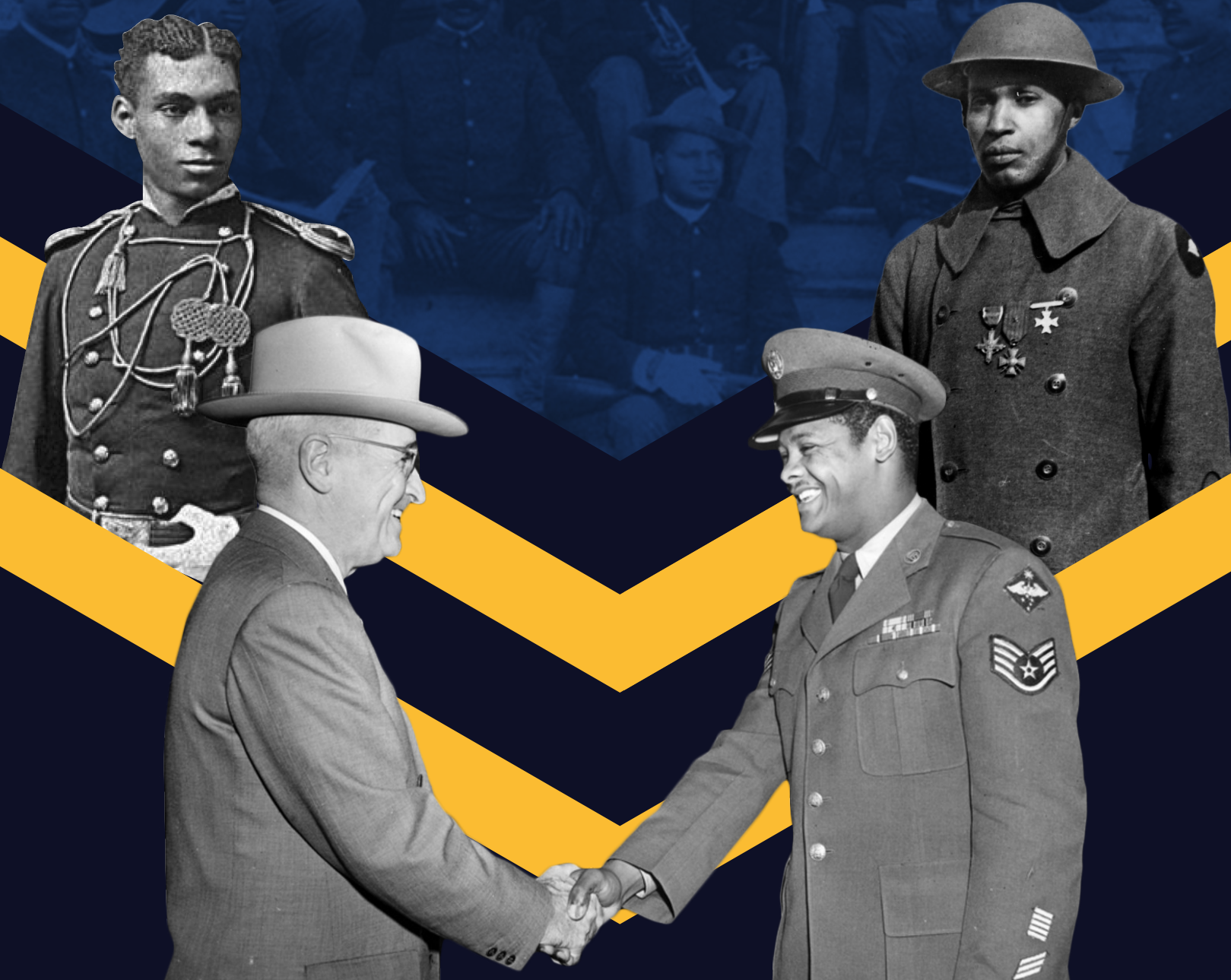




# 2025 IMPACT REPORT







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# LETTER FROM CEO

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As we reflect on 2024, it's hard not to feel immense pride in all that we've achieved together at the Center for African American Military History also known as Buffalo Soldiers National Museum. This year has been transformative, marking new milestones in our mission to honor and preserve the history of African American military contributions. Every success, every partnership, and every step forward has been made possible by you - our dedicated community of supporters, partners, and visionaries.

