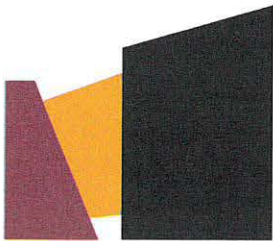


S50B01  
**Reginald F. Lewis Museum**  
2020 Budget Hearing Testimony





REGINALD F. LEWIS MUSEUM OF  
**MARYLAND AFRICAN  
 AMERICAN HISTORY  
 & CULTURE**

S50B01

Maryland African American Museum Corporation  
 Hearing Testimony – 2020

January 22, 2020

The Maryland African American Museum Corporation (MAAMC), known as the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture, is one of the largest museums on the east coast dedicated to the preservation of the African American cultural experience. A longstanding Smithsonian Affiliate, we have a core collection of more than 11,000 objects, artifacts, documents, and photographs that span 400 years of Maryland history housed in an 82,000 square foot building which opened in 2005.

The museum is pleased to report that under the leadership of Executive Director Jacqueline Copeland and her senior management team, the museum continued to show steady improvement in its operations in FY19. In fact, sustaining the growth in all facets of the museum is of paramount importance to Copeland. She is the first Executive Director with museum experience (more than 30 years), and brings years of museum leadership to her role. Ensuring that the museum has a clear vision and focus, that staff and Board are fully engaged, and that the greater Maryland community understands and supports the importance of the Lewis Museum’s role in preserving all of our shared histories, is her primary goal. She will lead the museum through a Strategic Plan that will clearly outline measurable goals for the next 3-5 years, and is confident that the Reginald F. Lewis Museum will be recognized nationally, as one of the main cultural attractions in the city of Baltimore and the state of Maryland.

**Overall attendance** for FY19 was 53,041 compared to 47,580 for FY18, **an 11.5% increase.**

Attendance by category was as follows for FY19 and FY18:

	<u>FY19</u>	<u>FY18</u>
General Admission	19,704	19,819
K-12 Tours	7,042	7,154
Adult Tour Groups	2,977	1,549
Special Events	18,128	17,265
Educational Meetings	642	384
Public Programs (Ticketed)	4,548	1,409
Total	53,041	47,580

There are a number of factors which played into the increase in attendance at the museum from 2017 to 2019. First and foremost was the focus on providing, for our visitors, great exhibitions, programs that are relevant to their lives, and a change in leadership which paid particular attention to keeping the museum sustainable. In 2017 we began our first major exhibition "Maryland Collects", which borrowed artwork from area collectors for our major fall exhibitions. To date they were: *Maryland Collects Jacob Lawrence*, *Maryland Collects: Romare Bearden: Visionary Artist*, and *Maryland Collects Elizabeth Catlett: Artist as Activist*. The 2018 exhibition *Hateful Things* engaged adults, students and teachers in conversations about the racist objects of the Jim Crow era. In addition, we offered programs that addressed concerns of our community, specifically a series of programs called Talks and Thoughts, which allowed diverse visitors to comment on real-time events that are relevant to our community: *Talks and Thoughts: Statues and Monuments Really Do Matter* (the Confederate statue controversy; *Talks and Thoughts: Is Colin Kaepernick the Rosa Parks of his Generation?*, and *Talks and Thoughts: Blackface and Its Legacy in 2019*. We continue the series on February 13, 2020 with the program *Talks & Thoughts: Ego vs. Ecosystem*, which examines the intricacies of the black male vote in America. In addition, since we are a Smithsonian Affiliate, we were able to premier the new documentary film *The Green Book: Guide to Freedom*, which chronicled the experiences of African Americans traveling in the segregated South. All of the above, plus partnerships with local colleges, universities, and museums, work together to make the museum more unique and a destination for our visitors.

