



INTERNATIONAL
AFRICAN AMERICAN
MUSEUM

2023

MEDIA KIT

@IAAMUSEUM | IAAMUSEUM.ORG

14 WHARFSIDE STREET, CHARLESTON, S.C. 29401

CONTACT:

media@iaamuseum.org

ASSETS FOR MEDIA USE

BACKGROUND



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The International African American Museum (IAAM) explores the history, culture, and impact of the African American journey on Charleston, South Carolina, the nation, and the world, shining light and sharing stories of the diverse journeys, origin, and achievements of descendants of the African Diaspora. Located at the historically sacred site of Gadsden's Wharf, IAAM honors the untold stories of the African American journey.

Its nine distinct galleries demonstrate how enslaved Africans and free Blacks shaped economic, political, and cultural development throughout the nation and beyond, while offering an especially close look at the connection to the South Carolina Lowcountry. These galleries include the Transatlantic Experience, the Atlantic Worlds Gallery, the South Carolina Connections Gallery, the Gullah Geechee Gallery, the American Journeys Gallery, the Carolina Gold Gallery, the African Roots Gallery, The Theater, and the Special Exhibitions Gallery.

In addition to the galleries, the African Ancestors Memorial Garden sprawls across the museum grounds and reflects on the historic significance of Gadsden's Wharf—where alongside several others in the Charleston Harbor—an estimated 40% of African captives entered this country. Artistic installations and site objects mark the history and archeology there. This area, which is free and open to the public, also provides a space for informal and structured gatherings, where stories and traditions can once again be shared.

Working to serve and improve equity for Black and African Americans, IAAM is a champion of authentic, empathetic storytelling of American history, and is thus one of the nation's newest platforms for the disruption of institutionalized racism as it evolves today.

Opening on June 27, 2023, IAAM has been in the works since 2000, when former Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. voiced a need for the museum in his State of the City address. In 2002, a steering committee was formed to explore the development of the museum, and in 2005, Congressman Jim Clyburn became the museum's first chair of the Board of Directors. As of early 2022, IAAM had raised close to \$100 million dollars toward building construction and the foundation of what comprises the heart of the museum. Since 2021, Dr. Tonya M. Matthews, President and Chief Executive Officer of IAAM, has guided the extensive efforts leading to the museum's opening and its ongoing efforts to tell the story of the African American journey.

For more information, please visit www.iaamuseum.org or call 843-872-5352.

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FACT SHEET



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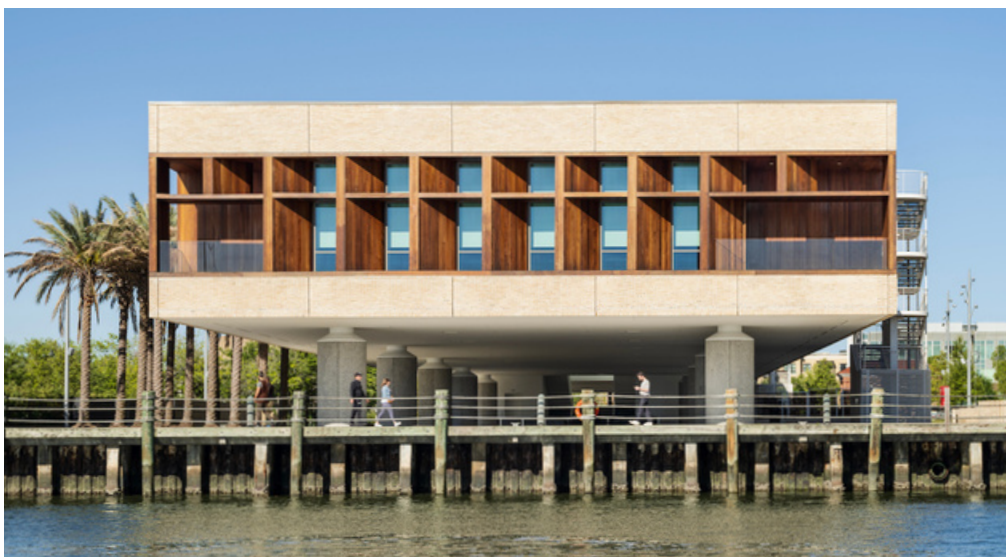
Overview: The International African American Museum (IAAM) explores the history, culture, and impact of the African American journey on Charleston, the nation, and the world, shining light and sharing stories of the diverse journeys, origin, and achievements of descendants of the African Diaspora. Across nine galleries and a memorial garden with art, objects, artifacts, and multi-media interaction, IAAM is a champion of authentic, empathetic storytelling of American history. As a result, the museum will stand as one of the nation's newest platforms for disrupting institutionalized racism as it evolves today.

