

Charles H. Wright

MUSEUM of AFRICAN  
AMERICAN HISTORY

Rejoice • Relive • Reconnect

# THE WRIGHT TIMES

CHARLES H. WRIGHT MUSEUM OF AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY  
MEMBERSHIP NEWSLETTER

## Letter from the President

January 2012

Recently, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Senior Editor of the *Atlantic* magazine, wrote a fascinating article for its Civil War issue entitled, “Why Do So Few Blacks Study the Civil War?” This editorial tour-de-force examined the question from the personal experience of the author as an avid consumer of history, and his realization of the revisionism that followed this country’s greatest conflict, resulting in a present in which most blacks are wholly divorced from an interest in this most pivotal of struggles for freedom. Mr. Coates makes a salient point about the need for African Americans to take ownership of this history:

*And for black people, there is this—the burden of taking ownership of the Civil War as Our War. During my trips to battlefields, the near-total absence of African American visitors has been striking. Confronted with the realization that the Civil War is the genesis of modern America, in general, and of modern black America, in particular, we cannot just implore the Park Service and the custodians of history to do more outreach—we have to become custodians ourselves.*

I can’t think of a better context in which to introduce a project that will premiere online and at the Museum on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day: *The Voices of the Civil War* video series. Created by the Museum’s Education Department, this monthly series will explore African American contributions to and perceptions of the Civil War as our country commemorates its 150th anniversary. Whether you believe that it should be considered, as Mr. Coates implores, “Our War,” the fact remains that the Civil War resulted in our freedom from

this nation’s original sin of slavery. Each and every month, you’ll be able to visit [TheWright.org](http://TheWright.org) to gain another perspective on the Civil War based upon research into the lives of African Americans who lived through it, or who have spent lifetimes studying its history. We expect these vignettes to become valuable tools for exploring a period in which the nation tore itself asunder in the quest for purging itself of its ultimate injustice.

### WHAT’S IN A NAME?

We’d like to thank all those who made our most recent Annual Meeting the best in many, many years. The Museum was graced by the presence of a number of past and present board members who were instrumental in its founding and success. There was also a lively discussion on the Museum’s branding, and a request was made to make mention of it to the membership. First, we are *not* changing the name of the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. Rather, on the recommendation of GlobalHue, the nation’s largest minority-owned marketing agency, we are consciously adopting one of the Museum’s many naming variations in existence and making it the one, accepted derivation from our official name for consistent use in our branding. To put it simply, not enough people know who we are, and we need to change that if we want to grow our audience. The Museum competes for attention in a very crowded marketplace with any of the thousands of ways people entertain themselves in this day and age, and we must be savvy in how we position it for the long-term viability of the institution. As one long-time employee put it, we’ve been called *The Wright Museum* since the day it was

rechristened the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. In selecting this moniker, we are recognizing not only its adoption by the public, but also its marketing potential - we aren’t just a museum; we are *The Wright Museum*. Brevity and impact are crucial for memorability and recognition, and “The Wright Museum” has both. At the same time, we’ve developed strategic guidelines so that the official name is always included in our promotions, to better tie the official and brand names together, grow awareness of the Museum in the modern media marketplace, and insure that our founder is never forgotten.

Juanita Moore,  
President & CEO



# RECENT EVENTS

By Leah Johnson

Photos by Annistrique Photography  
annistriquephotography.com

## Celebrating Literature & Literacy – September 29, 2011

Detroit luminaries **Dr. Gloria Aneb House** and **Aurora Harris** premiered new works in honor of the historic **Broadside Press** celebrating 46 years of “Literature and Literacy.” Dr. House read selected passages from her new book, *Home Sweet Sanctuary: Idlewild Families Celebrate A Century*, and Aurora Harris performed poetry from her book, *Solitude of Five Black Moons*. Both authors were accompanied by Detroit musicians **In the Tradition** and **Cecelia Sharpe**, founder of **Urban Stringz**. A meet and greet followed the performances along with a book signing and reception. “Dr. House and Aurora Harris are amazing people who have documented historic moments in time for us to hold on to, from the poems that Harris shared, to the Idlewild community that House explained has so much significance for the African American community. I am very happy that I was in attendance for this event,” said Adam Harris, 25, of Detroit.