The Ready and Forward \$13 million campaign has made significant strides, enabling us to expand our programming, renovate our facility, and lay the foundation for future sustainability. These improvements will ensure that the stories of courage and service continue to inspire generations to come. Our collaborations with local organizations have strengthened our outreach and allowed us to extend our educational and cultural impact.

But our work is never done. Looking ahead to 2025 and beyond, I am filled with hope and excitement for the possibilities that lie ahead. We are poised to achieve even greater things as we continue to push boundaries, expand our reach, and build upon the legacy that we're entrusted with. The re-launch and 25th Anniversary Gala in 2026 are just two of many upcoming milestones that will further elevate the Museum and the stories we share.

As we step into 2025, we remain committed to our mission which is grounded in faith and guided by purpose. Your continued support is crucial as we march forward into a year filled with new opportunities, challenges, and celebrations. Together, we will continue to honor the legacy of African American men and women who serve and ensure that their stories remain a vital part of our national narrative.

Thank you for your unwavering support. Here's to another year of growth, impact, and history.

With gratitude and determination,

*Desmond Bertrand-Pitts*

Desmond Bertrand-Pitts, CEO

Every success, every partnership, and every step forward has been made possible by you - our dedicated community of supporters, partners, and visionaries.





# READY AND FORWARD CAMPAIGN

## Where Are We?

We are delighted to announce that the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum's Ready & Forward Capital Campaign, launched in 2022, has reached a major milestone: \$10 million of our \$13 million goal has been raised!



**\$10 Million**

**NEARLY 80% FUNDED**

Help Us Cross the Finish Line!

## Campaign Initiatives



### Enhance the Armory

Modernize and create six new galleries across three floors with new state-of-the-art exhibits for immersive storytelling and a profoundly engaging visitor experience.



### Elevate Archival Capabilities

Safeguard treasured artifacts while offering a public research space so students, educators, and families can access personal and collective histories.



### Expand Reach & Education Services

Forge new opportunities for learning, wellness, and community engagement within our walls and beyond.



### Secure Sustainable Growth

Expand capacity to increase visitorship, broaden education and community partnerships, and strengthen financial stability for sustained growth.

## Establish an Endowment

To ensure the impact and contributions of the African American military experience thrives for generations, we are also establishing a \$1 million endowment, ensuring financial stability and long-term impact.

## Design plans

At the heart of this campaign is a reimagined, world-class visitor experience - anchored by a comprehensive 23,000 sq. ft., three-floor renovation designed by Stern & Bucek Architects. The museum will unveil immersive, state-of-the-art exhibits designed by MuseumArts, bringing the contributions, courage, and sacrifice of these soldiers to life. Additionally, these changes build capacity for community initiatives and educational spaces inclusive of Veteran-Centered holistic programming and a Youth STEAM Learning Lab.

## Make the Vision Possible

With less than \$3 million left to raise to make this vision a reality, the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum warmly invites philanthropists, corporations, and community members to join this once-in-a-lifetime historic campaign.

Your support will ensure the powerful legacy of "these brave soldiers," isn't just preserved - it's experienced, deeply felt, and carried forward to inspire all Americans for generations to come.

## TO JOIN THE BRIGADE, CONTACT:

**Desmond Bertrand-Pitts, BSNM CEO,**  
desmond@buffalosoldiersmuseum.org,  
713-696-9933 | readyandforward@gmail.com or  
info@buffalosoldiersmuseum.org.



## 2024 IN REVIEW

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Through innovative exhibitions and expanded educational programming, every department worked diligently to highlight the legacy of the Buffalo Soldiers and their connections to lesser known stories in African American military history. 2024 was a transformative year that culminated in new partnerships and collections of resources allowing BSNM to grow our reach and community.

