



**Newsletter of the  
SPRINGFIELD AND CENTRAL ILLINOIS AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MUSEUM**

VOLUME 1, NO. 2

SUMMER 2017

## INSIDE LOOK



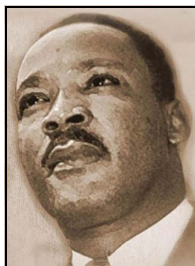
**NEW MUSEUM  
COORDINATOR**

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**REMEMBERING A  
LAWSUIT THAT  
CHANGED OUR  
LIVES...**

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**...AND THE MAN  
WHO LED THE  
WAY.**

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## **Tickets Now On Sale**

# **6th Annual Gala Set for October 26; Six to be Cited for Regional Roles**

Six individuals from Central Illinois who have made significant contributions to the region's African American community will be honored on Thursday, October 26, when the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum holds its 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Gala Banquet. The theme of the event, to be held at the Wyndham Springfield City Centre, will be *Early African American Pioneers of Central Illinois*.

Honorees will be Reverend Samuel Hale, Jerrie Blakley, and Russell Moore III, all of Springfield, Brandon McFarland of Champaign, and Meleesa Tyus and Melverta Wilkins of Decatur. The six will be profiled in the fall edition of the *AAHM Sojourner*.

The gala will begin with a reception at 6 p.m. followed by dinner at 7 p.m. There will also be a silent auction. Serving as co-chairs of the event are Ocheng Jany and Ernestine Lawrence. "This is our primary, annual fundraiser and we are confident that it will be a success," Jany said.

In addition to the formal program and silent auction, a new exhibit about Early African American Pioneers of Central Illinois will be on display. There will also be live music and performances throughout the evening.

Tickets are now on sale for the gala. A reserved table of 10 is \$500. Single adult banquet tickets are \$50, student tickets are \$25. To purchase a ticket or reserve a table call Jany at 217-553-5380 or Lawrence at 217-726-5698.

Everyone attending the Gala as well as event sponsors, will receive a Souvenir Book that also serves as a fundraiser. If you are interested in sponsoring the event or advertising in the keepsake book, contact Jany or Lawrence to reserve a spot.

Advertisements range from \$325 for a center page ad across from the program, to \$300 for the back cover, and \$275 for inside covers. A full page ad runs \$125, a half page, \$90, and \$60 for a quarter page ad. Sponsorships are \$7,500 (Diamond), \$5,000 (Platinum), \$2,500 (Gold), \$1,000 (Silver), and \$500 (Bronze). The deadline for sponsorships and advertising is September 15.



## OUR MISSION

- ★ We tell authentic stories about African-American life in Central Illinois, past and present, celebrating and sharing our history and culture and planning for the future.
- ★ We will do this through scholarship, oral histories, exhibits, partnerships, our board, our supporters and our friends.
- ★ We are and will be community builders.
- ★ We recognize that our stories are at once unique but connected to those of other communities and we will support those interconnections.
- ★ We will be integral to the cultural life of our area. We will partner with like-minded organizations.
- ★ We will be proactive in our community.
- ★ We will study and apply best-practices in business, scholarship and communication.

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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**AAHM website:** [spiaahm.org](http://spiaahm.org)  
**Address:** 1440 Monument Ave., Springfield, IL 62702  
**Telephone:** 217-391-6323  
**Toll free:** 877-757-2247

## A letter from AAHM President Doug King

Hello Friends,

Welcome to the second edition of *the Sojourner*. So many things are taking place at the Museum, and as you continue to read you'll see what I mean. There are many reasons for our continued success and a major reason is your continued support of the Museum's mission. That mission is two-fold: to tell accounts of the life experience and contributions of African Americans in Central Illinois and to educate all of us to know the 'whole story' of American history. There is danger in a single story, a story that causes us to make the same mistakes over and over again. So we will do our part to bring you important history and we ask your support in helping us to do so.



We are very excited to have Vaundra Mitchell join us as part time Coordinator of Visitors, Volunteers and Docents. Vaundra will assist in keeping the Museum operating and moving forward. Museum volunteers and board members will continue their active and essential roles as well.

On a sad note, we lost a founding member of the Museum this spring, Barbara "Babs" Dickerman. Babs had been tireless in her efforts over the years to bring attention to minority and underserved members of Springfield's population. She did much to establish and advance the Museum. Babs, we miss you.

