

*Black Agency Executives*  
*Annual Spring Retreat*  
*Salvador, Bahia and Rio de Janeiro*  
*Brazil*

By  
*Valerie Oliver-Durrah*



Black Agency Executives led a 26 member delegation on a return trip to Salvador, Bahia, the most African City in South America. BAE has led groups of black leaders to countries with ties to the African Diaspora to learn more about the country, how they address social issues especially those related to children and families, and to foster professional exchange of ideas and best practices. This year's group, composed of BAE members, boards of directors from several participating member agencies and a number of BAE friends, visited Bahia, Salvador, Rio de Janeiro and Buzios for an unforgettable experience. The tour was organized by Marlene E. Melton, president of African Ventures, Inc. a New York based tourism firm with a focus on Africa, the Caribbean and other areas of the Diaspora.

Brazil participants included: African Ventures Tour Consultant Marlene Melton, Cherine Anderson, Emory Brooks, Melba Butler, Darwin Davis, Lewis Duckett, Irene Farrar, Ernest Greene, Desiree Hardaway, LaWanda Jackson, Dr. Billy Jones, Marilyn Marshall, Dr. Megan McLaughlin, Gail Mitchell, Maria Orengo, Stephanie Palmer, Deborah Palmer-Long, Mary Pender-Greene, Mary Redd, Cynthia Roundtree, Ed Smith, Lenora Taitt-Magubane, Alexis Thomas, Cassandra Underdue, Pat White, Elwanda Young and yours truly.....Valerie Oliver-Durrah.

The Retreat Planning Committee was led by Pat White of The New York Community Trust and included Darwin Davis, president of New York Urban League, and Lenora Taitt-Magubane, director of Prevention Services at Steinway Child and Family Services.

A nonprofit organization, BAE is dedicated to the support and professional development of its members, who in turn promote the interests and values of the Black community. BAE provides training in strategic planning, board and staff management, finance, fundraising, and legal and environmental changes impacting human service agencies. Sessions are open to members and other nonprofit CEOs and managers. Informal one-to-one mentoring also is available to new and seasoned executives.

The group also advocates for government policies that promote the interest, welfare and empowerment of the Black community. Its activities are supported by membership dues, fundraising events, and corporate support. Stephanie Palmer, executive director of New York City Mission Society serves as BAE's president.

Commenting on the retreat to Brazil, President Palmer indicated that *"BAE's retreats are important for building social consciousness and cultural awareness among our members, their board volunteers and community leaders."*