### Exhibitions

The Blue Helmets in Action: The History of the 93rd Infantry Division in World War II, explored the history of the 93rd Infantry Division from its roots in World War I to its service in the Pacific Theatre during World War II. Through the cooperation of these soldiers' descendants the Museum was able to develop a fuller and richer narrative to share. This exhibition showcased the Museum's broader knowledge on African American military history, which led to collaborations with various historical institutions.

The Buffalo Division in Action: The Story of the 92nd Infantry Division in World War I and World War II, builds upon knowledge gained from The Blue Helmets in Action exhibition. Community input led to an expanded narrative that included more context of the 92nd Division's history and increased accessibility. This exhibition makes its own history by being completely bilingual for the public, a first for the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum.

### Educational Programs

Significant strides were made in expanding educational programming and partnerships. Our initiatives provided valuable opportunities to enhance learning experiences for students and professional development for educators.

The Summer Outdoor Youth Program focused on outdoor learning experiences that encouraged physical activity, environmental education, and team-building skills. The program's careful planning and emphasis on safety protocols helped create a positive and enriching experience for the youth and the staff involved.

We also hosted our inaugural Summer Educator Symposium, attracting educators from districts throughout the Harris County region. The symposium provided teachers a platform to share best practices, learn from experts, and collaborate on new teaching methods.

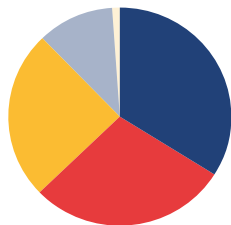
### Archives

BSNM is in the process of reorganizing and restructuring its collections to reflect museum industry best practices and interests. Specifically, acquisitions have shifted from collecting artifacts of veterans to artifacts that aid in the storytelling of the veterans' experiences. As we've amassed primary and secondary sources pertaining to the African American Military Experience, we were able to establish the Center of African American Military History Archive.



# BY THE NUMBERS

## Onsite Museum Visitors



**Total Visitors: 8,315 \***

- Adults: 2,824 - 34%
- Students: 2,418 - 29%
- Seniors: 2,053 - 25%
- Military: 917 - 11%
- Children Under Six: 103 - 1%

**\*NOTE:** The number of visitors does not reflect "Free Thursdays" and other potential days where BSMN sees its highest number of visitors. We are implementing new ways to record this information in 2025.

## Website Engagement and Visibility

**108,051**

Website Views

**49,267**

Website Visitors

## Social Media and Digital Engagement

	Likes	Comments	Shares/ Saves	Overall Growth
Facebook	25.79K	791	2,941	11.83% ↑
Instagram	6,465	138	10	4.5% ↑
LinkedIn	1,185	68	141	70% ↑

**2,278,552**

Impressions Across  
all Three Social  
Media Channels

## Educational Programs

**35**  
**Participants**  
Summer Educator  
Symposium

**53**  
**Schools**  
K-12 School  
Field Trips

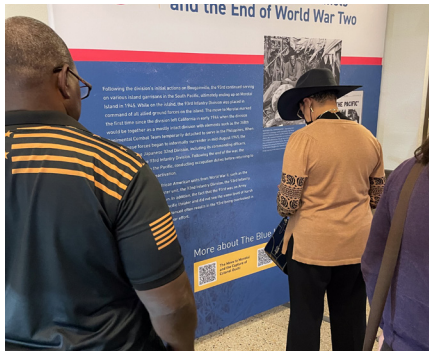
**106**  
**Participants**  
Summer Outdoor  
Youth Program

**800**  
**Participants**  
Living History  
In Person Programs

**25**  
**Community**  
Partnerships

# STORIES OF IMPACT

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## The Blue Helmets in Action

As the first of our exhibitions to follow museum best practices, it set a new standard for quality and presentation, while demonstrating how critical it is to recognize and honor the contributions of African American soldiers. BSNM was the first to create an exhibition focused on African American history in WWII, ahead of the National WWII Museum, whose mission is to highlight all WWII stories. The exhibition's success reinforced the museum's commitment to preserving and promoting these essential narratives for future generations.