**School attendance**, an institutional priority, decreased slightly in FY19 compared to FY18. However, our School Program remained strong. In FY19 we served over 300 educators in Professional Development activities, held our Annual High School Juried Art Show, and our Living History Program in schools throughout the state. We also held a preview for students and educators for the film *The Hate You Give*, and toured students through our exhibition *Hateful Things*. Students explored racist black memorabilia artifacts of the Jim Crow era, and participated in a workshop exploring racial stereotypes and identity with Dr. LaMarr Shields.

**Museum fund raising revenue (revenue)** for FY19 was \$2,037,149 compared to \$2,127,771 in FY18. These amounts are exclusive of funding received from the State of Maryland.

- **Museum Store gross sales** were **\$108,500** in FY19 compared to \$99,300 in FY18 – a **9% increase**. The museum store continues to be a source of earned revenue for the museum as we search products that align with our collections and exhibitions.
- **Special Events sales (building space rentals)** of **\$245,900** in FY19 represents a 5% increase over FY18. The 82,000 sq. ft building continues to be a desirable rental space for individuals and corporations.

- **Paid Membership** remained relatively stable in FY19 as compared to FY18. In FY20, we have redesigned our memberships to provide greater benefits to museum members and corporate partners, providing each with enhanced opportunities to participate in Museum programming and events, in advance of the general public. We introduced Membership cards that include pictures of historical and relevant Maryland African Americans. We have been experiencing tremendous response to both the new cards and the new Membership offerings. Our Membership revenue through December 31 of FY20 is \$17,460, an increase of 6.5% over the same period in FY19.
- **Our social media** presence was expanded and redefined towards the end of FY19 and into FY20 to reach a broader Maryland audience.
- **Maryland Collects exhibition series** continues to be extremely successful. In 2019 the exhibitions *Maryland Collects: Romare Bearden: Visionary Artist*, November 10, 2018 - March 3, 2019, followed the FY18 exhibition, *Maryland Collects: Jacob Lawrence*. These exhibitions were made possible solely on the loan of artworks by area collectors. The exhibitions attracted diverse audiences and were favorably reviewed by the Baltimore Sun, the Baltimore Times, the Afro, Bmore Art, and various other media outlets.
- **Digitizing the collection** and making it visible and accessible online, continues to be a priority for the Museum. When we debuted our website **Online Collections Portal** in early 2019, we began with 1,092 objects available for viewing. At the close of **FY19 we had 6,485 records online**, an invaluable tool for our online visitors, scholars and researchers. We are one of only a few African American museums to have a searchable collections database online.
- **Energy Efficiency.** The Museum continues to adhere to its policy of energy efficiency in partnership with BGE's Green Initiative.

In FY19, the museum continued to increase its partnerships with corporations, cultural and community organizations. Our annual Children's Book Fair, held in May 2019, featured authors and illustrators of African American children's books, partnerships with the Enoch Pratt Free Library, and attracted 1,272 visitors. A rotating series of exhibitions curated by local photographer Joe Giordano *Reflections of Baltimore* showcased new Baltimore-based artists, including six painters from MICA, experimental artists Wickerham & Lomax, and Baltimore street photographers who showcase their work on Instagram. In the first two quarters of FY19, we established a year-long "Health and Wellness" partnership with Kaiser Permanente, and Bank of America became the sole corporate sponsor of our major fall special exhibition, *Romare Bearden: Visionary Artist*. In conjunction with that exhibition, a book talk on Bearden and a dramatic presentation on Homer's *Odyssey* by Morgan State University's Theater Morgan attracted nearly 200 visitors. Earlier in FY19 we held an exhibition, *Hateful Things*, which garnered the attention of press and captivated school audiences. Educator and OSI Community

Fellow Dr. LaMarr Shields facilitated education workshops for teens on negative stereotypes in connection with *Hateful Things*. About 600 students participated. In partnership with 21st Century Fox, the museum invited 200 students and teachers to view the movie “The Hate You Give.” A partnership with University of Maryland, College Park enabled the museum to install an exhibition *Black Women: Image & Perception in Popular Culture*. The exhibition unpacked the stereotypical imagery of black females that continue to exist in popular culture. Our annual Kwanzaa celebration on December 29, 2018 had 1,639 visitors in attendance. Programs such as these have allowed the museum to be flexible and responsive to contemporary topics and establish itself as a place for safe and open dialogue and discussion. A highlight of FY19 programming was our 11<sup>th</sup> Annual High School Juried Art Show which included an exhibition of works by 22 high school students from 7 counties across Maryland (Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, Howard County, Prince George’s County, Montgomery County, and Carroll County).