One last note. On July 15, a collaboration of the Jewish community of Springfield, a multitude of African American organizations, and many talented individuals brought a documentary film to Springfield. *Rosenwald* by Aviva Kempner tells the remarkable story of Julius Rosenwald. Over 760 Central Illinois residents of diverse ethnic and racial groups attended the film debut and witnessed the life of an extraordinary human being who understood the power of giving.

Regards,  
**Doug**

## Be an AAHM Museum Volunteer!

You are welcome and needed at the Museum. Our volunteers are engaged in many activities: greeting visitors at the door, providing Museum tours, researching new subjects, developing exhibits, and hosting social events. For those who love children, volunteers are needed to assist with events for youth. Whatever your interests or skills, there is sure to be a place for you at the Museum.



is the quarterly newsletter of the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum, 1440 Monument Avenue, Springfield, Illinois.

Editor, Sue Massie; Design and Production, Vicky Whitaker.

# Vaundra Mitchell Named AAHM Coordinator

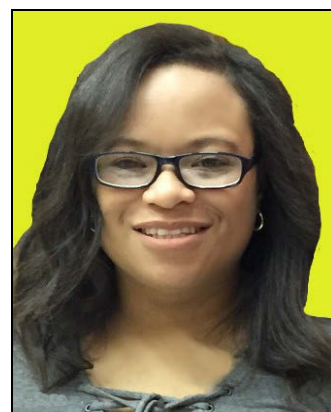
Vaundra Mitchell, a Springfield resident, has been named Museum Coordinator for Visitors, Volunteers and Docents. The position is part-time.

Mitchell has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and is working toward a Master's degree in Business in Administration, both from Benedictine University. She will coordinate day-to-day operations at the Museum and

assist with activities and programs.

The new Coordinator is the mother of two children, a son, 17-year-old Jason, a senior at Springfield High School and a daughter, Faith, 14, a freshman, also at Springfield High School.

Mitchell will be at the Museum during regular hours and welcomes all to stop in and introduce themselves.



## AAHM Museum Goes on the Road, Bringing Exhibits, Programs to Schools, Institutions

The Museum is often asked to provide presentations or exhibits at locations outside the Museum.

This provides an opportunity to talk to groups that would not ordinarily visit the Museum or who, after hearing our presentation, may become active members.

Already this year our Board and other volunteers have provided materials and/or made presentations at the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Illinois Correctional Facility



in Taylorville, the University of Illinois at Springfield, Lincoln Land Community College, and Jefferson Middle School.

The Museum is developing additional materials and programs that can be used for outreach.

If an organization you know is interested in a special program, please contact the Museum. A presentation could be arranged at either the Museum itself or another location.

## Cheers to Volunteers...

Algernon "Al" Baidy  
Jennie Battles  
Lacey Brown  
Patricia Crawford  
Jenni Dahl  
Judy Betts Davis  
Patricia Davis  
Jayna Flatt

Faith Mitchell  
Jason Mitchell  
Metria Nesbitt  
Roger W. Powers  
Edna Shanklin  
Pat Smith  
Cameron Vanmetre  
LaVon Wilson

The wonderful thing about our volunteers is their dependability and their skills. Two of our volunteers are great with technology, so great that one has become our webmaster.

Another volunteer can create a spread sheet in a moment's notice and populate it by the end of the shift. Some are so reliable that I don't have to call to see if they can work each week because they have given me a firm schedule.

They have mopped and vacuumed. They have stuffed envelopes and done internet research. They have entered data and conducted tours. They have taken new software and created an entire new database.

One wrote for and obtained a grant for the museum and another is in the process of categorizing and cataloging all the books in our library. In short, we have an impressive team of museum volunteers and are happy they are with us.

## ...and Thank You, Brad Davis

It is extraordinary how, when a need arises, a benefactor sometimes steps forward to help. The Museum desperately needed a sound system so that our audiences who are ever-growing in number could hear the programs. Brad Davis, president of Document Management Incorporated, recognized that need and donated a state-of-the-art complete Public Address System with wireless microphones. He also donated funds for a Quick Books Payroll program.