## Sergeant Thornton

With the opening of the 93rd Division Exhibition, we were honored to welcome some very special guests to the museum - relatives of the late Sgt. Daniel Thornton. His image was formatted using AI, giving his family the opportunity to see him in full color. Sergeant Thornton was born in 1920 of both Mexican and Black heritage, and was known to enjoy the outdoor western life. He enlisted in the 25th Infantry, Company H., in January 1940. In April 1944 he was wounded by enemy action and passed away from war wound complications in 1946.



## Combined Arms

Since the summer of 2022, the museum has partnered with local Houston nonprofit, Combined Arms, through a food pantry that has served hundreds of veterans and their families. This initiative offers veterans an opportunity to connect with the community and engage with the museum's rich history and culture, some for the first time. For others, it's a chance to rediscover a sense of pride and connection to their service while accessing additional support and resources tailored to their needs. This partnership emphasizes the importance of creating a welcoming environment that honors veterans and helps them thrive.



## Education Symposium

Many educators rarely have the opportunity to teach the history and impact of African Americans in the military. By highlighting the contributions and sacrifices of the Buffalo Soldiers, this event aimed to inspire a deeper understanding and appreciation for their role in shaping the nation's history. The symposium provided educators with the tools, resources, and knowledge necessary to bring this important chapter of American history into the classroom.



# STORIES OF IMPACT

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## **Zolla Gallo, M.C.J., *Educator & Academic Administrator***

For Black History Month, Zolla Gallo and her students visited BSNM, getting immersed in the powerful stories of resilience, bravery, and contributions that shaped this country. Receiving a warm welcome, these students gained an experience that made the past feel real and come alive. Too often and for various reasons, schools fail to teach the full depth of African American history. Gallo's students left inspired, informed, and empowered - seeing themselves reflected in a history too often overlooked.



## **Jason Fung, *BSNM Archivist***

Fung's diligent work in maintaining the Museum's collections and acquiring resources for the newly established history archive have increased BSNM's visibility on local, regional, and national levels. As a result he was invited to provide critiques at the Society of American Archivist 2024 Conference in Chicago and participate in dialogue with the Texas Association of Museum's Collection Managers Committee. These new connections have expanded the Museum's network to resources and industry professionals allowing BSNM to keep up with best practices.



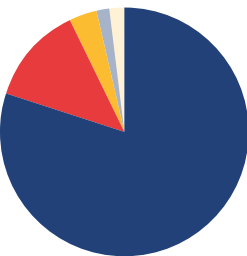
## **Nova Gonzales, *Intern***

Gonzales worked closely with museum staff assisting with exhibition breakdowns, archive arrangements, and social media engagement. Her experience at BSNM and encouragement from the Director of Education, Dr. Michelle Tovar, inspired her to apply to the prestigious Smithsonian Undergraduate Museum Studies Program with the National Museum of the American Latino, where she was accepted. Gonzales' time at BSNM enriched her academic journey and set her on a path to furthering her career in the museum field.

# FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

## Strong Diversification in 2024

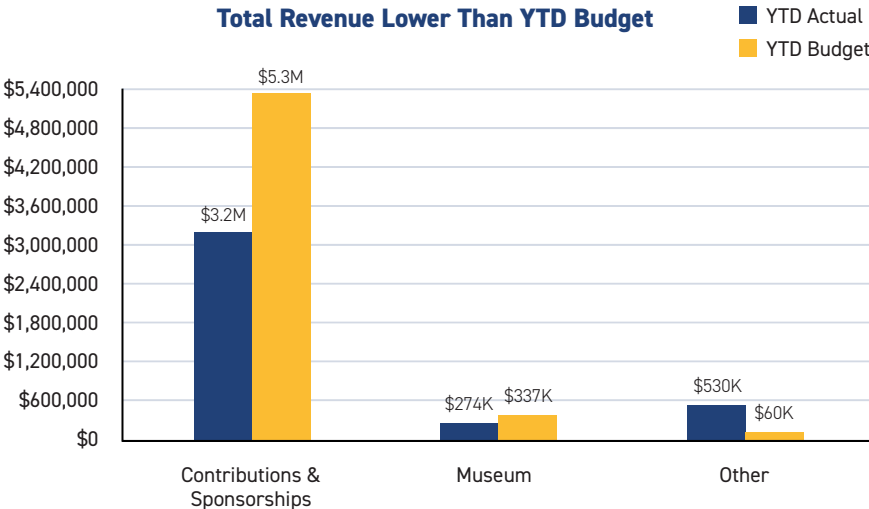
Compared to other small museums, BSNM demonstrates notable strengths. The organization maintains a robust cash position and significant investments in fixed assets, providing a solid foundation for long-term sustainability. Its diversified revenue stream and effective expense management are clear advantages. Although a majority of the funding comes from contributions and grants, there are many different sources for these funds, thus little reliance on one or two revenue sources. BSNM continues its course of revenue diversity which helps stabilize the organization.