We are proud that the Reginald F. Lewis Museum has continued to make significant progress in FY19, increasing the upward trajectory established in FY18. Our continuing efforts revolve around a focused plan to address issues facing many 21<sup>st</sup> century cultural institutions. The plan involves:

- ***Fiscal Management & Compliance*** - by displaying and maintaining sound fiscal responsibility, and achieving regulatory compliance practices;
- ***Advancement*** - by promoting financial development and backing among corporations, foundations and individuals supportive of the mission;
- ***Education & Scholarship*** - by creating a compelling history and interpretive experience for visitors through scholarly exhibitions that appeal to the non-specialist, and broad appealing public programs that expand the notion of Maryland’s African American history, art and culture for diverse audiences;
- ***Community Engagement*** - by strengthening community partnerships with local constituents and national stakeholders;
- ***Branding & Positioning*** - by developing new marketing strategies that support the vision statement and promote cultural branding through the development of unique exhibitions and creative programs.

The museum believes in strong partnerships as we manage towards success. Partners include Kaiser Permanente, Bank of America, M& T Bank, T. Rowe Price, the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance (GBCA), the Smithsonian Institution, Visit Baltimore, the Bloomberg Fellowship Program, the Baltimore Orioles, Arts Every Day, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), the Maryland Historical Society, The Walters Art Museum, The Baltimore Museum of Art, Towson University, Johns Hopkins University, University of Maryland College Park, the Jewish Museum of Maryland, University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), Morgan State

University, Galerie Myrtis, the Enoch Pratt Free Public Library, and a host of local community artists and activists.

We are grateful for the Board of Directors unwavering commitment to the Museum's success, and the elected representatives of this great state, who have remained stalwart. The State's continued recognition of us as Maryland's premier museum dedicated to the history and culture of African Americans resonates as an edifice of pride and community achievement.

In closing, I would be remiss in not pointing out that our 2019 exhibition *Elizabeth Catlett: Artist as Activist* was selected as one of the 10 Best exhibitions of 2019 by BmoreArt Magazine. A few days ago, on our annual celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, we offered a Visual Reality (VR) experience for our visitors. By donning goggles, visitors experienced being a part of the 1968 Sanitation Workers Strike at which Dr. King spoke, the day before his assassination. It is innovative experiences like this that allow our visitor to not only learn about history, but to be in the center of history that make the Lewis museum a unique and important museum with the state and nation. Our MLK Day celebration was featured on the front page of The Baltimore Sun newspaper on Tuesday, January, 21, 2020. A copy is provided with this testimony.

We are thankful to the State of Maryland for its past support and look forward to continued support through future State allocations.