*Elizabeth Alexander*  
Chair, Volunteer Committee



## NATIONAL WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

### Panel Discusses Challenges for African-American Women

Seven outstanding women shared their experiences at the Museum's second annual celebration of National Women's History Month. On March 11, Springfield Alderwoman Doris Turner moderated the panel of African-American women, each with non-conventional jobs. Adrienne Crossley, news producer for Channel 20, related experiences as she "worked her way up" in the news world. Crossley spoke of situations requiring her to really analyze herself and set a strong direction forward. Sherrie Gary, civil engineer, spoke of the perseverance needed to achieve goals including attaining a university engineering degree. Gary reminded us that the oft-used phrase "you can achieve anything" has boundaries as it takes both effort and ability in any selected area. Beverly Hicks-Gibson, VP and CFO of the Springfield Urban League, spoke about balancing her home and career. DeAnne Hubbard, a career military reservist, spoke of opportunities of a military career. Dechele Trammel, massage therapist and esthetician, talked of the crucial relationship between therapists and patients and her strong sense of purpose in the work she does. Donna Gregg, financial professional, emphasized the need to plan for a secure financial future. She spoke of the dilemma of many African-Americans who do not have the benefit of inheriting resources from earlier generations because few opportunities existed for them in the past. Every woman spoke about challenges of African-American women in non-traditional jobs and about the great importance to them of integrating their work life and family life.



# Spring Highlights

### DAY CAMP: FUN, TOURS AND TREATS

The Museum held a week-long day camp for students in June this year. Under the expert management of Pam King, 18 first through sixth graders enjoyed a great variety of activities. Camp partners from the Lincoln Home National Historic Site, Lincoln Tomb State Historic Site, and Lincoln Monument Association brought their skills and knowledge as campers participated in arts and crafts, music, and dance of the period. Harriet Tubman and other historic personalities visited with the campers. Hot lunches, also very popular, were graciously provided by the Calvary Missionary Baptist Church. We thank all who contributed. Special thanks to Rhonda Cook for her creative contributions.



### SECOND CHANCE CHRISTMAS

A unique event was held on April 8, an ethnic holiday celebration. Continents of the world were represented with food, decorations and in some cases costumes as well. Visitors learned a bit about selected countries' traditions, sampled their food, then voted for their favorites. The celebration was so interesting and fun, it is sure to become an annual event!



## Lawsuit Gave Black Community Voice in Local Government

**If you don't know your history, then.....**

If you can finish that sentence, you know and understand how important history is to your existence.

**Thirty years ago this year, eight individuals initiated and won a battle to change the way Springfield residents were represented by City government.**

Frank McNeil, William H. Washington, Rudolph Davenport, Howard Veal, Archie Lawrence, James Craven, Donald Craven and Professor Larry Golden were all courageous and selfless as they stood up for what was right and fair. Springfield now has a Mayor/Aldermanic form of government.

**Prior to the lawsuit, Springfield operated under the Commission form – a mayor and four commissioners elected citywide, who all lived west of Pasfield Street. From 1911 until 1987,**

**no African American could get elected to any city-wide offices, even though from 1963 to 1985 six tried.**

The lawsuit sought to equalize representation and ensure at least one African American on the city council. In 1987, with the swearing in of the new council, two African American males were seated; representing parts of East Springfield (Frank McNeil) and (Allen Woodson) parts of West Springfield. This was historic, but 30 years passed and no one observed this monumental event.

**On January 12, 2017, the Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum (AAHM) held a commemoration event that brought all but three of original eight, to retell the story. William Washington\* and Rudy Davenport were too ill to attend. Jim Craven died in 2015.**

Hearing from the actual history makers brought to light a spellbinding account of the meetings and preparation that lead

to the filing of the lawsuit and its success. All endured harsh criticism, backlash, ridicules and threats from many; even those the change was purported to benefit; still they sojourned on as they sought to bring change to Springfield.

**This lawsuit was the first filed on behalf of black voters in Springfield and the first north of the Mason-Dixon Line that relied on the 1982 Amendment to the 1965 Federal Voting Rights Act. The efforts went beyond Springfield resulting in other municipalities and special districts in Illinois accomplishing changes to their limited forms of government.**

**...You are destined to repeat it!**

**Gail Simpson**

Springfield Alderman 2007-2015  
Mayoral Candidate 2016

*\*Washington passed away on June 11.*

## Escape into a Book with Illinois Authors

An amazing group of authors gathered at the Museum on April 22. They talked about why they began writing and how they chose their subjects. Each author had a different and interesting message to impart. The authors provided books to be sold at the Museum on their behalf. The following books about the African-American experience by these and other authors are available for purchase at the Museum.