## Rhapsody in Boop – October 15 & 16

The Wright Museum and Cafagna Arts and Entertainment presented an evening of music from the Betty Boop films of the 1930s. A live big band, **The Paul Keller Orchestra**, took the stage in the General Motors Theater along with singer, **Kathy Kosins**. Together, they beautifully performed the music of legendary jazz musicians including Duke Ellington, Fats Waller, Don Redman, Cab Calloway and Louis Armstrong. “That was the most marvelous orchestra I’ve heard in ages,” said attendee Hazel Mohammed. “I also enjoyed seeing the Betty Boop cartoons”.



## Annie Lee Artist Reception – October 21

The Museum welcomed internationally acclaimed African American artist **Annie Lee** for an evening reception; Ms. Lee signed figurines and prints purchased that evening at the gift shop. “It was such a pleasure meeting and working with Annie Lee,” said Museum store manager Darius Smith. “She’s joyful, down to earth, has a dedicated fan base and appreciates where God has placed her in life.” *Annie Lee for Collectors by Collectors*, a new coffee table book heavily comprised of comments from Lee’s collectors, was available for purchase. Lee visits Detroit regularly and her work is available for purchase at The Wright Gift Shop.



### 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of *Daughters of the Dust* – October 30

Museum members and guests were treated to a screening of *Daughters of the Dust*, the first feature created by an African American woman, **Julie Dash**, to gain national theatrical release in the U.S. “This event provided a unique opportunity for members of the production team to reminisce about their experience, and we, as the audience, to listen in,” said Yolanda Jack, Program Coordinator. “The excitement and appreciation of the audience was tangible... it was a rare opportunity to meet a great filmmaker and members of the fantastic team which brought the world a story like no other.”



### Noel Night – December 3

Midtown Detroit once again expressed its holiday spirit with Noel Night. This annual event is an evening of fun for all ages, replete with arts and crafts, performances and opportunities to visit the city's cultural institutions. Jeanetta Black, a volunteer and first time Noel Night attendee said, “I really enjoyed myself... African entertainment, the quilting and handicrafts... there was just a wonderful crowd!” Detroit looks forward to its 40th celebration of Noel Night in 2012.



# ASALH Comes to The Wright Museum

*Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Detroit Branch*

By Leah Johnson

1538 Ninth St, NW, Washington D.C. is the primary address credited for housing the beginnings of a black heritage organization.

At that location in 1915, Dr. Carter G. Woodson began the structured task of researching, collecting and gathering information pertaining to the life and history of African Americans. Woodson's D.C. home morphed into the headquarters of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) until 1970, and ASALH remains in existence today.

Stemming from Woodson's sincere interest in preserving and recording the history of African Americans, ASALH's mission remains to "promote, research, preserve, interpret and disseminate information about Black life, history and culture to the global community," according to its website ([www.asalh.org](http://www.asalh.org)).



Today, ASALH sets the annual theme for Black History Month, and sponsors an annual convention to celebrate and study African Diaspora life and history, amongst other activities. ASALH has campus-based branches; branches in states including California, Florida and Illinois; and organizing branches including the Detroit Branch.

"We have the responsibility to carry on the legacy of Dr. Carter G. Woodson and to tell our own history," said Kathie House, the Detroit branch's Coordinator for the organizing year.

House, a woman driven by love for her community and for African American culture, saw the need to resurrect ASALH's Detroit branch, previously led by Arthur Johnson. She took the advice of Dr. Karl Gregory to host ASALH meetings at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History, and ASALH-Detroit began meeting at the Museum in June 2011. Museum Chief Operating Officer Tyrone Davenport assists House as the Coordinator for the organizing year and regularly offers museum resources.

To date, ASALH-Detroit has 41 members, and individuals that live as far away as Saginaw have expressed interest in joining. The member base of ASALH-Detroit includes people from all walks of life: professors, teachers, genealogists, and students. Most ASALH-Detroit members are also Museum members.

"The Museum is an anchor in our community; we enjoy that our member base is made up of Museum members too," said House.

During its organizing year, ASALH-Detroit is particularly focused on recruiting young people, enabling them to have a foundation built on history, and also to promote awareness of this esteemed organization.

"ASALH is such an important organization because of the sacrifices and tireless efforts people have made and continue to make to keep African American history relevant," said LaNesha DeBardelaben, Museum Archivist. She first learned of ASALH during her undergraduate days as a history major at Kalamazoo College. However, she never affiliated with a branch because there were none nearby.