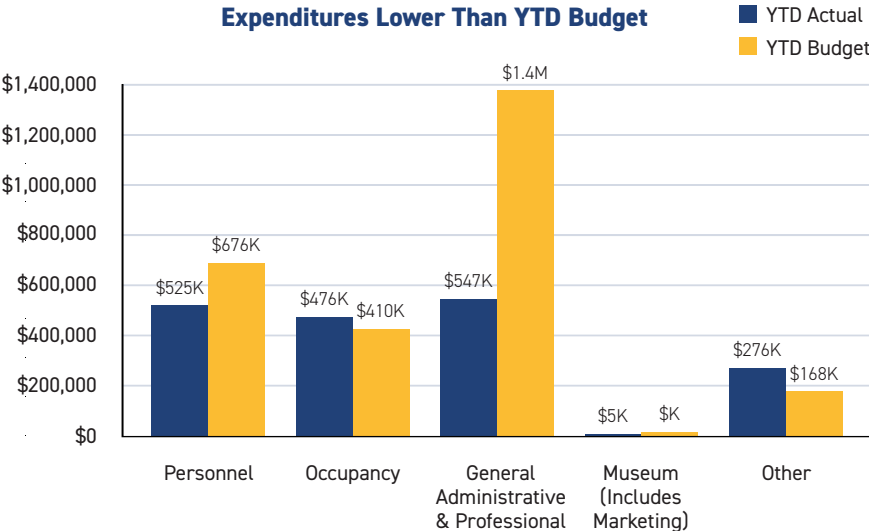
Actual YTD

- Contributions and Grants: 80%
- Interest: 13%
- Rental Revenue: 3.6%
- Rental Services: 1.7%
- Museum Other: 1.7%

Total Revenue Lower Than YTD Budget



Expenditures Lower Than YTD Budget



11.9  
MONTHS  
Operating Revenue

\$4.0M  
2024 Revenue

\$1.8M  
2024 Expenditures

\$2.1M↑  
Changes in Net Assets





# DONOR AND PARTNER RECOGNITION

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## Foundations | Corporations | Local Sponsorships

AARP	Frost Bank	Institute of Museum and Library Services
BIPOC Arts Networking Fund	Harris County Precinct One	Kinder Foundation
Brown Foundation, Inc.	HEB	Midtown TIRZ
Centerpoint Energy	Houston Arts Alliance	Summerlee Foundation
City of Houston	Houston Endowment	Tito's Handmade Vodka
Comcast	Humanities Texas	

## Educational | Programmatic | Consulting Partnerships

BIPOC Arts Network and Fund	Houston Community College	Sheldon ISD
Channelview ISD	Houston Public Library	Southern Polymath Creative Consulting, LLC
Combined Arms	Lone Star Flight Museum	Texas Southern University - Department of History
Contemporary Arts Museum	Memorial Park Conservancy - Memorial Groves Partnership	University of Houston - Center for Mexican American and Latino
Dira Professional Development, LLC	Museum Arts, Inc.	University of Houston - Department of Public History
Emancipation Park Conservancy	NASA	University of Houston - Clear Lake
HISD	Padrón & Co.	
HMNS Native American Grave Protection and Repatriation Act Committee	Rice University	



# MARCHING FORWARD

## Goals For The Year

### Celebrating 100 Year Centennial of Armory

The Houston Light Guard Armory, a three-story neo-Gothic building designed by renowned Houston architect Alfred C. Finn, was built in 1925. It's a Recorded Texas Historic Landmark, a City of Houston Protected Landmark, and eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for its architectural and cultural significance.

