



**JOHN GILMORE RILEY**  
CENTER/MUSEUM OF AFRICAN  
AMERICAN HISTORY AND CULTURE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **John G. Riley Center/Museum hosts Statewide Museums Conference May 18-20, 2015**

TALLAHASSEE, Florida - Whether paying tribute to the 150th anniversary of the Civil War or preserving significant places of memory like the historic Smokey Hollow community, museums and cultural institutions play a vital role in the engagement, enlightenment and education of the entire community. The Florida African American Heritage Preservation Network in partnership with the John G. Riley Museum will present its 2015 Statewide Conference... **“Places of Empowerment: Redefining the Role of Cultural Institutions”** beginning Monday, May 18th through Wednesday, May 20th.

Beginning with International Museum Day on **Monday, May 18th, 2015** which will be marked by a convening of the Riley Museum’s *Cast the Net Project* partners from North Carolina, Georgia, Virginia and Washington, D.C. followed by a free Community Placemaking Forum featuring Donovan Rypkema and sponsored by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. On **Tuesday, May 19th** there will be a full-day of workshops with something to fit every palette – including the Preservation Partnership Luncheon featuring Culinary Historian, Author, and Chef, Dr. Jessica Harris, who will explore the broader scope of preservation that encompasses the conservation of food-ways, historic traditions, folkways and other culturally relevant customs from Africa to the Americas. The conference will culminate with a distinctive commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation on **Wednesday, May 20th** with the annual reenactment of the historic decree that freed millions of previously enslaved persons. Followed by an unforgettable celebration at the Annual Emancipation & Abolitionist Ball, hosted by the Second Infantry Regiment U.S. Colored Troops Unit and Living History Association under the direction of Sgt. Major (Ret.) Jarvis Rosier. Tickets for the ball are \$50/each and can be purchased online at [www.RileyMuseum.org](http://www.RileyMuseum.org) or by contacting the John G. Riley Center/Museum directly at (850) 681-7881.

The 2015 FAAHPN Conference will highlight the importance of museums as institutions that serve society and its development and bring together representatives from over 40 African-American historic sites and museums to provide learning opportunities for museum professionals and patrons to lead, manage, and collaborate more effectively, while experiencing the unique history and culture of the Big Bend region. The Florida African American Heritage Preservation Network (FAAHPN) is a professional association organized in 2001 by Althemese Barnes, Founder & Director Emeritus of the John Gilmore Riley Center/Museum located in Florida’s capital city of Tallahassee.

FAAHPN was designed to provide a support system through which member museums could improve their operations, gain exposure to important preservation initiatives and achieve the highest levels of professionalism among museum and historic site managers. Today, FAAHPN is recognized as one of the pre-eminent state level, professional associations in its field and is considered a catalyst for an exponential increase in African American historic properties being listed in the National Register of Historic Places. *“This collective effort sparked a movement to reform the mainstream approach to heritage tourism by augmenting the efforts of these underrepresented yet dedicated, grassroots preservationists”* says Marion McGee, the new Executive Director of the John G. Riley Center/Museum. She has witnessed the tremendous economic impact that is being made by persons dedicated to preserving, identifying and restoring African American places of memory within the Tallahassee community and throughout the southeastern United States. The John G. Riley Center/Museum was recently awarded a \$150,000 grant from the Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS), written by Ms. McGee, to replicate the FAAHPN statewide model in three other states (Georgia, Virginia and North Carolina) to bring about change through cooperative work and collaboration among heritage tourism professionals who are poised to serve a burgeoning niche market of African-American tourists.

African American travelers are one of the fastest growing segments in all areas of the tourism industry and represent 45% of the \$90 Billion in total annual revenues generated from multi-cultural travel. According to the United States Travel Association (USTA), African-Americans are more likely to travel to southern destinations throughout the United States than the general population and over 86% of all African-American adults can trace their family origin in the United States to a southern destination.

- African-Americans outrank all other Americans in visiting historical places and museums (17% to 16% respectively).
- Compared to travelers overall, nearly three (3) times as many African-American person trips involve group tours
- African-Americans are more likely to stay in hotels, motels and bed & breakfast establishments than total travelers.
- African-Americans travel three (3) times as often in a rental car as their primary mode compared to travelers overall.
- African-American travelers spend more than \$40 Billion annually.

By any definition, cultural heritage tourism is nothing new, but some of the ways it can be encouraged and implemented within diverse communities are exciting and fresh. The opportunities to combine culture, commerce and community are wide-ranging. In addition to the obvious financial impact, cultural heritage tourism promotes the identification, collection, documentation and maintenance of our greatest cultural treasures and beloved folkways. Likewise, museums offer a protective home for historic documentation as well as the myriad of tools, clothing, artifacts and other objects that define a specific time period and/or culture. Given the substantial economic impact activity generated by the presence of

FAAHPN member museums and historic sites across the state, the upcoming conference is certain to leave its mark on Florida's capital city by broadening perspectives of cultural spaces as empowerment zones for preservation beyond the built environment, to include the safeguarding and perpetuation of cultural traditions, culinary food-ways, and social norms.

The Riley Museum's regular hours of operation are Monday through Thursday, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. and Fridays Saturdays 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. Admission is \$2 for adults and \$1 for children. For more information on the upcoming events or to schedule a group tour, please contact the Riley Museum at (850) 681-7881 or log onto [www.RileyMuseum.org](http://www.RileyMuseum.org).

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