



*With Gratitude*

By Samuel W. Black AAAM President

In January of 2001, Dr. John Fleming suggested I get more involved in AAAM.

In 2003, I accepted an invitation to serve on the board by then-President Bill Gwaltney. At the end of the August 2016 annual conference, I will end my tenure. For 13 years I have served with amazing members of AAAM in varying capacities--At-large board member, Vice President and since 2011, as President. It has been my pleasure to work with great museum professionals and influence the continued growth and development of AAAM.

As the 2016 Annual Conference quickly approaches and I ponder my years of leadership years---now a blur, I am humbled. As President, I have focused on developing a strong board, re-establishing our non-profit status, and planning for a healthy management of the organization's business with the forecast of a full-time Executive Director as the goal.

During my tenure, the board has focused a great deal on the quality of the national conference. Conference programming continues to focus on stronger educational programming and standards. Under my leadership AAAM broadened its conference city sites to include-- Charlotte, Memphis, and Riverside – exposing the museums in those cities to a national audience. For the first time since 1984, the national conference will convene on the West Coast. We chose Riverside, California to purposefully and intentionally strengthen western membership by bringing the conference closer to them and to learn more about the Black museum movement in the West.



In 2012, AAAM and the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC) at the Smithsonian began discussing ways to help each other succeed, and by 2015 a formal agreement was established. The partnership with NMAAHC provides office space in the new museum, along with program and administrative support. I want to thank Mr. Lonnie Bunch and Dr. Deborah L. Mack for their leadership, vision and acknowledgement of the important role AAAM plays into the legacy of NMAAHC. The partnership has allowed us to expand conference programs and establish the John Kinard Scholarship for the Jekyll Island Management Institute of the Southeastern Museum Conference (SEMC).

As President, I also wanted to make sure AAAM realized a profit. Our revenues have climbed each year and our financial affairs – once an issue of concern – now operate under the watchful eyes of a museum professional/CPA as treasurer and an outside auditing firm. I have had numerous conversations with fellow members about ways to sustain the operations of AAAM, and we all know that means having a full-time staff and Executive Director. Toward that goal, AAAM set out to conduct an assessment of the field, initiate strategic planning, and upgrade its communications and social media platforms.

In Riverside, California, I will preside over my last conference as President. *Looking West* will bring together a mass of museum professionals from all over the country. It reminds me of my first AAAM conference in Dayton, Ohio in 1992 where I met John Fleming, John and Karen Franklin, Rowena Stewart, Vanessa Thaxton-Ward, Juanita Moore, Dr. Charles Wright, Dr. Margaret Burroughs, among others. I had no idea they would all have such a powerful impact on my professional career. If I had not followed the directive of my mentor



John Fleming in 2001 and “become more involved in AAAM,” I would have missed this intimate relationship with my favorite organization.

As immediate past President I will remain an advisor to the board. Not much will change. I will still be around.

Thank you all for allowing me to serve as your President.