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The National Public Housing Museum Names Founding Executive Director



CHICAGO – February 27, 2009 — The National Public Housing Museum Board of Directors announced earlier this month they appointed Keith L. Magee as its Founding Executive Director. He was selected following a thorough and extensive search.

“We could not have chosen a better candidate to lead this remarkable Museum forward,” said Fred L. Bonner, Board of Directors President. “His broad nonprofit management and fundraising experience, national connections and passion for the mission presented him as the strong and visible leader that we desire for the Museum.”

Magee comes to this position and Chicago after working on the Obama for America campaign as a Senior Advisor, Religious Affairs, and serving as Senior Director, Institutional Advancement at the Museum of African American History in Boston. He has also served as a Senior Pastor for two congregations in Boston, MA.

“I’m elated that I have been selected to lead the National Public Housing Museum,” said Magee. “We have the opportunity to educate and embrace a significant component of America’s fabric, one that includes culture, race, ethnicity and class, and weaves together a unique tapestry. I look forward to bringing national audience and support, raising awareness, and securing the necessary funding to insure that this American history is revealed and preserved.”

The National Public Housing Museum is the first cultural institution in the United States dedicated to interpreting the American experience in public housing. The Museum draws on the power of place and memory to illuminate the resilience of poor and working class families of every race and ethnicity to realize the promise of America.

The Museum was conceived by Ms. Deverra Beverly, Founding Chair, and a resident of the ABLA Homes, along with Mrs. Beatrice Jones. Ms. Beverly remains devoted to ensuring that the story of public housing is interpreted with accuracy and embodies something that generations to come can take pride in.

“I instantly found Keith to be a very genuine, nonjudgmental and an extremely likeable person,” said Beverly. “I have great confidence that he will further bring our Museum to life. Not only include the voices of the residents, but he will also engage a very broad and comprehensive group of scholars, politicians, community and corporate leaders, celebrities and donors, to understand that public housing is a significant part of American history.”

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Magee is passionate about providing humanitarian aid to children and families and is active in community. He is the Co-Founder of Abba House, a home for children infected and affected with HIV/AIDS, in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa. He is engaging in building an interfaith Chapel with Partners in Health in rural Rwanda. He also remains as Co-Chair of the Governor's Council of Chaplains for Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick, on the board of advisors of the Anti-Defamation League-World of Difference Institute, and on the board of directors of the Legacy Foundation. He is a member of the National Center for Black Philanthropy, the American Academy of Religion and a life member of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Inc.

"Keith is a builder, and embraces the challenge of raising the funds necessary to enable the Museum to expand programs and to open its doors," said Sunny Fischer, Executive Director, The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation and Board member. "He has from the beginning been able to articulate a compelling vision for the Museum."

The National Public Housing Museum is a 501(c)(3) organization that will operate and sustain itself as a new cultural institution. It will be much more than a traditional "museum;" it will be a place to understand policy from the perspective of families affected by those issues – poverty, race, housing, and civil liberties. The Museum will be located in the last remaining building of the Jane Addams Homes, a 1937 WPA building that was home to hundreds of public housing families until 2002. The site will provide over 37,000 square feet to house permanent and temporary exhibits as well as a museum store and other leased retail and office space. Using material objects and artifacts, original documents and oral histories, the Museum will recreate living spaces of public housing apartments during eight consecutive decades (1938-2000). It will incorporate art and music of the periods, the politics and economics, all told through the lives of the residents.

The Museum, which will also house the International Center for the Study of Housing and Society, will be both forward looking and reflective. Its public programs, workshops, symposia and public forums, some of which have already taken place, will continue to discuss the many lessons of public housing and related issues such as housing, poverty, race and immigration, which continue to form the urban experience and affect the communities in which we live. A phased opening of the Museum is slated to commence in 2012.

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