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Contact:  
Helen K. Thomas  
Interim Marketing & Communications Manager  
Northwest African American Museum  
[hthomas@naamnw.org](mailto:hthomas@naamnw.org)  
206.518.6000 x 108

## **LaNesha DeBardelaben Named Executive Director of Northwest African American Museum**

SEATTLE, WA – LaNesha DeBardelaben has been named the new Executive Director of the Northwest African American Museum (NAAM) in Seattle, Washington. Her 15+ year career in museums has been spent in Michigan, most recently as Senior Vice President of Education & Exhibitions at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit. At the Wright Museum, which is the nation’s second largest African American museum, LaNesha was instrumental in managing successful educational, exhibition, and community initiatives and led the Wright Museum through two valuable Museum Assessment Programs (MAP) to enhance museum practice. LaNesha began her career in museums in 2001 at the National Museum of Kenya in Africa, and has studied museum and library management in England and Germany.

As Executive Director at NAAM, LaNesha looks to enrich the funding, strategic planning, community engagement, programming, profile, and overall operations of NAAM in significant ways. “I am elated at the opportunity to join such a dynamic and important African American museum,” notes Ms. DeBardelaben. “I look forward to working closely with the talented staff, passionate board, and dedicated community of Seattle to accelerate NAAM’s mission-driven growth and impact.”



DeBardelaben is well-positioned to provide executive leadership to the museum. She is a national board member of the Association of African American Museums (AAAM) where she serves as board secretary and Program Chair of AAAM’s 40th anniversary 2018 conference to be held in Hampton, Virginia. She also serves on the national board of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) where she chairs ASALH’s national Marketing & PR Committee. She recently served on the Michigan Museums Association board as well. Ms. DeBardelaben brings vast insights and expertise in museum education and programming, project management, and public relations.

“We have been blessed by LaNesha DeBardelaben’s six-year tenure and many accomplishments with the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History,” says Juanita Moore, president & CEO of The Wright Museum. “LaNesha is a true professional, and we are confident the Northwest African American Museum will be equally well-served by her caring, commitment, passion and expertise.”

While in Detroit, Ms. DeBardelaben received numerous awards for her extraordinary community and professional service, including the 2014 *Crain’s Detroit’s* 40 Under 40, 2015 *Michigan Chronicle’s* Women of Excellence, and 2017 *Michigan Chronicle’s* 40 Under 40. She is a graduate of both the Jekyll Island Management Institute for museum managers and Leadership Detroit for civic leaders.

Northwest African American Museum  
2300 S Massachusetts St Seattle WA 98144

206.518.6000  
[www.naamnw.org](http://www.naamnw.org)

“On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are thrilled to have such a prominent, enthusiastic and experienced leader join the NAAM family,” says NAAM Board President Debbie Bird. “For nearly ten years, NAAM has provided new narratives of the black experience through exhibits that celebrate local and national African American artists. We look forward to the prominent role she will play in shaping our future.”

Ms. DeBardelaben earned a bachelor’s degree in history and secondary education from Kalamazoo College, a Master of Arts in history and museum studies from the University of Missouri in St. Louis, a Master of Library Science in archives management from Indiana University-Bloomington, and is pursuing a Ph.D. in U.S. and African American history at Michigan State University.

“Today, the Northwest African American Museum is embarking on a new journey. LaNesha DeBardelaben assumes the helm as Executive Director of NAAM,” says Norman Rice, NAAM board member and former Mayor of Seattle. “We are proud and pleased to have her wisdom, insights, and energy to move our museum to new heights.” Brian Carter, President of the Association of African American Museums agrees, stating, “LaNesha has been an invaluable member of AAAM’s Board of Directors, bringing her years of experience and expertise to help the Association better serve, and advocate for, the African American museum field. I have no doubt she will bring these talents and skills to her new position at the Northwest African American Museum in Seattle.”

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About the Northwest African American Museum:

NAAM is a nonprofit organization and the only museum in the Northwest dedicated to exhibiting the art, history, and culture of people of African descent. The Museum is housed in the historic Colman School building located in the heart of the Central District just above the I-90 lid overlooking Jimi Hendrix Park. NAAM is a vibrant community gathering place with 19,000 sq. ft. featuring three main galleries, a gift shop, genealogy center, and rental spaces to host private events and public programs. Our exhibits and programs explore the richness and diversity that echo the varied interests of the Black community. NAAM always has something new and relevant to offer the Northwest and beyond.