THE CHARLES H. WRIGHT
MUSEUM OF AFRICAN
AMERICAN HISTORY

2019 ANNUAL REPORT
THE WRIGHT THRIVES BECAUSE OF YOU.
After nine months of leadership, I look back on a year that has been defined by its challenges and opportunities in equal measure.

First, I must thank Board Member George Hamilton, who stepped in as interim Chief Operating Officer (notably not as CEO) while the search for a new President was underway. His wise counsel and that of our outstanding board have been invaluable. I also express my sincere gratitude to The Wright staff for their patience and resourcefulness during this time of transition.

The first traveling exhibition of my tenure Slavery at Jefferson’s Monticello: Paradox of Liberty opened critical community dialogues about African American lineage, representation, and resistance. These conversations resulted in a renewed commitment to be more responsive to the diverse communities we serve through the creation of the Community Advisory and Advocacy Committee. We’ve also worked hard to ensure that the community has access to The Wright facility at a time of increasing operating costs.

Notably, our programs facilitate the Detroit community’s engagement with leading scholars, artists, and activists from around the African diaspora. In recognition of our work, Charles Ferrell, our VP of Public Programs received the Michigan Humanities Award for best humanities programming. Soon after, our Chief Sustainability Officer, Leslie Tom, accepted the Alliance of American Museums Award on behalf of The Wright for outstanding sustainability programming at their Annual Meeting in New Orleans in May.

Our education programs continue to plant the seed of excellence in young people throughout the region. Camp Africa, for example, served 600 young people (ages 7-12) for six weeks during spring and summer school breaks, with 50% of slots reserved for referrals from social service agencies. This year, we also had a record number of groups of all ages tour the facility.

Though systemically underfunded since its move to our current building in 1997, The Wright has been extremely fortunate to receive major investments from local and national foundations and new opportunities to build its capacity to serve the region. Notably, the City of Detroit continues to make sustaining grants for general operations and capital improvements, and is working with us to finalize a robust new operating agreement for the first time in 20 years.

We have also been extremely fortunate in securing major capacity building grants, allowing us to hire executive-level staff with field-specific expertise and experience in Operations and Development. In October, we introduced a beautiful new website with state of the art security protocols that are ADA compliant, providing a holistic experience for all of our visitors.

A bold new sign adorns our Warren facade announcing a reinvigorated Wright which, with your help, will continue to enhance its stature as one of the nation’s most emulated museums of African American History and Culture. Much remains to be done. However, nothing could happen without our family of supporters like you.

**LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT & CEO**

Neil A. Barclay, J.D.
President & CEO
2019 EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

**JULY**

- **Concert of Colors** - Produced in partnership with several cultural institutions, this 9-day festival unites Metro Detroit's diverse communities and ethnic groups through performances by music and dance acts from around the world. Participating institutions also facilitate dialogue where guests embrace freedom of expression.

**AUGUST**

- **African World Festival** - This free 3-day festival brings more than 150,000 attendees to the grounds of The Wright Museum, making it an important day to increase membership, give guided tours and promote our Museum Store inventory. The event featured poetry, arts and crafts, African drumming and dance, more than 125 vendors, authentic foods of the diaspora, a fashion show and more! Attendees were treated to performances by R&B legend Freddie Jackson, The Clark Sisters and others.

**SEPTEMBER**

- **Grandparents Day sponsored by AARP Michigan** - Designed to strengthen the bonds between grandparents and their grandchildren, this free and fun-filled afternoon has something for all ages including musical performances, dancing, face-painting, museum exhibits, and a health and wellness resource fair for both youth and older adults. In 2018, 400 families took part in this program.

**OCTOBER**

- **The Wright Gala** - This exclusive social event is The Wright’s largest annual fundraiser and is dedicated to supporting the institution’s Educational Activities, Literacy Initiatives and Public Programs. Themed Fashion Night at The Wright, the 2018 Wright Gala was attended by 438 people and brought in almost $364,000.

**DECEMBER**

- **Noel Day** - The annual Noel Day is the Midtown Detroit Cultural Center’s holiday “Open House” with over 80 participating venues including the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History.

- **Kwanzaa** - Kwanzaa is a seven-day celebration of African heritage and values, celebrated with a number of daily activities at The Wright, to encourage people to embrace and follow seven traditional principles. Over 2,300 guests participated in The Wright’s activities during Kwanzaa 2018.
2019 Event Highlights

January

MLK Day Breakfast & Celebration -
This exciting day started at 8 AM in the Ford Freedom Rotunda with a full buffet breakfast, followed by a keynote presentation in the General Motors Theater, by Gloria J. Browne-Marshall, J.D., M.A. Free Museum-wide family activities took place for the rest of the day, including face painting, a live artist, storytelling, moderated youth discussions, educational films and more!

