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INTRODUCTION

This annual report recaps a phenomenal year for the African American Cultural & Historical Museum. While it did not end as we envisioned a year ago, AACHM has taken giant strides forward to permanency and expanded outreach throughout our community.

The start of 2020 brought with it hopes for new horizons, and the reality of unprecedented challenges. In response to public health restrictions due to COVID-19, AACHM has regrouped to increase its virtual presence and build its collection. Based on public health recommendations and consistent with other museums, schools and universities face-to-face events were cancelled and scheduled to resume in late spring of 2021 pending lifting of public health restrictions. Following a Legacy Donor sneak peek event in March, the museum on 1528 Pontiac Trail was closed for the remainder of the year due to COVID.

The AACHM Board and committees held Zoom meetings throughout the year. As you will see in this annual report AACHM has increased its activities and applied all that it has learned in the decades since the inception of the museum to expand our reach and to establish a vibrant and permanent presence to serve our community and accommodate continuing growth. If you have been able to join some of our virtual events – thank you. If not, please watch for more AACHM activities in the coming weeks.
“The Year of 2020 would be the year of perfect vision,” some predicted. With the year 2020 behind us, I can see that “It was the worst of times, it was the best of times, and still we rise.”

It was the worst of times. In March of 2020 just weeks after the AACHM “Sneak Peek” opening, the COVID-19 pandemic shut down the economy. Words like “unprecedented,” “unanticipated,” “uncertainty” rolled off lips with ease and trepidation as the losses of life and livelihood mounted. In the midst of the raging pandemic, racial hatred pressed its knee on the neck of the innocent gave way to global Black Lives Matter protests.

After a period of quarantine, we re-emerged in a new “Zoom world.” The period of isolation challenged us to re-enVision ourselves as a museum in the virtual space. We tore down mental walls and began to stretch our wings.

It was the best of times. Joining forces with our community partners, Kerrytown Concert House, the Ann Arbor District Library, Mentor2Youth, All Things, Artistic Ministries, Inc., Black Men Read, the League of Women Voters, we began to soar.

And still we rise. The year 2020 was the worst of times and the best of times and still we rise, to meet new challenges, stretch our vision building on successes wrought in the struggle and triumphs of 2020. We are united, strong, energized and focused on our mission to research, collect, preserve and exhibit cultural and historical materials about the life and work of African Americans in Washtenaw County.

In 2021, look forward to virtual Underground Railroad Tours, publications, virtual and in-person collections and events, the return of our annual fundraiser, enhanced technology, and yes, Kwanzaa 2021 Community Celebration. Stay connected and stay tuned. With your continued support, the best is yet to come.

This has been a year unlike any other. The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted communities across the world, which in return has forced many businesses and organizations to alter their strategies. As you have all had to pivot, so has the AACHM. During this tumultuous time, we have had to figure out how we are going to continue carrying out our Mission to gather and share the stories, images, artifacts and documents which preserve the history of African Americans in Washtenaw County, as well as focusing on our Vision to be a visible, vibrant presence in the community.

Our 2020 Annual Report is a snapshot of our accomplishments, past programs and activities, upcoming plans and events, as well as some of our future plans. Thank you for sharing these moments with us and for your continued support of the African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County.
MISSION VALUES VISION

**Mission:** to research, collect, preserve and exhibit cultural and historical materials about the life and work of African Americans in Washtenaw County.

**Vision:** The African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County will be a visible, vibrant presence in the community.

**Values:**
- **Authentic**
  
  It is our desire to present an authentic experience with trained, dedicated and knowledgeable volunteers and staff.

- **Accountable**

  Acknowledging our community roots, and strong volunteer base we strive to be relevant, accurate and professional in our work, our exhibits, our programming and to engage our members in meaningful ways.

- **Inclusive**

  We believe in being a community asset for all residents of Washtenaw County and beyond with a lens for equality, justice and inclusivity.

The AACHM was established by 23 founding members in 1993 to document, collect, preserve and share African American history in this community. More about our history on page 6.
OUR HISTORY

On February 6, 1993, Dr. Margaret Burroughs, a co-founder of the DuSable Museum in Chicago, was the guest speaker at the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. Delta Psi Omega Chapter Founders Day. She challenged everyone in the room to document and preserve the history of the African American community of Ann Arbor, Ypsilanti and surrounding areas. From that challenge the African American Cultural & Historical Museum was born. Dr. Charles Wright, founder of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History in Detroit visited Ann Arbor and helped with initial planning. In 1996 AACHM received 501(c)(3) status and rented its first office space at New Center on Main Street. In 1997, The Mosaic Foundation extended a $10,000 challenge grant to the museum for strategic planning and development.

FOUNDING MEMBERS
The AACHM was established by 23 founding members in 1993 to document, collect, preserve and share African American History in Washtenaw County.

*Passed On

LETITIA BYRD*
BAMIDELE DEMERSON
GLORIA J. EDWARDS
WILLIE M. EDWARDS*
CHERYL ERVIN
MARTHA GRAHAM*

JOANNE HALL*
JOYCE M. HUNTER
EARL W. JACKSON
LOLA M. JONES
NJOKI KAMUYU
In 2005 AACHM administrative offices were moved from New Center to the David R. Byrd Center at 3261 Lohr Road in Ann Arbor. The Byrd Center is a farmhouse built in 1830 in what is now Pittsfield Township, and restored by African American architect David Byrd and his wife Letitia Byrd.

