

**Black Belt African American
Genealogical and Historical Society, Inc**
PO Box 971 • Selma, AL 36702 • www.bbaaghs.org
Preserving Our Heritage and Creating Family Legacies

FIFTH ANNUAL BLACK BELT HERITAGE CONFERENCE ANNOUNCED

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Two stories of African American family history – one with links to Canada from Alabama and Kentucky; the other featuring a song memory traced through generations from Georgia to Africa – will be featured presentations during the Fifth Annual Conference of the Black Belt African American Genealogical and Historical Society (BBAAGHS), Feb. 18-19 in Selma, AL.

The conference opens with an evening session on Friday, Feb. 18 at the Larry D. Striplin Performing Arts Center, 1000 Selma Avenue and continues with all-day workshops and an awards luncheon on Saturday, Feb. 19 at the Carl C. Morgan Convention Center, 211 Washington St.

Deanna Bowen, a Canadian descendant of Alabama and Kentucky-born slaves, will be the keynote speaker at the Saturday awards luncheon. An interdisciplinary artist and lecturer at the University of Toronto, Bowen will show her recently commissioned oral history film “Sum of the Parts: What Can Be Named,” about her ancestors who were Black Prairie pioneers of Amber Valley, Alberta, Canada.

Bowen also will discuss a newly-premiered work inspired by Canadian responses to the 1965 Voting Rights March from Selma to Montgomery. Bowen received a master’s degree in Visual Art from the University of Toronto and a diploma of Fine Arts from Emily Carr College of Art and Design. She has received several grants in support of her artistic creations.

A reception and the showing of the documentary, “The Language You Cry In,” will open the conference on Friday. The film tells an amazing scholarly detective story of how a five-line song of a Gullah woman living in coastal Georgia in the 1930’s was linked back to 18th century Sierra Leone in Africa. Wilson Moran, a descendant of that Georgia woman, Amelia Dawley, will

present the film at the Larry D. Striplin Performing Arts Center. Film narrator Vertamae Grosvenor said, "This is a story of memory, how the memory of a family was pieced together through a song with legendary powers to connect those who sang it with their roots."

The registration fee for the entire conference which includes Friday night's opening reception and documentary presentation at the Performing Arts Center, Saturday workshop sessions at the Convention Center and Awards Luncheon is \$35. Reduced rates for students and senior citizens (62 and older) are available.

In past years, the annual BBAAGHS conference has brought together more than 100 novice and advanced family researchers from Alabama and around the country to learn about research methods, techniques and resources, cemetery preservation, family reunion planning, using the internet, DNA and other topics from some of the area's foremost experts in genealogy and the heritage of African Americans in the Black Belt.

The conference is open to anyone and should be of particular interest to those living in or with ancestry in the 12 counties of Alabama's Black Belt region. **For information or to register, visit the website, www.bbaaghs.org or send an email to bbaaghs@bbaaghs.org.**

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