

# The Association of African American Museums: 39th Annual Conference

Washington, DC July 31-August 4, 2017

<http://www.blackmuseums.org/>



The 39th Annual Conference of the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) will be held in Washington, DC July 31 – August 4, 2017 and hosted by the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC), the theme of the conference is “Presence-Power-Persistence: Advancing the History and Possibility of Museum Activism”.. The conference will promote an understanding of social movements – Civil Rights, Black Power and Black Studies – that fostered racial consciousness in the 1960s and cultivated the creation of Black Museums over the past 50 years. This one-of-a-kind conference will bring together representatives from over 200 museums, libraries, HBCU’s, historic sites and cultural centers in the United States, the Caribbean and Latin America. The Association played a pivotal role in museum activism since the movement to establish African-American places of memory as museums, archives, and libraries began. Presenters are invited to submit proposals that emphasize best practices and sustainable models for advancing the possibilities of these spaces through partnerships, collaborations, and socially responsive initiatives.

The Association of African American Museums (AAAM) is a non-profit member organization established to support African and African American focus museums nationally and internationally, as well as the professionals who protect, preserve and interpret African and African American art, history and culture. AAAM was 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. The services provided by AAAM enhance the ability of those museums to serve the needs and interests of persons of African ancestry and those who wish to know more about the art, history and culture of African-derived cultures.

## **AAAM History**

Established as the voice of the African American Museums Movement, the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to serving the interests and needs of Black museums and cultural institutions nationwide. Membership is comprised of museums, museum professionals, institutions, and individuals that share an interest in African American art, culture, and history. Through training opportunities and member services, AAAM supports the goals of African American museums and museum professionals.

AAAM works as an advocate for the interests of institutions and individuals committed to the support of African and African derived cultures. It defines a relationship for the body of such institutions within the national museum community, and seeks to strengthen such institutions through improved communication, shared resources, training, annual conferences, technical aid and assistance, and through fund raising guidance. The Association also provides, through newsletters, placement bureaus, etc., services supportive for the professional needs of its membership. Hence, AAAM includes cultural organizations, historical societies and museums which not only collect, preserve, and exhibit objects valuable to art, history and science, but also educational institutions, research agencies and cultural centers; and it works to advance all of the agendas of member institutions. The membership shares a common core of knowledge, sense of purpose, and code of ethics that enhance their educational and scholarly attainments; and therefore, AAAM supports opportunities for sound professional preparation and provides outlets for research and publications as well as foster the continued improvement of the profession through the development and observance of high standards and ethics.

In the late 1960s, Dr. Margaret Burroughs, founder of the DuSable Museum in Chicago, and Dr. Charles H. Wright of the Museum of African American History in Detroit, initiated a series of conferences for Black museums. The National Association of Museums and Cultural Organizations and the Black Museums Conference, the first informal Black museum association, evolved from these conferences. In 1978, a consortium of six Black museums, with funding from the National Museum Act (administered by the Smithsonian Institution), presented a series of conferences at participating institutions. The conferences provided the opportunity for an ad hoc committee to lay the groundwork for yet another organization. Under the chairmanship of E. Barry Gaither, the committee prepared by-laws, which were ratified in Detroit in February of 1978. The new organization adopted the name "African American Museums Association" (AAMA), and elected its first governing council. AAMA's first office was at the Museum of the National Center for Afro-American Artists in Boston, Massachusetts.