Founded: In 2000, Former Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. first announced the idea of the International African American Museum in his State of the City address. In 2002, a steering committee was formed to explore the development of the museum. In 2005, Congressman Jim Clyburn became the museum's first chair of the Board of Directors.

Mission: To honor the untold stories of the African American journey, at one of our nation's most sacred sites.

Areas Served: Located in Charleston, S.C., the International African American Museum is a national museum that tells the story of the African American journey, inclusive of its international connections and impact, with an emphasis on its South Carolina Lowcountry roots.

Industries Served: Museums and cultural attractions, non-profits, academic programs, travel and tourism, and a variety of entities working to serve and improve equity for the Black and African American population



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FACT SHEET (CONT.)



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Visitor Information: The Center for Family History will serve to actively help community members find connections between themselves and their ancestors, as well as others. This department will store photos, marriage records, archival tools, and the largest collection of United States Colored Troop (USCT) records, outside of the National Archives. All are available digitally in the Center for Family History. Currently at www.cfh.iaamuseum.org, visitors can explore genealogical resources and educational tools to help discover more about their own stories.

The African Ancestors Memorial Garden, a collection of gardens and artistic installations that sprawls across the IAAM grounds, will be free and open to the public. It will give visitors the opportunity to honor African ancestors and reflect on the historic significance of Gadsden's Wharf facing the harbor, where some historians estimate more than 45% of enslaved Africans entered this country. Site objects mark the history and archeology there. This area also allows for informal and programmed gatherings where stories and traditions can once again be shared.

Technology and Educational Features for Visitors:

- Another centerpiece of the museum, the "Atlantic Worlds Gallery," will be furnished with North America's first public installation of the latest Crystal LED display in a 32-foot wide, 7-foot-high configuration provided by Sony. The immersive audio/visual experience is expected to elicit a powerful emotional response from visitors, as it brings history to life through technology.
- To help visitors explore, the South Carolina Connections Gallery includes an interactive table digital map (supported by Google) that highlights where history happened throughout the state and the Lowcountry.
- The Theater (supported by BMW) will feature a commissioned film installation, *The Ummah Chroma*, an award-winning film collective. It will serve as both a visitor orientation to the museum experience and a work of art to be screened and distributed internationally. The film will be a visual and an emotional encapsulation of the spirit, resilience, and power of people of African descent.

FACT SHEET (CONT.)



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Galleries:

1. Transatlantic Experience
2. The Theater
3. Atlantic Worlds
4. Gullah Geechee
5. African Roots
6. Carolina Gold
7. South Carolina Connections
8. American Journeys
9. Special Exhibitions

Leadership Team:

- Dr. Tonya M. Matthews, CEO and President
- John Anderson, COO / Vice President of Administration
- Dianne Firment, Chief Finance Officer
- Malika N. Pryor, Chief Learning and Engagement Officer

Address: 14 Wharfside Street, Charleston, S.C. 29401

Phone: 843-872-5352

Email: media@iaamuseum.org

Website: <https://iaamuseum.org>

Social Media Handle: @iaamuseum

Assets for Media Use: [View Here](#)

Mobile App: Through a collaboration with [Bloomberg Connects](#), IAAM has launched a self-guided audio tour that will assist visitors in moving throughout the Museum and the African Ancestors Memorial Garden.



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AFRICAN ANCESTORS MEMORIAL GARDEN INSPIRATION



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In January 2016, Hood Design Studio embarked on a collaborative journey, which started with three immersive days in Charleston, South Carolina. This dynamic gathering brought together a diverse group of individuals, including local artists, academics, historians, archaeologists, activists, architects, designers, the mayor, and museum leaders. The purpose of these curated tours and conversations was to cultivate a rich dialogue that would ultimately shape the design of the African Ancestors Memorial Garden.

These conversations allowed for a chorus of voices to be woven into the landscape, creating a space that acknowledges the sacred nature of Gadsden's Wharf and provides support to the building as it rises above the ground. The garden, inspired by both local landscape vernacular and the broader African diaspora, serves as a tranquil space for dialogue and reflection.

The archaeology of the site is honored in two distinct ways. A shimmering stainless steel band, which captures and reflects light from above, commemorates Gadsden's Wharf. The old storehouse, a haunting reminder of the enslaved people who once perished within its walls, is traced by a brick paving band. A poignant boardwalk featuring kneeling figures cuts through two polished granite walls, encouraging a collision of past and present.

