

https://www.nola.com/entertainment_life/article_cd661ca6-2d56-539a-b841-3776b087442d.html

After 6 years, New Orleans' African American Museum set for grand re-opening in Treme

BY SUE STRACHAN | sstrachan@theadvocate.com APR 10, 2019 - 8:01 AM

1 of 4



Kara Oridge, right, executive director of the Amistad Research Center, and Bernadette Gildspinel, center, a programs manager with the center, place pieces on the wall at the African American Museum in New Orleans on Monday, April 8, 2019.

[Buy Now](#)

Advocate Staff photo by CHRIS GRANGER

The to-do lists on the four pieces of bright yellow paper on the wall next to Gia Hamilton's desk are a prominent reminder of what has already been accomplished — and what is left to

be done — before the New Orleans African American Museum in Treme celebrates its re-opening on Thursday (April 11).

The evening event, with free admission, will feature a blessing by Sula Spirit, music from DJ RQ Away and refreshments from Dooky Chase's Restaurant.

Visitors will also experience the debut of "Everywhere We Are, Everywhere We Go: Black Spaces and Geographies," an exhibition that Hamilton, the museum's new executive director and curator, got the Amistad Research Center to curate.

Focusing on the history of Treme, a neighborhood established by free people of color in the late 18th century, the exhibition features photos of Mardi Gras Indians, musicians such as Louis Armstrong and the neighborhood, as well as art and documents pertaining to the history of Treme.

The grand re-opening is a way to celebrate a new beginning for the museum.

It's a challenge that Hamilton is embracing, and one that is personal as well as professional.

“I talk about the museum as a passion project,” said Hamilton.

The mother of four, soon to be five, is raising her children in Treme, where she's lived since 2016. Her grandmother was born in Treme.

Hamilton volunteered at the museum as a high-school student when it opened in 1996, after being recruited by her brother. “He had come back from France, where he had gotten his master's in business, and helped on various projects, such as setting up the books, for six months before moving to another job,” she said.

Her new position? “It's really serendipitous.”

Before joining the museum in January, Hamilton was the director of the Joan Mitchell Center, an artist residency program on Bayou Road, and before that served as consulting managing director of Junebug Productions, a New Orleans theatrical company.

Both gave her experience handling budgets, wrangling donations and dealing with the everyday issues of running a museum.

In May, Hamilton will present “Welcome to the Afrofuture,” which she curated at Art Basel Miami in 2018, and Paper Monuments’ “Claiming Space.” Paper Monuments seeks to bring diverse New Orleans voices to the discussion of public monuments.

Planning for the African-American Museum is done in the museum’s blue administration building at 1417 Gov. Nicholls St., which had been renovated, but never really put to use before the museum closed.

The other buildings include the Meilleur-Goldthwaite House, which faces the administration building, the former slave quarters, three houses and the Passebon Cottage, which was a brickyard owned by free people of color before the Civil War.

The properties stretch back from Gov. Nicholls Street along North Villere Street to Ursulines Street.

When walking through the complex with Hamilton, her excitement about what can be done is evident. But first, the buildings, some in

a state of neglect and disrepair, need to be stabilized. She is awaiting contractors' bids for that and future renovation.

For now, reconnecting with the community is among the priorities, particularly through events such as the grand re-opening.

Hamilton admits not wanting to do more than the museum can handle, but is excited about having robust programming, particularly through partnerships.

"We'll be launching something called the museum takeover that actually gives organizations and/or artists and creatives an opportunity to kind of utilize the museum in creative ways once a month," she said.

The word is out about the museum. Tour operators have started sending inquiries, and a school tour has been lined up. Ideas City conference and residency will start a few days after the grand re-opening. Ideas City, founded in 2011 by the New Museum in New York City, addresses the premise that art and culture are essential to the vitality of cities. The museum will be one of its locations for programming.

Standing outside the administration building and looking across the street at the museum's other structures, Hamilton said, "Like most people who drove by, I was saddened by the deterioration and that there was nothing happening."

But starting Thursday, something will be happening again.

New Orleans African American Museum Grand Re-Opening

WHEN: 6 p.m. Thursday (April 11)

WHERE: 1417 Gov. Nicholls St.

noaam.org

FREE

FOLLOW SUE STRACHAN ON TWITTER, FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM @SUESTRACHAN504.

You May Like

Sponsored Links by Taboola

This Trick Can Drop Your Bed Bath & Beyond Total Instantly

Wikibuy

This Amazon Upgrade is Even Better Than Prime

Honey

U.S. Cardiologist: It's Like a Pressure Wash for Your Insides

Gundry MD Total Restore Supplement

Shut The Front Door! The New Audi Lineup Is Simply Astonishing!

Audi Cars | Search Ads

If You Like to Play, this City-Building Game is a Must Have. No Install.

Forge of Empires - Free Online Game

Louisiana Senior Drivers Who Drive Less Than 55 Miles a Day Are Entitled for Extra Rate Decrease

Insured Nation

Earth Origins Marietta Mackenzie - Womens Casual -

\$80 - earthshoes.com

Our \$5 Wines Are Better Than Most \$50 Wines

Firstleaf

MORE FROM THE ADVOCATE

- Rabalais: Will Tua Tagovailoa's ankle be ready when LSU plays Alabama? An LSU player may provide a clue
- America's Cajun Navy founder John Billiot arrested for felony theft in Lafayette, sheriff says
- Louisiana DA tries to remove black judge from 300 cases over comments alleging racial bias
- Rabalais: Auburn punched LSU's Joe Burrow in the mouth, then he showed exactly who he is
- Mother, daughter sentenced to federal prison in horrific abuse of relative in Amite

MORE FROM OUR PARTNERS

-
-
-
-
-

Recommended by



