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INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM ANNOUNCES NEW SITE, ARCHITECT

Charleston, S.C.—City of Charleston Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. along with members of the International African American Museum Board of Directors and members of Charleston City Council announced a new location for the International African American Museum (IAAM). The IAAM on the new site, located next to the Charleston Maritime Center, will sit precisely where Gadsden’s Wharf was located during the time of the African slave trade.

Gadsden’s Wharf, the largest wharf in British North America in the late 18th and early 19th century, was built by Revolutionary War patriot Christopher Gadsden, and was the single most prominent entry point for enslaved Africans in North America. It is estimated that 40% of all enslaved Africans brought to North America in this era came through the port at Charleston. The African men, women, and children sold at Gadsden’s Wharf labored on the profitable South Carolina rice plantations, the cotton plantations in the upcountry and the cotton and sugar plantations in the Louisiana Territory.

Mayor Joseph P. Riley, Jr. said, “This spiritual, sacred place, on the land where Gadsden’s Wharf once stood, is one of huge national significance. It is the most appropriate location for the International African American Museum. Now, not only do we have the privilege of building a world class center of excellence, whose cultural and social impact on our nation will be immeasurable, but also we have the privilege of doing so on the very spot where the story began.”

The new site of the IAAM will further enrich the already riveting story the museum will tell. Wilbur Johnson, Chair of the IAAM Board of Directors said, “Gadsden’s Wharf was a stepping point in the history of many African Americans. With the IAAM being built on the exact spot of Gadsden’s Wharf we can again use this location as a stepping point; this time for understanding our past, recognizing those who helped build our country and helping to shape the future of many to come.” He added, “The IAAM will educate, connect and empower all who enter its doors, standing tall in the city that is in fact its greatest artifact.”

The IAAM and the City of Charleston will be re-engaging the architectural firm of Moody Nolan, based in Columbus Ohio, and headed by Curtis Moody, President and CEO. Founded in 1982, Moody Nolan is the largest African American owned and operated design firm in the country. In addition to historic preservation, Moody Nolan’s areas of specialization are commercial, sports/recreation, college/university, pre K- 12 education, healthcare, institutional/civic, retail, transportation/aviation, mixed use development and public safety. The firm has received more than 150 citations for design excellence from local, state, and national organizations. Some of their clients include: Girl Scouts of America, JPMorgan Chase, Ohio State University, Honda of America, and Time Warner Cable.

Joining Moody Nolan’s team in creating the architectural design of the IAAM will be the renowned New York based architectural firm of Pei, Cobb, Freed & Partners, led by Harry Cobb. Harry Cobb

is a fellow of the American Institute of Architects; he served as Studio Professor and Chairman of the Department of Architecture at the Harvard Graduate School of Design (1980-85); he has received the Gold Medal for Architecture, awarded by the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and the Topaz Medallion for Excellence in Architectural Education. He served as the principle design partner to many buildings across the country and throughout the world, including: Library Tower, Los Angeles ('89); Fountain Place, Dallas ('86); United States Courthouse, Boston ('98); National Constitution Center, Philadelphia ('03); Torre Espacio, Madrid ('09); Palazzo Lombardia, Milan ('13); Soyak Krystal Kule, Istanbul ('14).

Ralph Appelbaum, President and Founder of Ralph Appelbaum Associates in New York City, is continuing his service with the IAAM as the exhibit curator. Ralph Appelbaum, whose work includes the Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC, the new Visitor Reception Center at the United States Capitol, Clinton Library, and many more, is the most prominent exhibit designer in the world. All three companies will be engaged in the conceptual building and program design of the new site.

About the IAAM:

The International African American Museum (IAAM) at Gadsden's Wharf will be a unique center of learning where individuals, families, and groups will advance their understanding and appreciation of American History, particularly the role of African Americans in creating the country known today. Standing at the primary site of enslaved Africans' entry into North America, IAAM at Gadsden's Wharf will afford a distinct opportunity to convey the shared and individual journeys of African Americans as part of the American narrative.

- IAAM at Gadsden's Wharf will include immersive, interactive exhibits, and multimedia experiences for visitors of all ages. There will be an active changing exhibit program highlighting such subjects as the *Gullah Geechee Community*; *African Origins*; *African American Spiritual, Music, and Food Ways*; *African American Literature*; and *The Era of Jim Crow*. There will also be family gatherings, music and dance programs, public lectures, readings, and a variety of other learning opportunities for audiences of all ages.
- IAAM at Gadsden's wharf will include a "Family History Center" where individuals and families will advance the exploration of their own personal histories through DNA testing and analysis and research assisted by family history counselors.
- IAAM at Gadsden's Wharf will be a gateway to historic sites in South Carolina's Lowcountry important to African American History including Magnolia Plantation, Middleton Gardens, The Avery Center, The Penn Center, Aiken Rhett House, and the Slave Market Museum.
- IAAM at Gadsden's Wharf will be a national and international resource and a significant addition to the cultural, educational, and economic assets of Charleston, the Lowcountry, and South Carolina.

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For more information on the International African American Museum project, please contact Felicia Easterlin, Project Director at 843.973.3333 or easterlinfs@iaamuseum.org.

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