The AACHM was a key partner in extensive research on nineteenth-century antislavery activism and African American community life with the University of Michigan Arts of Citizenship Program in 1999. The research was the foundation for the AACHM’s Journey to Freedom: an Underground Railroad Guided Bus Tour of Washtenaw County. Journey to Freedom, was accepted as an official member in the US Department of Interior, National Park Service, National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program in 2004. The research also produced an exhibit called Midnight Journey that tells the story of the Underground Railroad in Michigan. It was recently on display at Grand Valley State University for the annual Michigan Freedom Trail Commission Conference.
2020 PROGRAMS, EVENTS, AND ACTIVITIES

PROGRAM OUTREACH AT AADL
AACHM president/CEO made a presentation about the museum at the Ann Arbor District Library, Westgate Branch on February 23, 2020.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH
We had over 100 attendees at a film screening of “Harriet” (photo above) at the Michigan Theatre on February 16, 2020.

UNDERGROUND RAILROAD TOUR

THE LIBERTY AWAKES EXHIBIT
The “Liberty Awakes” exhibit celebrates the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment and the formation of the League of Women Voters. AACHM worked with the League to highlight the role of African-American women in the Suffrage Movement. The exhibit will be touring area libraries during the year.
Just before the COVID stay-in-place orders were issued in Michigan AACHM hosted a sneak-peek for Legacy Donors at the newly restored 1528 Pontiac Trail site. The site was closed soon thereafter due to COVID restrictions.
Again, this year, AACHM and Kerrytown Concert Hall hosted jazz with Athena Johnson. This popular event was held virtually and streamed live.

Blue Skies: A Jazzy Afternoon with Athena Johnson
Athena Johnson (vocalist), Ibrahim Jones (bass), Eric Joe (drums), and Derrick Benford (piano/keys)

The “Journey to Freedom” Underground Railroad Tour carried on with COVID restrictions and with public health cautions. This event was another in our popular series of tours of Underground Railroad sites in the area.
AACHM ANNUAL REPORT 2020

LIVING ORAL HISTORY
PHASE VII

November 8, 2020

The African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County in collaboration with the Ann Arbor District Library launched Phase VII of our Living Oral History Project on November 8, 2020. Excerpts were shared from interviews with William Hampton, Thekla Mitchell, David Rutledge, Don Simons and Harold Simons.

The Living Oral History program is a partnership between the African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County and the Ann Arbor District Library. The Living Oral History collection includes 60 interviews.

The full Living Oral History Project Exhibit includes materials from AADL’s Community Collections about six major topics important to African American communities in Washtenaw County: Community Centers, Education, Housing, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Faith.

The oral histories added to the collection and launched with a live Zoom Q&A on November 8. More than 60 participants logged into Zoom for the premiere session. Thank you to each history provider for sharing your story.

Illustrations by James Rocker
IN THEIR OWN WORDS

40 years ago, Historian and EMU Professor A.P. Marshall interviewed dozens of leaders in Ypsilanti’s African American community, seeking to preserve the stories and struggles of a generation who lived through the Great Depression, WWII, and the Civil Rights movement. The online archive features the recording with a full transcript, annotations and photographs.

Presented in partnership between the African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County and the Ypsilanti District Library this exhibit was made possible in part by the Michigan Humanities Council, an affiliate of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

The In Their Own Words - Voices from the Past collection contains 38 interviews.

A.P. MARSHALL

A.P. came to Eastern Michigan University in 1969 and retired in 1980. In that time he taught library science and served as the director of Eastern Michigan University’s library as well as the Dean of Academic Services. He was involved in the Ypsilanti Rotary Club, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity, Ypsilanti-Willow Run Branch of the NAACP and Brown Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, for which he wrote a history.

VOICES OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

In partnership with Comcast, Voices of the Civil Rights Movement (an electronic kiosk) has traveled throughout our community allowing visitors to see, hear and add their own stories of the struggle for civil rights.
STORIES OF ANTI-BLACK RACISM

The Ann Arbor District Library and AACHM are collecting Stories of Anti-Black Racism. Although painful to tell these stories are part of the historical record of our era and are being preserved to assist future historians in learning about the times in which we live.

FOCUS ON THE ARTS-
LOCAL AUTHOR
DEBBIE TAYLOR
November 22, 2020

In another of AACHM’s “Meet the Author” events, children and young adult book author Debbie Ann Taylor was featured. Taylor is a picture book author and magazine writer with a special interest in historical fiction. Her work has been published in children’s magazines including Spider, Cricket, New Moon and Pockets Magazine.

Taylor’s next book about the Ann Arbor French Dukes will be published in 2021.
AACHM took on the challenge to design and conduct a virtual Kwanza Celebration for 2020. The week-long family event was designed to celebrate the heritage, traditions and culture of African Americans. It was a collaborative effort between AACHM and several community partners: Mentor2Youth, Black Men Reads (BMR), and All Things Artistic Ministries, Inc. (ATAMI).