**Unclothed, Memoir of a Naked Soul,** Casandra M. Austin

**The Big Brown Box,** Karen A. Bellamy, illustrated by Jason Warfeld-Bey

**Ephraim and the Bee,** Karen A. Bellamy, illustrated by Jason Warfeld-Bey

**What is Zawadi to We?,** Vandella Brown

**My Walk, Life through the Lenses of LaMarcus Elreese Childrous**

**Expressions of Love, Life and Living,** Nell R. Clay

**They Call Heroes Mister: the Jesse White Story,** Rick Davis

**The First-Century Mission and the 21st Century Church,** Samuel W. Hale, Jr.



**Adventures of the Souls, Self-Reflections of Selected Souls,** Samuel W. Hale, Jr.

**The Spirit of Springfield's early African Americans: 1818-1859,** Richard Hart

**Lincoln's Springfield: the Underground Railroad,** Richard Hart

**Lincoln's Springfield: Abel W. Estabrook: Robert Todd Lincoln's Abolitionist Teacher,** Richard Hart

**The Colored Section, Oak Ridge Cemetery: Springfield, Sangamon County, Illinois,** Richard Hart

**Private Lewis Martin and African-American Civil War Soldiers in Springfield, IL,** Kathleen Heyworth

**Released, Inspired Messages, A Book of Collected Poems,** Robert L. Horton

**Time In-Between,** Seenaa Godana-Dulla Jimjimo



**Something Goes Wrong in the Waldorf Kitchen,** Loretta A. Johnson

**The Story of African-Oromo Women and the American Experience,** Sena Godana-Dulla Jimjimo

**Justice Delayed vs. Justice Denied,** Joyce M. Lakes

**What Price Freedom, Yesterday-Today-Tomorrow,** Don S. McClure

**Groundwork,** Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights, Genna Rae McNeil

**Me in the Making, One Man's Journey to Becoming a School Superintendent,** Dr. Walter Milton, Jr.

**The Presidents' Men, Black United States Marshals in America,** Robert Moore, U.S. Marshal

**A Matter of Life or Death: Why Black Men Must Save Black Boys in America's Public Schools,** Dr. Michael Nellums and Dr.

Walter Milton, Jr.



**Secret Powers for the Young, The Maries Reunite,** Stella Nguenpang

**Angels Hear What the Spirit is Saying to the Seven Churches,** Minister Gary T. Pierce

**Striving While Black, A Playbook for the Seriously Ambitious,** Kwame S. Salter

**The Tuskegee Airmen, Mutiny at Freeman Field,** Lt. Col. James C. Warren, USAF (ret.)

**Parenting Wisdom 101,** Evey Williamson

**100 Things to do in Springfield, IL Before You Die,** Penny Zimmerman-Wills



# Coming Attractions

We're working on lots of new programs and projects as well as preparing for some of our regular events. Here's an update on some of the special events and activities we'll be telling you more about in future issues of AAHM Sojourner:

## EVENTS BEING PLANNED TO HONOR MEMORY OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

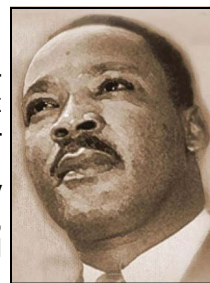
The Springfield and Central Illinois African-American History Museum has begun work on local events in 2018 that will mark the 50th anniversary of the assassination of famed civil rights activist Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and will be reaching out to area organizations, educational institutions and individuals interested in working on the project.

Dr. King led the 1955 Montgomery bus boycott and helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1957, serving as its first president. He helped organize the 1963 nonviolent protests in Birmingham, Alabama and the 1963 March on Washington, where he delivered his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

In 1964, Dr. King received the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through nonviolent resistance. In 1965, he helped to organize the Selma to Montgomery marches, and the following year he and SCLC took the movement north to Chicago to work on segregated housing. In 1968, King was planning a national occupation of Washington, D.C., to be called the Poor People's Campaign, when he was assassinated by James Earl Ray on April 4 in Memphis, Tennessee. Ray, who fled the country, was arrested two months later and sentenced to 99 years in prison for King's murder. He died in 1998.

King was posthumously awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Congressional Gold Medal. Martin Luther King Jr. Day was established as a holiday in numerous cities and states beginning in 1971, and as a U.S. federal holiday in 1986. Hundreds of streets in the U.S. have been renamed in his honor (including one in Springfield). The Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., was dedicated in 2011.

If you would like to participate in the planning or receive more information, call the Museum at 217-391-6323 and provide your contact information.



