



NAAHBCU HISTORY:

The National Alliance of Artists from HBCUs, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit, was founded during the summer of 1999 on the campus of Morris Brown College in Atlanta, Georgia, by Dr. Lee Ransaw, then Dean of Arts & Letters and Chair of the Fine Arts Department, and 13 Charter Members. The first officers of the organization were elected from this founding group: Dr. Peggy Blood, President of NAAHBCU since 2005, at the time served as treasurer for the newly formed organization, and was department chair of art at Savannah State University; Phillip R. Dotson (Vice President), Professor of Art and Program Director at LeMoyne Owen College in Memphis, Tennessee; Marvette Pratt Aldridge (Secretary), Assistant Professor of Art at Winston-Salem State University in North Carolina; Professor William Anderson, Morehouse College in Atlanta; Professor Hassan Kirkland, Johnson C. Smith University; Associate Professor Charnelle Holloway of Spelman College; Associate Professor Johnnie Mae (Gilbert) Maberry (Historian), Chair of the Visual Arts Department from Tougaloo College; and Assistant Professor Anita B. Knox of Talladega College in Alabama.

NAAHBCU's mission is to bring the Visual Arts and Art Education to the forefront in its member institutions and to keep these programs as institutional priorities for generations to come. The Alliance is committed to providing exhibitions for its members and to fostering artistic knowledge among HBCU art students.

With its partner universities, the organization fosters student artistic skills and providing opportunities for member professionals. NAAHBCU supports the HBCU Arts Act (H.R. 2664), which seeks to strengthen arts programs at these institutions, often considered incubators for Black excellence, and advocates for increased funding to address historical inequities.

In 2024, NAAHBCU celebrated its 25th Anniversary at the Chastain Arts Center and Gallery in Atlanta, Georgia, and at Bowie State University in Bowie, Maryland.

To increase audience engagement and facilitate cultural exchange, NAAHBCU has curated traveling exhibitions on specialized topics.

In 2002, NAAHBCU held its first major traveling exhibition, “Visions from Within”, at the James Kemp Gallery at The Black Academy of Arts & Letters in Dallas, Texas. This remarkable exhibit featured more than 30 member artists making expressive statements through their craftsmanship

and placed some of them on the national stage for the first time. In 2004-5, the exhibition “Visions from Within” traveled to The APEX Museum in Atlanta, The National Center for the Study of Civil Rights at Alabama State University in Montgomery, and the Arthur Rose Museum at Claflin University in Orangeburg, South Carolina. Another important thematic exhibit, entitled “Prevalence of Ritual,” traveled to West Virginia State University and the Nassau County African American Museum in New York. Additional exhibitions have been featured in such museums as National Center for the Study of Civil Rights & African American Culture in Montgomery Alabama; The APEX Museum, Atlanta, GA; The Birmingham Civil Rights Institute in Birmingham, Alabama; and North Carolina State A & T University Museum in Greensboro; and The Beach Institute of African American Cultural Center Museum, in Savannah; all have showcased notable traveling exhibits such as: “The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas,” “Civil Rights: A 50 Year Reflection.” “Bloody Sunday on the Edmund Pettus Bridge” and “Coming by Force: Overcoming by Choice”. In 2022, “Common Roots, Many Branches” traveled to Live Oak Bank’s Channel and Gallery Verrazzano at the ArtWork; Glyn Visual Arts Center, St. Simons Island, Georgia; Delta, Arts Center, Winston Salem, North Carolina; and Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, Georgia. and Rialto Center for the Arts, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia. And, in 2020, “Negritude ” traveled to five states in India: Kerala. Lalithakala Art Gallery, Dubar Hall Art Centre, Ernakulam, Kerala; Bharat Kala Bhavan Museum, Banaras Hindu University; Visva-Bharati University; Kolkata Contemporary Museum; Art and Culture Center of Goa; and Udaipur: West Zone Cultural Center. Following the exhibitions in India, NAAHBCU traveled to Shanghai, China, to exhibit at Harmony Gallery and for Dr. Blood to participate as an invited guest at an artist conference and lecture on Black art at various universities, supported by a grant from the US Embassy in Shanghai.

In celebration of the US's 250th Anniversary, a travel exhibition titled “The USA's 250th Anniversary, Reflecting the Black Experience” was curated for travel starting in 2025 at the APEX Museum, continuing through 2026 from Fayetteville State University, Norfolk University, Virginia State University, and Tennessee State University.

Members of The NAAHBCU include outstanding artists and educators who have since become the backbone of the organization. Among this group are legends such as the late Benny Andrews, who attended Ft. Valley State College and wrote the introduction to “The Visions From Within” catalog; Dr. Leo F. Twiggs, the first African American Art graduate from the University of Georgia in Athens, Georgia; Dr. William Colvin the first African American graduate from the doctoral program at Illinois State University and Chairman of the Art Department at Alabama State University for many years; the late Louis Delsarte; Kelvin Cole; and Dr. Peggy Blood the first

African American to graduate from University of Arkansas, Fayetteville with a M.F.A.; and dr. Lee Ransaw, the founder and Board Chair of NAAHBCU.

The current list is exceptionally long, with more than 70 artists and art educators exhibiting their works. Many NAAHBCU artists have roots in the South and are strongly committed to issues that affect everyone, such as racial justice, law & order, social welfare, education, and Civil Rights. These are dominant issues in the Black community, and the NAAHBCU has delighted in recent opportunities to visually express deep feelings about them.