Standing at the edge of Gadsden's Wharf, one's gaze is drawn eastward to Sullivan's Island and further beyond. A large water feature pays tribute to the Atlantic Passage. The water's ebb and flow reveals and conceals figures within, their silhouettes dancing on the water's surface as light reflects and refracts. Through this evocative landscape, the African Ancestors Memorial Garden connects us to a past that must not be forgotten, while fostering dialogue and contemplation for the present and future.

ARCHITECTURAL INSPIRATION



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The architecture of the International African American Museum is shaped by the guiding principle defined by its lead designer, the late Henry N. Cobb: “As the place where thousands of Africans from diverse cultures first set foot in North America, Gadsden’s Wharf is not just the right place to tell this story; it is hallowed ground. The special design challenge of the museum is to build on this site without occupying it.”

In service to this aim and IAAM’s mission, the building grants primacy to the seascape it fronts, the landscape that frames it, and the memorial it shelters. The New York–based architectural firm Pei Cobb Freed & Partners, with executive architect Moody Nolan, the largest African-American-owned design firm in the United States, designed the 426-foot-long, 84-foot-wide single-story volume to hover thirteen feet above the ground, supported by eighteen cylindrical pillars arranged in two rows. Reflecting a careful contextual response to the highly charged historical site, the long side walls are clad in pale yellow brick, while the glazed end walls are framed by African sapele louvers, directing views to the Atlantic on the east and downtown Charleston on the west. The supporting columns are clad in traditional oyster-shell tabby, also used as paving in portions of the landscape.

With the exception of two service cores framing a central skylit stairway, the entire ground plane beneath the building remains open, representing the heart of the site’s collective memory. On the east side of this open space, oriented to the harbor and ocean beyond, a shallow reflecting pool signifies the edge of Gadsden’s Wharf as it was at the beginning of the nineteenth century, at the peak of the slave trade. On the west side, oriented to Concord Street and Gadsdenborough Park, granite paving demarcates a sheltered gathering place for group activities and performances.

ARCHITECTURAL INSPIRATION (CONT.)



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The African Ancestors Memorial Garden, designed by landscape artist Walter Hood, embraces the entire site, deploying elements of low-country landscape as it celebrates the arts, the crafts, and the labors of African Americans. The garden is bounded on one side by a shallow pool—a metaphor for the Atlantic—whose sharply defined western edge marks the original seawall of Gadsden’s Wharf, while its soft eastern boundary evokes the limitless ocean beyond. The design team envisioned the entry sequence as both a destination and transitional space between the landscape and exhibition. Visitors are drawn into the museum through the luminous atrium, moving from shadow to light as they ascend the monumental stair. On the upper level, housing an array of historical and cultural exhibits as well as the Center for Family History, exhibit designer Ralph Appelbaum Associates planned the narrative flow of the installation around the architecture, allowing visitors to enjoy unobstructed views through the center of the building toward the waterfront beyond.

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Gross area: 41,800 square feet

Sustainability: designed for LEED certification

LEADERSHIP TEAM BIOS



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Tonya M. Matthews, PhD

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)

Dr. Tonya M. Matthews is a thought-leader in social entrepreneurship, institutional equity and inclusion strategy, and the intersection of formal and informal education. Her background as both poet and engineer has made her a highly sought-after visioning partner on boards and community and economic development projects, as well as a frequent public speaker and presenter for gatherings across all ages and sectors.

A non-profit executive veteran, Dr. Matthews is currently President and Chief Executive Officer of the International African American Museum (IAAM) located in Charleston, SC at the historically sacred site of Gadsden's Wharf. Under Dr. Matthews' leadership, IAAM has become a champion of authentic, empathetic storytelling of African American history and thus is one of the nation's newest platforms for the disruption of institutionalized racism as America continues the walk toward "a more perfect union."

Dr. Matthews brings her "pre-K through gray" philosophy of education alongside a deep respect for life-long learning and radical empathy skill building to every appointment. Dr. Matthews' storied career includes her role as Associate Provost for Inclusive Workforce Development & Director of the STEM Innovation Learning Center at Wayne State University and, prior to that, as the President & CEO of the Michigan Science Center – flexing her science and STEM educational equity chops in both roles. She is the founder of The STEMInista Project, a movement to engage girls in their future with STEM careers and tools and STEMInista Rising, which supports professional women in STEM – and the colleagues who champion them. Additionally, prior to taking the helm of the International African American Museum, Dr. Matthews served as Vice President of Museums for the Cincinnati Museum Center leading the education and engagement footprint of the 100+ year old three-museum and three-research center institution.