## GRAB A HAT, DON YOUR GLOVES: "OLD-FASHION TEA" AHEAD



The Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum will host "An Old Fashion Tea: Celebrating The Spirit of Freedom" on Saturday, September 23 from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., complete with period costumes, traditional finger foods, and entertainment. Churches and other organizations are being invited to come out and celebrate with us. Organization can sponsor a table on the Museum lawn and all participants can dress in period outfits or simply put on a hat and gloves to enjoy foods and drinks. Awards will be presented for the best decorated table and the table that has the most money in their Museum donation box. There will be entertainment, music, poetry reading, sing along and dancing. All proceeds will benefit the Museum. For additional information and to participate call Jerrie Blakely at 217-391-6323 or 217-546-2138.

## DEMAND, GRANT SPAWNS EXPANDED FAMILY HISTORY EXHIBIT

The African American History Museum of Springfield and Central Illinois is going into the second year at its new home and has welcomed visitors from all over Illinois and other parts of the nation as well as foreign countries. Of the many wonderful comments received, outstanding among them is the request to have more exhibits featuring the history of the Springfield African American community. This request was the driving force for this year's Gala theme, "Early African American Pioneers in Springfield and Central Illinois." As a result the planning committee appointed a sub committee to develop displays keeping with the theme. Elizabeth Alexander, Patricia James Davis and Doris Bailey are identifying Springfield African American families from the 1800s through the early 1900s. Those families with descendants still living in the area are being interviewed and pictures and or artifacts are being loaned to the museum for display. As part of this exhibit, a timeline identifying the first people of African American origins arrival in Springfield and Central Illinois will be presented on pull-up posters. Results of interviews, census and archival research will be printed and mounted on large heavy boards. All of this historical information gathered will be on display at the Gala and will then become an exhibit at the Museum. As this is a dynamic exhibit new information will continue to be added as more families and people are identified. This exhibit is being made possible for display by a very generous grant from the Sangamon County Historical Society.



# Calendar of Events

**MUSEUM HOURS: TUESDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, NOON TO 4 P.M.; SATURDAYS, 10 A.M. TO 5 P.M.**

**Saturday, September 23: *Annual Old-Fashion Tea***, 2 p.m.-5 p.m. Museum lawn. Churches and other organizations welcome to participate.

**Sunday, October 1: *"Echoes of Yesteryear, A Walk Through Oak Ridge Cemetery,"*** Noon to 4 p.m. The Museum participates with the Sangamon County Historical Society to bring back interesting individuals interred at the cemetery with live portrayals by costumed interpreters.

**Thursday, October 26: 6th *Annual AAHM Gala Banquet*** 6 p.m. (reception), 7 p.m. dinner. Wyndham Springfield City Centre, Springfield. This year's theme will focus on "*Early African American Pioneers of Central Illinois*" and will include live music and entertainment, a silent auction, and recognition of community members. For ticket information, see page 1.

**Thursday November 21: *A Greek Christmas.*** Sororities and fraternities come together to celebrate Christmas at the Museum.

**Saturday, December 9: *An Historic Christmas.*** The Museum joins historic sites throughout the city in opening their doors to the community.

**Tuesday through Saturday, December 26-30: *Kwanzaa Celebration.*** The African American tradition of celebrating the year will be enjoyed by all.



A May 20 program on the tradition of quilting in the African-American community drew broad interest from those who pursue the craft or follow its rich history. Early Sangamon County quilts made entirely by hand were displayed side-by-side with today's machine-made versions in a talk and demonstration at the Museum. Check the Calendar for future special programs that help link our past to the present.

**Springfield and Central Illinois  
African American History Museum  
P.O. Box 301  
Springfield, IL 62705-0301**



**MEMBERSHIP**

Members receive membership cards, certificates of membership, and museum communications. Members at the Sustaining level and above also receive invitations to previews, grand openings and special VIP events.

**Membership Categories**

- |  |       |                                      |  |
|--|-------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual    | \$ 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporting  | \$100-\$199                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family        | \$ 50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining  | \$200-\$499                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Youth/student | \$15  | <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing   | \$500-\$999                                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Senior        | \$20  | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Member | \$1,000 <i>includes free lifetime admission.</i> |

- ☐ Business Member \$500-\$999 (includes business listing at museum events)

- ☐ I would like to pay now for three years of membership . AMOUNT enclosed )\$ \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street address \_\_\_\_\_

City, state, zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

Your check should be made payable to the **Springfield and Central Illinois African American History Museum (SCIAAHM)** , P.O. Box 301, Springfield, IL 62705-0301