February

Black History Month -
Originally created as Negro History Week by Dr. Carter G. Woodson -
This annual celebration of achievements by African Americans is now a federally recognized observance. Throughout the month, museum staff, in partnership with several community-based organizations, offered several musical presentations, educational activities and entertaining movies!

March

Women’s History Month -
Women’s History Month - The Wright Museum recognizes Women’s History Month with a calendar full of exciting activities and celebratory events. In 2019, two highly attended concerts were held - We Found Hip Hop hosted by Nina Payne & Piper Carter, and jessica Care moore’s Black Women ROCK!

June

Black Music Month -
The Wright aims to explore connections between music and the American Black experience, with works ranging from slavery through modern times. In 2019, the Museum gave away several hundred Black music history books to visitors and members alike.

JUNETEENTH -
Juneteenth commemorations at The Wright symbolize the overcoming of seemingly insurmountable obstacles, the pursuit of knowledge and the determination to achieve greatness. 2019’s Juneteenth celebration had over 300 attendees to participate in a variety of educational activities.

2019 Sustainability Excellence Award Winner
With this award the American Alliance of Museums and the Environment and Climate Network recognizes the CHARLES H. WRIGHT MUSEUM AND MICHIGAN SCIENCE CENTER as a model of Sustainable Programs

Special events & Rentals
MAKE (PERSONAL) HISTORY AT THE WRIGHT.
Whether you’re hosting an intimate engagement party, or a high-stakes business meeting, The Wright offers a range of comfortable environments perfect for gatherings large and small.

Start planning your next occasion: thewright.org/rent

Education
At The Wright, young learners can connect with history through reenactments, interpretive tours, summer camps, and more! To ensure the best quality experience, our tours, classroom talks, and workshops are linked with the Michigan Department of Education’s K-12 Curriculum & Standards in Social Studies, English Language Arts, Art History, World Languages, and other subjects.

Learn more about Education Department offerings: thewright.org/education

Public Programs
Public Programs serves a variety of functions, chief among them the organization and curation of our dynamic line-up of cultural and entertainment offerings. Audiences of all ages are engaged through lectures to film screenings, musical performances, and more.

View all upcoming Public Programs: thewright.org/public-programs
CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS

CAPITAL PROJECTS 2019

• Warren Circle (completed)
• “United We Stand” sculpture renovations (completed)
• Install Safety Bollards (completed)
• Wright Community Gallery, formerly Multi-Purpose Room (completed)
• External Building Name Signage (completed)
• Replace 1st and 2nd Tier Roof (underway)
• Renovate Staff Kitchen
• Replace Accessibility Lift

CAPITAL PROJECTS 2020

• Roof’s Dome/Skylight
• Parking Lot
• Relocate Gift Shop
• Upgrade Information Desk
• Upgrade Executive Conference Room

EXHIBITIONS

UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS

Personal to Political: Celebrating the African American Artists of Paulson Fountaine Press
OPENING DATE: DECEMBER 19, 2019
This free and fun-filled afternoon has something for all ages including musical performances, dancing, face-painting, museum exhibits, and a health and wellness resource fair for youth and older adults.

QUEEN: From the Collection of CCH Pounder
OPENING DATE: JANUARY 28, 2020
Featuring artwork by Africans, African-Americans, and artists from the Diaspora, the pieces on display in Queen are drawn from the personal collection of award-winning actress CCH Pounder, and span a range of styles and mediums. The works in the exhibition are images of women that grapple with themes of representation and the power of black womanhood.

SHORT-TERM ONGOING EXHIBITIONS

The Inside World: Contemporary Aboriginal Australian Memorial Poles
July 27, 2019 – January 5, 2020
Drawn from the collection of Dennis and Debra Scholl, this exhibition presents a number of beautifully designed totems created by indigenous Australian Aborigines.
And Still We Rise: Our Journey Through African American History and Culture
This long-term exhibition serves as the central experience of the museum. The 22,000 square-foot exhibition space contains more than 20 galleries that allow patrons to travel over time and across geographic boundaries. The journey begins in Africa, the cradle of human life. Witness several ancient and early modern civilizations that evolved on the continent. Cross the Atlantic Ocean, experience the tragedy of the Middle Passage and encounter those who resisted the horrors of bondage, emancipated themselves and sometimes took flight by way of the Underground Railroad. Throughout this trip, the efforts of everyday men and women who built families, businesses, educational institutions, spiritual traditions, civic organizations and a legacy of freedom and justice in past and present-day Detroit are hailed.