Dr. Matthews' dedication to community and accomplishments are widely recognized. She has served on the boards of the American Alliance of Museums and the American Association for State and Local History. She has been noted as one of the Charleston's Most Influential by Charleston Business Magazine twice and honored as Trailblazer by Career Mastered Magazine (2017). She is a former member of the National Academy of Sciences Board on Science Education and was appointed by both Democratic and Republican administrations to the National Assessment Governing Board. Dr. Matthews

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Tonya M. Matthews, PhD

PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO)

has also served as board member for First Independence Bank and as DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) advisor and consult to impactful Fortune 500 companies and striving small businesses, alike.

Amplifying her “full brain” style, Dr. Matthews has authored several articles and book chapters on inclusive board governance, non-profit management, and fundraising. Additionally, her editorials, essays, and presentations on race, diversity, and social justice are cited across local and national platforms. Dr. Matthews is a published poet and is included in 100 Best African American Poems (2010) edited by Nikki Giovanni. She has also been honored with an honorary doctorate from Central Michigan University for her career achievements and contributions.

Dr. Matthews received her Ph.D. in biomedical engineering from Johns Hopkins University and her B.S.E. in biomedical and electrical engineering from Duke University, alongside a certificate in African/African American Studies. She is a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and The Links, Inc. Dr. Matthews is a native of Washington, D.C. and—in each community she has settled—is known for planting roots on the side of town best for keeping an eye on progress.

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John Anderson

VICE PRESIDENT OF ADMINISTRATION AND CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER (COO)

John Anderson joined the International African American Museum in 2021 as Vice President and COO. In this role, he is responsible for activating the museum's visitor experiences, building and site operations, organizational administration, and company culture. Prior to joining IAAM, Anderson served as the Michigan Science Center's vice president of administration and chief operating officer. Prior to that, he held multiple professional positions with the City of Detroit and Detroit Zoological Society.

Anderson holds almost 30 years of experience as a leader in cultural attraction operations, organizational culture, and customer service. In 2010, Anderson served as human resources committee member for the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions (IAAPA), and he is currently an IAAPA Certified Attractions Executive. In 2015, he was recognized as a Patriotic Employer by the U.S. Office of the Secretary of Defense. Anderson received a Bachelor of Science degree in zoology from Michigan State University.

Dianne Firment

CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER (CFO)

Dianne Firment joined the International African American Museum in 2019 as Director of Finance and was promoted to CFO in 2021. In this role, she is responsible for propelling the financial growth and success of the museum's operations.

Firment has more than 25 years of experience in the fields of finance, human resource management, and leadership. Prior to joining the IAAM team, she served as the director of finance at the Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public School in Worcester, Massachusetts. There, she directed all accounting and human resource functions of the school with over \$20 million in revenues, over 200 staff, and over 1,400 students. Firment received her Bachelor of Science degree in business administration with a focus on accounting, and she completed certificate coursework in human resource management at Assumption College.

LEADERSHIP TEAM BIOS



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Malika N. Pryor

CHIEF LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT OFFICER

Malika N. Pryor, Chief Learning and Engagement Officer for the International African American Museum, provides strategic direction for creating and enhancing dynamic programs that explore the Middle Passage, the African diaspora, and the crucial contributions that African Americans have made to our history and to our modern world. As a member of the senior executive team, Pryor works closely with the CEO to establish partnerships and programs that support and sustain the museum's mission, including exhibitions, school programs, faith-based initiatives and programs, local and national public programs, and the Center for Family History, a one-of-a-kind research center that focuses on African American genealogy.

A native of Detroit, Michigan, she was shaped by many of the city's community and cultural arts institutions, and her education and work experience reflect this.

Pryor received her Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Studies and Afro-American and African Studies from the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor before going on to earn her Juris Doctor degree from Wayne State University Law School in Detroit.

After practicing law in Atlanta for several years, Pryor returned to her hometown of Detroit in 2010, where she served as director of education and programs at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. From there, she started a boutique non-profit consulting firm providing services to emerging community-based organizations with a special emphasis on BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) founders. She then joined the National Art Gallery of the Bahamas where she established the communications and education department. While living abroad, she founded the Curlyfest Bahamas Festival before once again returning to Detroit, where she most recently served as senior director of education programs and outreach for the Detroit Historical Society. There, she formed a cohesive department, developing innovative experiences including *Invoking the Spirit: Detroit's Black Bottom*, a digital exhibition and walking tour chronicling the lives and experiences of one of the most historically important neighborhoods in the city's history.

UPDATED 10/8/23

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