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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Fredericksburg Area Museum Announces Promotion of Dr. Gaila Sims to Vice President of Programs and Interpretation

Fredericksburg, VA – August 5, 2024- The Fredericksburg Area Museum (FAM) is proud to announce the promotion of Dr. Gaila Sims from Curator of African History and Special Projects to Vice President of Programs and Interpretation, effective immediately.

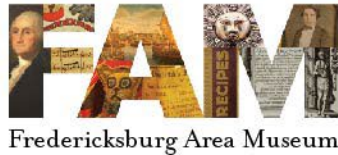


Dr. Sims has been an invaluable member of the FAM team since joining the museum in 2022, bringing a wealth of knowledge, passion, and expertise in African history and cultural heritage. In her previous role, Dr. Sims spearheaded numerous successful exhibitions and initiatives that have significantly enriched the museum's offerings and broadened the understanding of African American contributions to the region's history.

"We are thrilled to promote Dr. Gaila Sims to Vice President of Programs and Interpretation," said Sam McKelvey, President and CEO of the Fredericksburg Area Museum. "Her dedication to community engagement, historical research and educational excellence has made a lasting impact on our institution and community. We are confident that in her new role, Dr. Sims will continue to elevate our programs to new heights to better tell the stories of Fredericksburg's past."

In her new position, Dr. Sims will oversee the development and implementation of innovative programs and interpretive strategies that enhance the museum's educational mission. She will supervise staff in the education, curatorial, and collections departments and will be responsible for major exhibitions, including the upcoming "Living Legacies: African American History in the Fredericksburg Area," scheduled to open in May 2025.

Dr. Sims holds a Ph.D. in American Studies from The University of Texas at Austin, where she completed a dissertation titled "Imprimatur of the State: Interpretation of Slavery at American State History Museums." She also earned a Master of Arts in American Studies with a thesis titled "Mandatory Education: Sharing the Story of Slavery at the Whitney Plantation Museum" and a Portfolio in Museum Studies from the same institution. Dr. Sims completed her undergraduate studies at Oberlin College, where she earned a Bachelor of Arts in History and African American Studies with honors.



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At FAM, Dr. Sims has made substantial contributions, particularly through her work on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the City of Fredericksburg. Key accomplishments include:

- **Creation of the African American History Committee:** Dr. Sims led the establishment of a joint committee comprising representatives from FAM, the community, the City Manager's Office, and other city departments to develop a collaborative approach to African American history programming.
- **Strategic Planning:** She developed a strategic plan with clear objectives and deadlines, ensuring a cohesive interpretive plan for both FAM and the City at large.
- **Exhibition Development:** Dr. Sims oversaw the development of multiple exhibitions including the interpretation of the "Slave Auction Block" inside the Fredericksburg Area Museum, which opened in March 2023.
- **Interpretive Plans and Community Engagement:** She worked with city staff to develop and implement an interpretive plan for the auction block site at the corner of William and Charles Streets, including drafting a Request for Proposals for design teams for a new outdoor exhibit on the corner.
- **Educational Programs:** Dr. Sims collaborated with FAM educators to create K-12 education programs and reviewed and updated city interpretive materials, including the "African American History of Fredericksburg" brochure and the Underground Railroad brochure.
- **Walking Tours and Interpretive Materials:** She built multiple downtown walking tours focused on African American history and made recommendations for wayside panels and other interpretive materials to tell a more complete story of African American heritage in the city.

"For the last two years, I have been incredibly honored to serve as the inaugural Curator of African American History and Special Projects for the City of Fredericksburg. I am absolutely thrilled to take on this new role, and ensure the continuation of our efforts to highlight diverse people and stories at the museum and across the region," said Dr. Sims.

The Fredericksburg Area Museum invites the community to join in congratulating Dr. Gaila Sims on her well-deserved promotion and to look forward to the exciting new programs and initiatives under her leadership.



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About the Fredericksburg Area Museum:

The Fredericksburg Area Museum (FAM) is dedicated to collecting, preserving, interpreting, and sharing the history and culture of the Fredericksburg region. Through its exhibitions, educational programs, and community outreach, FAM strives to inspire and engage people of all ages. For more information, visit www.famva.org.