Ring of Genealogy
Located on the floor of the Ford Freedom Rotunda, is Genealogy, a work designed by artist Hubert Massey. The creation depicts the struggles of African Americans in this country. Each figure is symbolic of an experience, from slavery to present day violence, the hunger for knowledge, the importance of spirituality and the upward mobility of African Americans. Surrounding this 37-foot floor are bronze nameplates of prominent Africans and African Americans in history.

Stories in Stained Glass: The Art of Samuel A. Hodge
The works of art included in this long-term installation focus on three areas of African American culture and history. “Musicians” celebrates everyday people who have exercised their right to interpret the world as they see it through songs and instruments. “Dance and Dancers”, on the other hand, honors those artists who use their bodies as the medium to express non-verbal emotions, themes and ideas. Finally, “Freedom Advocates” is dedicated to notable African Americans who fought and died to ensure dignity and freedom for themselves and their people. Vivid, colorful and luminescent, this exhibition provides extraordinary imagery and stories in a medium seldom used by African American artists. This exhibition was sponsored by The Robert Bosch Corporation.

Detroit Performs!
Detroit Performs!, is a photomontage dedicated to those who gained national and often international prominence in the performing arts. Although a majority of these artists moved here from other regions, especially the south, they claimed Detroit as their own, usually crediting it as the place where they honed their skills. Many of these innovators, John Lee Hooker, Tommy Flanagan and Mattie Mass Clark among them, put unique spins on existing art forms such as blues, jazz and gospel. Other performers, including Aretha Franklin, Juan Atkins, Derrick May, Kevin Sauderson and Eddie Fowlkes, created whole new genres; for example, soul and techno.

Inspiring Minds: African Americans in Science and Technology
Inspiring Minds: African Americans in Science and Technology is a comprehensive, high-tech and permanent exhibition highlighting trailblazers, contemporaries and careers in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. African Americans have contributed to the scientific and engineering output of the United States since the 17th century, and this history is brought to life through interactive computer kiosks, a touch screen video wall, and hands-on activities and play areas teaching basic engineering concepts. Four disciplines of scientific advancement are explored: Physical Sciences, Earth Sciences, Life Sciences, and Technology & Engineering. Within these, Inspiring Minds introduces individuals from across the spectrum of fields, levels of renown, and from times past and present, with particular focus on African American women in science, black aviators, black inventors, medical ethics, and key historical figures.

To learn more about our exhibitions go to: thewright.org/exhibitions
The Wright experience some decline from the previous year as a change in leadership took place. The museum was without a President & CEO for seven months of fiscal year 2019 causing precipitous decline in giving. Our institutional and individual donors were reluctant to give to the museum until permanent leadership was in place. However, beginning with the fiscal year that began July 1, 2019, donors made gifts of $1 million and $200,000 respectively specifically noting the appointment of new nationally recognized leadership. Notably, total revenue for the year ended June 30, 2019 decreased $790,886, or approximately eleven percent from the prior year primarily due to shortfalls in projected revenues from our 2018 annual gala, a touring exhibition that was unable to garner the contributed revenue necessary to underwrite all of its costs, and the sharp decline in corporate giving. Total expenses, excluding depreciation, increased $306,035, or approximately four percent, primarily due to the high cost of a touring exhibition and one-time search firm expenses associated with recruiting and securing a new President & CEO as well as cost related to securing an interim COO while the CEO search was underway. Funding from the City of Detroit (the “City”) remained at its historic level of $1.9 million. Overall, net position decreased by approximately 35 percent, compared to an increase of approximately two percent a year ago. The museum’s change in net position fell by $1,060,134 to $(1,018,940) as of June 30, 2019. However, with the receipt of the $1 million multi-year grant and the $200,000 for general operations received to date as mentioned above, the museum’s net position should drastically improve.
DONOR RECOGNITION

MUSEUM DONORS

The Museum would like to extend its sincere appreciation to those donors who have made gifts to support our exhibitions, programming and special events. Listed here are the names of contributors who made gifts of $250 or more. Every attempt has been made to list donors accurately. If there are errors or omissions, please call (313) 494-5872 so we may correct them. Thank you!

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$300,000 +
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"From the exterior you can not imagine what you will discover inside. The architecture and creativity in arranging the exhibits mixed with the descriptions makes the whole history of African Americans come alive. It has been tastefully arranged tracing the chronological history from Africa, slavery, to modern day achievements”