



NEWS RELEASE

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Tampa Bay History Center Names Fred Hearn Curator of Black History

(TAMPA, Feb. 25, 2021) – The Tampa Bay History Center has named historian and long-time community advocate Fred Hearn as their Curator of Black History.

Hearn joins Saunders Foundation Curator of Public History Dr. Brad Massey and Touchton Map Library Director Rodney Kite-Powell, adding depth to the History Center’s curatorial ranks as they take on new community initiatives such as assisting with research on lost African American cemeteries, revamping part of the History Center’s permanent exhibit galleries, and collecting 2020-related artifacts as part of their *Tampa Bay Stories* effort.

Hearn has a long tenure with the History Center. In 2004, then-mayor Pam Iorio appointed him to represent the City on the History Center’s Board of Trustees. It was a pivotal time, as plans were underway for a new History Center to be constructed along a proposed 2.6-mile Riverwalk.

“I was thrilled that I got to have some input into how the history of Black people in Tampa should be reflected and honored,” says Hearn. “Along with several other trustees, I got to sign my name on a beam as the new facility was topped out. So I’m literally a part of this story.”

Hearn has remained a mainstay of History Center programming, frequently appearing as a guest lecturer for educational programs at the museum. In 2017, he worked to develop the History Center’s Central Avenue Black History Walking Tour, which he led for three years.

“In a way, Fred has always been a part of this organization,” said C.J. Roberts, the History Center’s President and CEO. “He served as a Trustee, he’s led walking tours, and has served as an advisor and supporter for more than a decade,” he said. “Hiring him as Curator of Black History formalizes his ongoing involvement with the History Center.”

When Hearn steps into his new role at the History Center, he’ll start a new chapter in a career more than 40 years in the making.

The Bronx native and adopted Tampa son grew up in East Tampa and graduated from USF. After graduating, he worked as a journalist before being hired by the City of Tampa in 1975. He retired as director of the Department of Community Affairs under Pam Iorio in 2007, a 32-year run.

Soon after, he had a new title: Tour Guide. Hearn led more than 300 tours through Tampa's historic neighborhoods over more than a decade in business.

As a history consultant for the City of Tampa and several private developers, he weighed in on major infrastructure projects including the Encore Housing development and Perry Harvey Park. As a community volunteer, he worked to re-establish his alma mater, Middleton High School, and led the charge to build both the 78th Street Community Library and a new Robert W. Saunders Public Library.

Hearn holds two master's degrees, one in Africana Studies from USF and another in Organizational Management and Leadership from Springfield College. He has two books, "Getting it Done: Rebuilding Black America Brick By Brick" and "It's Your Move!" about the Rev. Abraham Brown, to his name. For now, he's put his Ph.D. coursework at USF on hold and, this spring, he will begin a new chapter with a new title: Curator of Black History at the Tampa Bay History Center.

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Located on Tampa's Riverwalk, the **Tampa Bay History Center** includes three floors of permanent and temporary exhibition space focusing on 12,000 years of Florida's history and culture. A Smithsonian Affiliate museum and accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the History Center includes the Touchton Map Library and Florida Center for Cartographic Education and the Witt Research Center, and is home to the Columbia Cafe. One of Tampa's premier cultural venues, the History Center's hands-on, interactive exhibits and theaters provide an entertaining and educational experience for visitors of all ages. For more information, visit www.tampabayhistorycenter.org.