**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**ASSOCIATION OF AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUMS EXTENDS CONDOLENCES**

**EMANUEL AFRICAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, CHARLESTON SOUTH CAROLINA**

Washington, DC June 18, 2015—The Association of African American Museums extends condolences and offers prayer and meditations to the families of victims in the senseless slaying of nine members of Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina on June 17, 2015. Emanuel AME is an historic church that lays at the foundation of African American Christian history. Formed in 1816 after a dispute with white congregants over burial grounds of the church, members of African descent formed Emanuel AME. In 1822 Denmark Vesey and thirty-five members of the church planned a slave revolt but were captured and executed. Following their trial the Church was burned to the ground. The present edifice was built in 1891 and has continued to provide religious leadership and be a community beacon in Charleston. Today it is the oldest AME church in the Deep South.

Emanuel AME is one of many historic Black churches across this nation. They serve not only as houses of worship but also as historic landmarks. We urge all of our member institutions and staff to be proactive in protecting your facilities, staff, members and visitors. Make sure your security protocols are in place and if you do not have security, make sure you communicate with law enforcement. There is a history of assault on African American churches and on other institutions of culture and learning. AAAM members must be diligent in protecting themselves from those who are determined to destroy our institutional expressions of personhood, community and citizenship.

We ask that you keep the families, friends, and associates of Emanuel AME in your thoughts and prayers.

**About the Association of African American Museums**

The Association of African American Museums (AAAM) is a non-profit member organization established to support African and African American focused museums nationally and internationally, as well as the professionals who protect, preserve and interpret African and African American art, history and culture. Established as the single representative and principal voice of the African American museum movement, the Association seeks to strengthen and advocate for the interests of institutions and individuals committed to the preservation of African-derived cultures.