The building had fallen out of use and into disrepair when, in 2012, the BSNM began operating there, giving it new life through a different kind of service to the military community.

### Upcoming Repairs & Renovations

In 2017, Hurricane Harvey caused extensive damage to the building, forcing the museum to close some interior spaces for safety concerns and conserve many artifacts in on-site storage units. A recent structural investigation of our facility conducted by Apollo BBC highlighted the cracks and deterioration of steel and stonework in addition to leaks and moisture intrusion at various doors and windows. Our goal is to complete all crucial repairs and improvements so that we can fully utilize and reactivate our facility to preserve and promote the legacy of courageous African American men and women who have played a crucial role in the U.S. military over time.



### Juneteenth @160

In June 2025, BSNM will honor the 160th anniversary of Juneteenth with a three-day festival. This significant commemoration will unite historical reflection and contemporary conversation, spotlighting the contributions and legacy of the United States Colored Troops (USCT) and the role of Juneteenth in Texas.

### 25 Year Anniversary

In 2026, we proudly celebrate 25 years of preserving and honoring the legacy of African American military service. From a vision to a nationally recognized institution, the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum has grown into a powerful force for education, storytelling, and community engagement. This milestone isn't just a reflection of our past - it's a launchpad for our future. Stay tuned for the grand relaunch and year of celebration.





# HOW TO SUPPORT

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## Volunteer Opportunities

Help us elevate our guest experience by becoming a Gallery Guide! We welcome individuals with strong communication skills and who are comfortable interacting with diverse audiences. No experience is necessary to get started.

**For more details please contact:**  
Michelle Tovar, *Director of Education*  
[michelle.tovar@buffalosoldiersmuseum.org](mailto:michelle.tovar@buffalosoldiersmuseum.org)

## Volunteer Highlight

To show our appreciation, dedicated volunteers are given the opportunity to share their connections to the military with the community. In the case of Larry Coleman, the Archive Department worked with him to highlight his family's contribution to the American Revolutionary War as well as to the Civil Rights Movement. One of Mr. Coleman's ancestors, John Redman, was a Dragoon in the Continental Army. The other ancestor was a Civil Rights leader named J.R.Clifford.

## Membership & Sponsorships

Do you want to promote the museum's work and uplift the stories of the Buffalo Soldiers? Consider showing support through membership or sponsorship. Starting at \$35, membership perks include but aren't limited to:

- Unlimited Free Admissions for One Year
- 10% Discount on Gift Store Merchandise
- Invitations to Special Events
- Invitations to Members-Only Events

**For more details please contact:**  
Ethel Grant, *Director of Operations*  
[ethel@buffalosoldiersmuseum.org](mailto:ethel@buffalosoldiersmuseum.org)

# OUR TEAM

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## Staff

**Desmond Bertrand-Pitts, MBA, M.ED**  
Chief Executive Officer

**Ethel Grant**  
Director of Operations

**Michelle Tovar, Ed.D**  
Director of Education

**Cale Carter II**  
Director of Exhibitions

**Jason Fung, MA**  
Archivist

**Michael Ford**  
Bar Manager

**Michael Hayward**  
Facilities Manager

**Kayla Hayes**  
Guest Services Coordinator

**Latoya Henry**  
Guest Services Coordinator

**Lanetra Scott**  
Guest Services Coordinator

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Magnet Coordinator  
Retired, Houston Independent  
School District

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LTC, USA (Retired)**

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Technology Consultant

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**Shad Bogany**  
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American History Professor  
Houston Community College

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PRAIRIE VIEW A&M UNIVERSITY









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