

## IV. Branch Purpose and Relationship with ASALH

### A. Purpose of Branches

ASALH's Bylaws Section 5b states that "...The function of such Branches shall be to stimulate study and to carry on research in local history, and to disseminate such findings to the office of the Executive Director. An annual report of Branch activities (including memberships) shall be presented to the Executive Council at its June meeting."

Branches are as relevant today as when they were created by Dr. Woodson as local centers to promote and recognize the accomplishments of African Americans through vehicles such as Black History Month, his brainchild. Recent themes reminiscent of the past on social justice and the teaching of African American History only serves to remind us that the effort to weave the African American experience into the story of American is ongoing.

We know that a shared purpose is what brings people together, and this concept of community is ASALH's foundation. No doubt, Dr. Woodson recognized the value of communities when he structured the ASALH collective with a National office and a network of local branches. It is believed that Dr. Woodson's Christian faith informed this umbrella structure and the naming of local affiliates as branches. This nomenclature is thought to be steeped in the scripture found at John 15:5<sup>1</sup> which is explained as Jesus speaking to his disciplines to carry the message of the good news. Dr. Woodson saw this scripture as a metaphor for his work as an advocate for fundamental human justice that could be carried out only through community, specifically branches.

Over the years, branch members have honored Dr. Woodson's intent by enthusiastically championing ASALH's mission within their own communities. Ultimately, branches will need to evaluate their strategies and tactics to determine if they will meet continuing needs. As time elapses and torch bearers fade, an important question to ask is: how does the branch help new generations find meaning, purpose, and information sufficient to invest in the mission that inspired earlier generations?

---

<sup>1</sup> John 15:5 scripture verse from the New International Version reads: "I am the vine, you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."

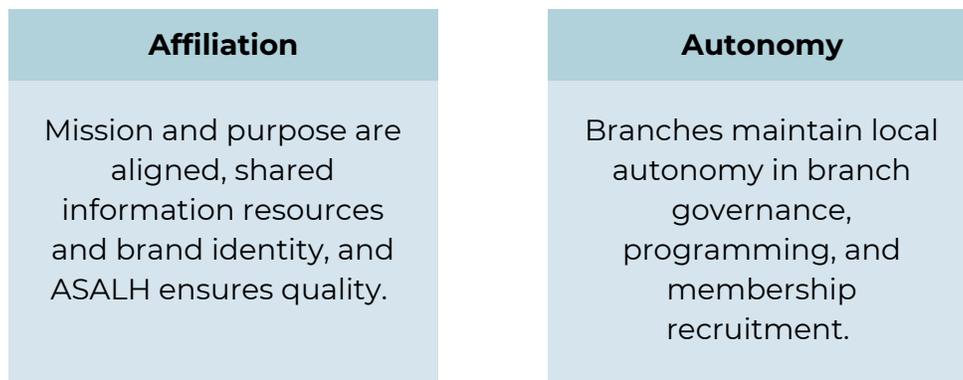
## **B. Relationship of Branches to ASALH**

Branches have both an affiliation and organizational relationship to ASALH.

### **1. Affiliation**

Branches are direct affiliates of the ASALH National organization, aligned in mission and purpose but subordinate with respect to establishing the terms of governance. At the same time, branches have an independent governing body. The relationship, as shown in Figure 1, allows ASALH to extend its scope through the branches, subject to all of its goals, guidance and regulations.

**Figure 1: Affiliation and Autonomy**



## 2. Functional

The functional or organizational relationship between branches and ASALH National is principally through the governance structure established to achieve its shared mission, as shown in Figure 2:

**Figure 2: ASALH Functional Governance Structure**