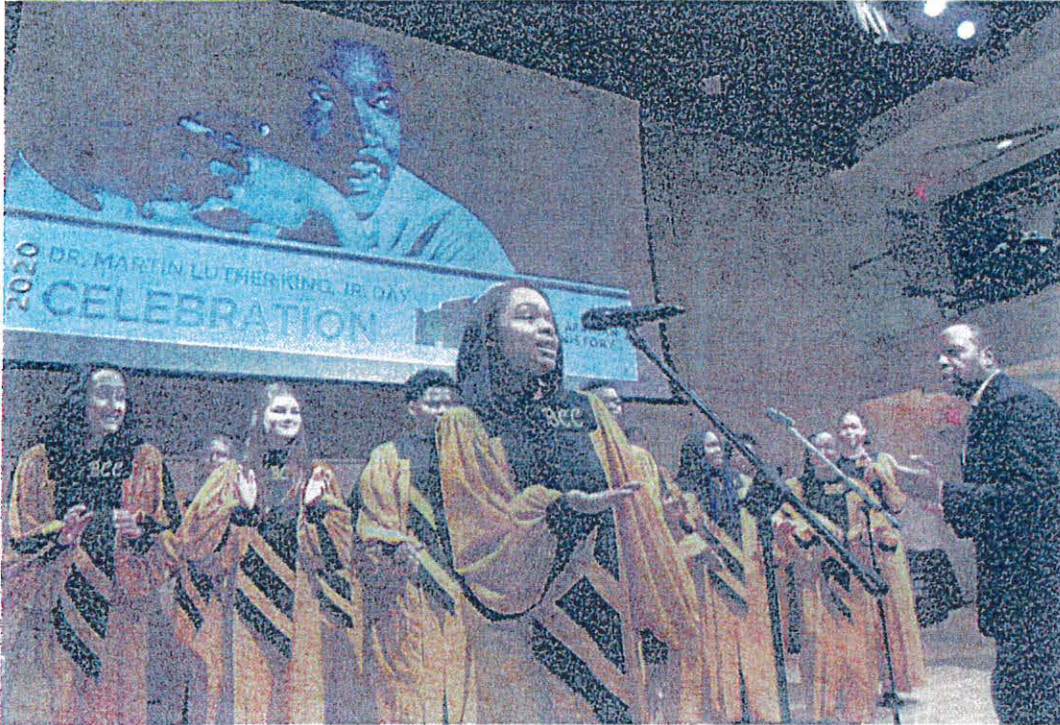
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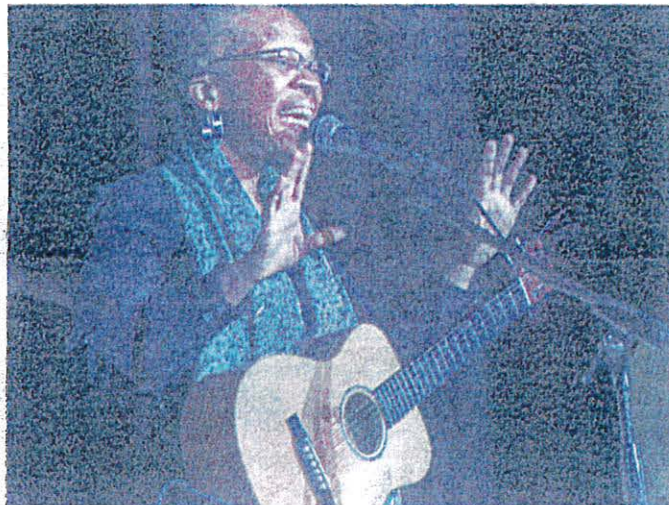
## PICTURING MARYLAND



AMY DAVIS/BALTIMORE SUN

## HONORING MLK'S LEGACY

Above, the Baltimore City College Choir, directed by Marcus Smith performs at the Reginald Lewis Museum on Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The museum also featured the "I Am a Man" Civil Rights Movement virtual reality project that was created by Derek Ham, an assistant professor of graphic design at North Carolina State University in collaboration with the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. One museumgoer said the VR experience had him feeling "all the pain" of the day King was assassinated. At right, Carroll Community College and the Carroll Arts Center sponsored a musical tribute to King performed by artist LEA. See story on NEWS PG 2.



DOUG KAPUSTIN/FOR BALTIMORE SUN MEDIA



AMY DAVIS PHOTOS

Dedrick Asante, 46, of Columbia, right, participates in a virtual reality experience of the day that Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis by watching "I Am A Man," one of the events at the Reginald Lewis Museum on Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

## VR experience 'one of the most powerful things I've ever done'

Exhibit at Baltimore's Lewis Museum drops viewers into civil rights movement.

