



## **And The Work Begins**

By Samuel W Black  
President

After a very successful annual meeting in Birmingham, I have a renewed energy and euphoria about the direction the Association is headed. My euphoria is bolstered by the talent and skill of our magnificent board that has worked countless hours to advance best practices and standards in an effort to sustain the organization. Part of that work was rewarded with a National Leadership Grant of \$291,424.00 from the Institute of Museum and Library Services. This grant will allow AAAM to assess and refine the vision and priorities of the board and selected stakeholders; develop new guidelines for governance; lead a strategic planning process; strengthen the organization's capacity to better serve the increasing number of African American museums; and establish the infrastructure needed to facilitate the recruitment and hiring of a paid executive director. The project director is board member Dr. Redell Hearn, and her team consists of fellow board members Dr. Kheli Willetts and Brian J. Carter.

This summer, AAAM will welcome five new members and a new officer to the board. Auntaneshia Staveloz, who has served as board secretary since 2013, has been elected as the new vice president for a three-year term. Newly elected at-large board members for the class of 2018 include: Dina Bailey of the National Center for Civil and Human Rights; Dr. Rico Chapman of Jackson State University; Dr. Robert L. Lockett of Jackson State University; Mark McCormick of the Kansas African American Museum; and Eveline Pierre of the Haitian Heritage Museum.



Many thanks to outgoing board member, Schroeder Cherry, for chairing the nominating committee and his work identifying and recruiting such strong new board members. Speaking of out-going board members, all due praise and a hearty AAAM thank you to Dr. Deborah L. Mack, Dr. Alvia Wardlaw, Wayne Coleman, Ellen Zisholtz, and Beverly Robertson for their dedicated service to AAAM as board members and officers. This class of board members were instrumental in crafting the vision of AAAM over the past five years. Within that period, they worked on the restoration of AAAM non-profit status, restructuring of the board and organizational policies, establishment of the Jekyll Island Management Institute Scholarship, and formulating partnerships with the National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Southeastern Museums Conference, the American Alliance of Museums, and the International Council of African Museums.

The theme for the 2015 AAAM annual conference in Memphis, Tennessee is “Milestones in History: African American Museums and the Story of African American Progress.” The opportunity to discuss the way museums have approached milestones in history such as the sesquicentennial of the end of the Civil War and 13th amendment; the 105th anniversary of the Niagara Movement; the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Association for the Study of African American Life & History; the 60th anniversary of the Montgomery Bus Boycott; the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights Act; as well as many other milestones in African American history. Equally important is that specter of the past shadowing the current issues of justice and genocide across America. These issues represented by Ferguson, Baltimore, and elsewhere have put police and Black folks in contention and made justice a seemingly



unattainable salvation. Museums have the opportunity to be forums and educational centers that explain the value of humanity in the context of Black life and culture.

The 2015 keynote speaker will be Dr. Hasan Kwame Jeffries, Associate Professor of History at The Ohio State University. Jeffries has written a probing history of Civil Rights activism in rural Alabama called *Bloody Lowndes: Civil Rights and Black Power in Alabama's Black Belt*. His message will be most appropriate as the story of regional activism of fifty years ago plays out against a backdrop of familiar current issues facing our nation. A feature at the 2015 conference will be the Director's Roundtable luncheon with guest speaker Brickson Diamond, COO of the Executive Leadership Council. The luncheon is scheduled for Tuesday, August 4, at the Peabody Hotel Memphis, and all registered conferees are welcome to attend. The National Civil Rights Museum (NCRM) will host the 37th annual conference for the very first time. AAAM is excited to be in Memphis, and to be able to share the NCRM with the museum field. For many of our members, the conference will offer the first view of the capital renovations recently made to the NCRM. These improvements have taken the pilgrimage site that is the Lorraine Hotel, and enhanced the visitor's opportunity to pay respect, learn from, and be enriched by the life and sacrifice of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

In 2016, AAAM will be "Looking West" as we convene in Riverside, California, August 2-6, 2016, hosted by the Riverside Host Committee and the Dora Nelson African American Museum. Program Chair Brian J. Carter will convene concurrent sessions, panels, plenaries and keynotes that will address the scope of the Black museum movement west of the Mississippi River and especially the Pacific Coast. This conference will mark the first time in nearly two



decades that AAAM will be on the West Coast. Make your plans now, and look out for travel and registration information for the “Inland Empire.”