

LaNesha McCoy (DeBardelaben)

AAAM Board President: 2019–2022



LaNesha McCoy (DeBardelaben) is a historian, museum director, and nonprofit administrator. She is Founding Principal & CEO of Purpose-Driven Strategies, a consultancy that offers executive leadership to nonprofits. In this capacity, she is Executive Director of BlackPast.org, an online encyclopedia on Black history. She is past President/CEO of the Northwest African American Museum in Seattle where she led innovative programming, crafted a forward-facing strategic and expansion plan with a relevant new mission statement, and elevated the museum's fundraising to record-setting levels. While there, she founded the nation's first traveling museum choir and the Knowledge Is Power Book Giveaway Program that distributed over 25,000 free, new African American children's books. Prior, she was Senior Vice President of Education & Exhibitions at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.

She is a member of the International Council of Museums and has studied museums and libraries in Kenya, Ghana, South Africa, Germany, England, and Israel. She has served on the boards of Visit Seattle, Cascade PBS, Seattle Metro Chamber of Commerce, and the Association for the Study of African American Life & History (ASALH) National Executive Council. She also served on the American Alliance of Museums Excellence in DEAI Steering Committee. She co-chairs AAAM's 50th Anniversary Committee.

McCoy earned a B.A. in history and secondary education, an M.A. in history and museum studies, an M.L.S. in archives management, and an M.A. in comparative Black history. She is a Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Washington, researching the history of race, class, and conflict in interracial women's organizations, exploring how Black women have shaped the story of American democracy. In addition to her advocacy for educational equity, McCoy is an ordained clergy serving as Assistant Pastor at her church where she leads its work in affordable housing. She is a member of The Links, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, The Pierians, the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa, and the International Women's Forum. She has twice been named a Top 40 Under 40, a Top 50 Woman Leader in Washington State, and a Champion of Justice. She has been featured on the Travel Channel's "Mysteries at the Museum" and is a contributing essayist to *The Inclusive Museum Leader* (2021) and *Change is Required: Preparing for the Post-Pandemic Museum* (2022). Never forgetting her roots or the many mentors that shaped her life, she strives to honor their investment through service.