this community” (2).

Establishing the effect of the era’s social unrest on the interpretation of black history through museum experiences, Burns goes on to tell how African American neighborhood museums established themselves on their own terms, “contesting and reinterpreting traditional depictions of African and African American history and culture” (3). She highlights the DuSable’s emphasis on science and industry, and its educational programming designed to inform both children and adults. She also discusses an innovative “foreign guest hospitality program,” which allowed international visitors to visit the museum and the surrounding community, and dine in the homes of museum members. The International Afro-American Museum (later known as the Charles H. Wright Museum) considered its operations a revolutionary force for change beyond the city of Detroit, establishing a conference on the campus of Wayne State University that solicited black museum leaders from around the country. Planning for the nation’s bicentennial celebration “signaled who was to be included in the official vision and interpretation of local and national history— and, most critically, how their stories would be told” (107).

Out of the “con- tested struggles” of these plans emerged the African American Museum of Philadelphia in 1976, a testament to the untold organized collective efforts of black museum advocates, community activists (including the Philadelphia Black Panther Party), and local political black leaders. The Black Museum Movement continued beyond the 1970s in part through the Association of African American Museums, established in 1967 as the collective “voice” of the movement. That voice still unifies over two hundred black museums traversing the tributary rivers of “mainstream” museums today. Reflective of the title, Burns brings her accounting of the Black Museum Movement full circle with two Smithsonian Institution museums—the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum, established in the storefront featured on the cover of the book and the National Museum of African American History and Culture, in development amidst the nation’s most prized monuments and museums.



Burns recounts the remarks of Sidney Dillon Ripley (eighth Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution) at the opening ceremonies of the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum in 1967. “This is no ordinary museum,” he said. “I suspect that museums will never quite be the same again...perhaps our cities won’t be either” (37). In 2012, the Smithsonian Institution broke ground for the National Museum of African American History and Culture, scheduled to open in 2015. Given the protracted history of racism in the United States, it is understandable that Burns would include challenges faced by leaders of the black museum movement, particularly the ambivalence of their white museum counterparts, as detailed in Anacostia and Philadelphia. What is unfortunate, however, is her overarching emphasis of the existence of black museums as “counterpoint” to white museums. The Black Power movement was a global cultural and political phenomenon, echoed in the home front voice of James Brown’s anthem “Say it loud, I’m Black and I’m Proud!” Burns’ interpretation is, at times, almost apologetic in both the acknowledgement of the movement and in its impact on the museums that emerged, missing the opportunity to render a comprehensive accounting to inform readers about both the struggle, and the power, of black museums to transform not only neighborhoods but the nation.

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## ***Old School vs. New School: Cross-Generation Perspectives on AAAM Conference 2014***

*If you have ever had the pleasure of attending an AAAM conference, then you already know that the annual convening of museum professionals offers something for everyone. If you have never attended the conference, then you should make plans now to join us in Memphis, TN (2015), Riverside, CA (2016) and Washington, DC (2017). We wanted to hear directly from AAAM members, about the value that the organization adds to their professional practice.*

*Therefore, at the close of this year's conference, we asked two AAAM members, one from the old school (seasoned museum founder/executive director) and one from the new (a recent graduate and young museum professional), to share their perspective on the professional development experience offered during the 2014 conference in Birmingham (August 2014). The similarities we discovered may surprise you!*

### **1. WAS THIS YOUR FIRST TIME ATTENDING THE AAAM CONFERENCE? IF NOT, APPROXIMATELY HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU ATTENDED IN THE PAST?**

**OLD SCHOOL:** No, this was certainly not my first time. My participation in the 2014 Birmingham AAAM Conference marked the fifth time I have been in attendance. My other conferences were 2008 Chicago, 2010 Pittsburgh, 2011 Tallahassee, and 2013 Charlotte.

**NEW SCHOOL:** Yes, this was my first time attending the AAAM Conference. I graduated from Florida A&M University with a Masters in History last December and since then have worked at the Riley Museum as a docent and membership coordinator. So this was one of my first opportunities to interact with other young museum professionals and I loved it!