BY MARY CAROLE MCCAULEY

Dedrick Asante's virtual reality headset made the scene outside Memphis' Lorraine Motel seem so real, so vivid, it was hard to believe the events he was seeing weren't unfolding at that very moment.

He wanted to run across that crumbling parking lot, to where the Rev. Martin Luther King stood on the balcony and yell a warning to go back inside before it was too late — even though Asante knew that in fact, it was more than 51 years too late. Then he heard a shot ring out, and Asante's goggles went black.

"That's one of the most powerful things I've ever done," Asante, 46, of Columbia said after completing the 15-minute, immersive virtual reality experience that took participants to the scene of the assassination on April 4, 1968.

The "I Am a Man" Civil Rights Movement virtual reality project was created by Derek Ham, an assistant professor of graphic design at North Carolina State University in collaboration with the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. The experience was among the activities offered as part of the Reginald Lewis Museum's MLK Day Celebration.

"I know a lot about the civil rights movement, but that had me thinking new things and feeling new things," Asante said. "I knew he was about to be killed. I could feel all the pain and rage of that day."

Hundreds of events honoring King's legacy were held Monday throughout Maryland. Activities ranged from volunteering at local charities to a public call by Sonja Santelises, CEO of the Baltimore City Public Schools, and other education officials urging legislators to adopt the so-called Kirwan Commission's recommendations for improving Maryland's



Asante with one of his daughters, Ella Asante, 5, recounts his virtual reality experience of the day that Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis.

public schools.

But perhaps no organization sponsored more events than the Lewis, Maryland's largest museum of African American history and culture. More than 1,200 people were expected to attend, according to Jackie Copeland, the museum's executive director.

The virtual reality experience was new to the Lewis this year, and Copeland said it might have the greatest impact on kids, for whom the events of 1968 can seem unimaginably distant.

For instance, Asante's 8-year-old daughter, Jemison, participated in a slightly less intense VR experience that featured stories of discrimination experienced by African Americans who traveled through the South during the Jim Crow era.

"I felt like I was part of it," Jem said. "Sometimes when people talk, they don't say the whole truth about what happened. But it's harder to lie when you see it happening right in front of you."

Also new for the Lewis' 2020 King Day celebration was a booth in which participants recorded oral histories of personal struggles against injustice.

"A lot of folks who participated in the

civil rights movement are getting up in age," Copeland said. "If we don't collect their experiences now, they'll be lost for good."

Joyce Dennison, 78, of Baltimore stood before the cameras and described her efforts to integrate the Northwood Plaza Shopping Center in the mid-1960s. At the time, Dennison said, African Americans "were allowed inside the shopping center. But we couldn't try on any of the clothes or go to the movie theater."

She told her interviewer that she and about 20 of her fellow students at Morgan State University received two months of training in nonviolent protest techniques before attempting to desegregate the strip mall. The protesters were taught not to respond to even extreme provocation.

"Sometimes, you got coffee poured on you," she said. "Sometimes, you got spit on. You just gritted your teeth and tried to bear in mind that your purpose was to gain equal treatment and civil rights."

A different perspective on history was provided by author Sharon Langley, who read from her new picture book, "A Ride to Remember," which chronicles the outcome of the contested effort to integrate Gwynn Oak Park. Written with Amy Nathan, the book tells the story of how the author became the first black child to ride the famous carousel there on integration day, Aug. 28, 1963.

At the time, Sharon was one month shy of her first birthday — too young to retain memories of her historic ride. But for the next several decades, she listened as family members told and retold the story of that day. Now, more than half a century later, Langley still loves merry-go-rounds. They have no beginning and no end, she writes in her book. There are no leaders and no one gets left behind.

"Fighting for social change was one of the values that was important to our family," she said. "The park was integrated on the same day that Dr. King led his famous march on Washington. My ride symbolized that his ideals were starting to come true."





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