Each day of the week-long Kwanzaa Celebration began and ended with drumming by Tariq; inspiring even the youngest of celebrants to drum along.
Grants received by AACHM include the following:

Welcome Program Administrator: RETA GOLIDY

Reta Golidy is the AACHM Program Administrator, funded through a generous grant from the James A and Faith Knight Foundation. Ms. Golidy is an Alumna of Eastern Michigan University where she earned her Bachelor of Science studying History and African American Studies.

Reta grew up in Ann Arbor where black history was only taught sparingly and the local black history was non-existent in the grade school curriculum. It was at Eastern Michigan University, after taking a few courses in African American studies, where a renewed interest in learning more about Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti’s local black history was sparked.

James A. and Faith Knight Foundation Grant

James A. and Faith Knight Foundation grant awarded funds to support AACHM program administration.

StEP Program

Through the StEP (National Assessment) Program with the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture (NMAAHC) and the American Association of State and Local History, AACHM has received a bronze certificate in Mission, Vision, Governance and Management during this the inaugural year of the StEP Program.

GRANTS, AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Michigan Humanities Council

Towsley Foundation

Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation
The massive community benefits that the AACHM provides Washtenaw County and the surrounding areas would not be possible without the generous support of our many sponsors.

**Museum and Event Sponsors**

**Genealogy Level**
- Bob & Beverely Elliott
  - Family Charity
- Pearls and Ivy Foundation of Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.
- Rogel Cancer Center, Michigan Medicine
- University of Michigan Credit Union

**Museum Level**
**Organizations/Businesses**
- Comcast Heartland Regional
- Construction Laborers’ Local Union 499
- Destination Ann Arbor
- JB&B, LLC - James Wesley
- Nannies + Sitters + Tutors

**Museum Level**
**Individuals**
- Bette Thompson
- Christina and Teesha Montague
- Jacqueline & Michael Lewis
- Jerome Rush
- Joyce M. Hunter
- Judith Cawhorn and Larry Hunter

**Thank you**
to our numerous sponsors, supporters and patrons!

Special thanks goes to the fifteen Kwanzaa event (see page 14) sponsors: Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority; Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity; Alumnae Chapter Delta Sigma Theta Sorority; Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity; Laurita Thomas; Joyce Hunter; Bette Thompson; Akili & Lakita Jackson; All Things Artistic Ministries, Inc.; The Akoma Portal; Friends of AACHM; Mentor2Youth; Rossi Ray-Taylor; Ann Arbor NAACP Branch; and Command-Z, LLC.
PARTNERS

Ann Arbor District Library
Ypsilanti District Library

University Musical Society

Kerrytown Concert House

Michigan Theatre

NEW Center

The Byrd Center
Strategic Plan Update

The AACHM strategic plan calls for building financial and accounting capacity for the growth of the organization. This goal was advanced by:

- obtaining bookkeeping services through the NEW Center
- adopting board-approved accounting processes
- investing in KEY technology
- purchasing an annual license to Bloomerang.

AACHM has also increased sponsorships for the major fundraisers and programs and received four grants to advance its work. An endowment has been established. AACHM members now has ROAM membership providing admission to ROAM partner museums.

In recognition and celebration of the many AACHM legacy donors to AACHM a donor wall was designed.

Board continues to review and revise its policies.
AACHM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Patricia Berry (Chair of Membership Committee); Nakisha N. Chaney (Board Vice-Chair); Ellen Copeland Brown (Recording Secretary); Debby M. Covington (Board Chair); Marlys T. Deen (Past Chair, Co-Chair of Exhibits & Collections Committee); Gloria J. Edwards; Cheryl Ervin (Co-Chair of Marketing Committee); Joyce M. Hunter (President/CEO, Chair of Development Committee, and Chair of Facilities Committee); Patricia King (Treasurer); Deborah Meadows (Underground Railroad Tour Docent, Chair of the Programs Committee); Joetta Mial (Co-Chair of the Marketing Committee); Rossi Ray-Taylor (Chair of the Site Search Subcommittee); Anthony Stewart; Bette Thompson; Kenyatta Tucker; Beverly Tyler (Assistant Treasurer); Beverly Willis (Corresponding Secretary, Co-Chair: Exhibits & Collections)

SCHOLAR-IN-RESIDENCE

Carol Mull

EMERITUS BOARD MEMBERS

Lola Jones
Bettye McDonald
Zerilda Palmer

2020-2021 ADVISORY BOARD

Karmen Brown, Judith Cawhorn, Tricia A. Edwards, Barbara Eichmuller, Beverely Elliott, James Frenza, Carine Hails, Amy Harris, Scott McFadden, Frank McVeigh, Mia Milton, Teesha Montague, Carol Senneff, Grace M. Shackman, Matthew Siegfried, Deborah VandenBroek, Donica Varner

Thank you to all who have so generously donated their funds, time and talents to AACHM’s success. It is with our deepest appreciation that we look forward to continued growth and support in the coming year.
To stay up-to-date, and to become a member, connect with us here!

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