### **2. WHAT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES DID YOU GAIN FROM ATTENDING THE AAAM CONFERENCE?**

**OLD SCHOOL:** I was privileged to be a presenter on a panel representing the Florida African American Heritage Preservation Network, where we shared information about networking with a purpose. Also, I gained much insight about digitizing artifacts in the session on "Using Digital Tools to Create 21st Century Institutions." Additionally, I collected brochures and pamphlets on the topics of transforming closed down schools into museums, and onsite videoconferencing





with classroom students. I also purchased books that are providing me with scholarship to assist with interpretation for future projects.

**NEW SCHOOL:** Coming to Birmingham, afforded me the opportunity to learn more about the AAAM organization and much more than I ever knew before about other museums across the nation. I've also had a chance to network and meet several directors and coordinators across the nation. I'm excited and interested in traveling to other museums/conference host sites, to learn more about best practices in my field and ways that others have overcome some of the similar challenges that others membership coordinators may have faced in building a name and appreciation for their institutions.

### **3. HOW DID THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE EXPERIENCE COMPARE WITH OTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES THAT YOU HAVE HAD?**

#### **OLD SCHOOL:**

After receiving a brochure about a walking tour in the Civil Rights district of Birmingham, I was inspired to establish a similar project back home at my museum in Clearwater, Florida. We have formed a committee to research historical sites, and to secure markers for a walking tour in the African American community in Clearwater. Other than my past AAAM conference experiences, I don't recall gaining as much pro-active and practical guidance from any other conference/training.

#### **NEW SCHOOL:**

It was very informative, I loved attending the workshops and talking with other people who have had much more experience working with museums than I. It was also good to be around those who are new to the field like me. I was able to learn and share new ideas. I would suggest that next time there should be fewer workshops (during the same time slot) in order to give individuals the opportunity to attend as many workshop sessions as possible, without missing out on other equally valuable offerings. Other than my experience at AAAM, I don't ever remember having an opportunity like this one before. Even our graduate level academic conferences did not compare to the hands-on training we received.

### **4. WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST MEMORY, TAKE-AWAY OR "AH-HA" MOMENT DURING THE 2014 AAAM CONFERENCE?**



### **OLD SCHOOL:**

My "ah-ha" moment was probably what I mentioned above. An important idea I lifted from the brochure is that it affords tourists an opportunity to become acquainted with the exhibits. All they would need is a brochure containing historical pictures, and a telephone. They simply dial a number to receive audio about the exhibits. Of course, this is not meant to take the place of actually being there, but it would be most helpful when there is inclement weather and to accommodate classroom teachers who are not able to receive funding for field trips.

### **NEW SCHOOL:**

There was a workshop where our museum founder, Mrs. Althemese Barnes, spoke on the need for advocacy in the community. She passionately spoke about urban renewal in the 1960's and how it changed the African American community, leading to the subsequent decline and displacement of once thriving communities of color. She emphasized the need of people in place who are sympathetic to the idea of commemorating the history of the community, the importance of historic preservation, and how the next generation ought to be informed and taught how to preserve history and be an advocate in the community. I will never forget the words that were spoken on that day.

### **5. DO YOU PLAN TO ATTEND THE 2015 AAAM CONFERENCE IN MEMPHIS? WHY OR WHY NOT?**

#### **OLD SCHOOL:**

Indeed I do plan to attend the AAAM Conference in Memphis. Because of all of my past experiences attending the conferences, I have been able to form partnerships with other attendees, and we have continued to share ideas and keep each other informed of activities taking place at our sites as well as sites throughout the country. I look forward to the face-to-face contact I have with them at the annual AAAM conferences.

#### **NEW SCHOOL:**

Yes I would love to attend the 2015 AAAM Conference in Memphis, I would love the opportunity to reconnect with many of the people that I interacted this year and catch up on the progress we've each made within each of our institutions over the past year. I definitely am committed to continuing and growing my involvement in the AAAM Conference.