"One day, while walking back to my office at the Museum, I came upon a visitor who was looking for what he called 'the Dr. Carter G. Woodson group'," said DeBardelaben. "I then found out that there was an ASALH group organizing here in Detroit. I pointed him to the room, and have been involved in the Detroit organizing efforts ever since."

Currently, ASALH-Detroit is brainstorming ways to partner with the Museum during Black History Month. The Detroit Branch also wants to expound on the 2012 National Black History theme, *Black Women in American Culture and History*, by inviting influential African American women to Detroit to speak in February.

"There's a sense of belongingness and community that comes from participating in ASALH and a wealth of educational opportunities," said House, summing up the benefits of ASALH.

*Meeting Schedule, January – March, 2012: January 22 at 3 pm; February 19 at 3 pm; March 18 at 3 pm. For information on ASALH or the Detroit Branch's meetings, contact Kathie House at [kshouse@oaklandcc.edu](mailto:kshouse@oaklandcc.edu).*

# The Wright Angels Fly Again

## Volunteers Help Museum Fulfill Mission; Volunteering Provides Personal Fulfillment

Says Jo-Ann Hale, “Thank you for calling The Wright Museum, how may I direct your call?” That’s how Ms. Hale begins her day at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History. She understands that she’s often the public’s first connection with the Museum. Therefore, she strives hard to effectively answer questions from callers and explain the benefits of Museum membership.

Every Friday, Roland McKenney puts on his Kente cloth vest and plants himself at one of the Museum’s entrances. “Welcome to The Wright Museum,” McKenney says to each visitor. He can also be found assisting at special events, his favorite being March’s *Black Women Rock!* concert with poet Jessica Care Moore.

“I have an eye for organizing things, especially when it comes to processing the archives and collections, and organizing them according to series to see what goes well together,” said Katy Schroeder. She can often be found in the Louise Lovett Wright Library & Robert L. Hurst Research Center cataloging and spending time with the archivist and librarian, or perusing the exhibits.

Joyce Tucker smiles inside and out as groups of different ages and ethnicities enter the Museum in awe of the Ford Freedom Rotunda. She assists with pre-tour preparations, helping visitors settle in. She knows each individual in the group is about to do more than tour; rather, they are going on a journey, an experience that can change their life.

What do these four individuals have in common?

They are each volunteers, otherwise known as “The Wright Angels.” They give of their time, energy and skills, and help the Museum provide crucial services to the community.

Volunteering takes many forms at the Museum as there is much work to be done. After an orientation session, Wright Angels can serve by answering phones, assisting with research, greeting visitors, supporting group tour activities, helping at special events and much more. Each task affords them the opportunity to connect with the Museum and its visitors on a more intimate level.

“Volunteering allows me to help people and continue to be an instrument of God’s love to others,” said Roland McKenney, a volunteer since 2009. “I get a chance to help educate and enlighten people of our great ethnicity and contributions in the world.”

Joyce Tucker, a volunteer since 1997 and recipient of the “Volunteer of the Year” award, said, “My experience as a volunteer has truly been a wonderful extension of my education. I learn something new almost every week.”



The Wright Angels are quick to highlight that the Museum does more than present African American history; it also makes that history come alive through its range of events including performances, film screenings, readings, festivals, book signings and more. The Wright Angels eagerly attend and support these events. For example, in conjunction with the *Dance Theater of Harlem: 40 years of Firsts* exhibit, the Museum hosted a fundraising gala featuring performances by Dance Theatre of Harlem. The overwhelming response prompted the Museum to present the ensemble again, this time at Detroit School of Arts. Wright Angel Jo-Ann Hale was in attendance.

“My fondest memory is being able to see the Dance Theatre of Harlem sponsored by The Wright Museum perform at the Detroit School of Arts,” said Hale. “To schedule a date for the ensemble to return was a great way to give the general public an opportunity to see a magnificent group of artists performing their craft.”

Opportunities to volunteer at the Museum are always available. If interested, please contact Reba Johnson, Volunteer Coordinator, at (313) 494-5826. We welcome you to *Rejoice, Relive and Reconnect* as a Wright Angel!



## Volunteering at The Wright Museum

### Volunteer Opportunities:

- Greeters and Gallery Monitors
- Customer Service Representatives
- Museum Educators
- Workshop and Tour Support Facilitators
- Marketing Distribution Team Members
- Staff Aides
- Special Team
  - Advisory and action committees
  - Virtual Volunteers

**Age Requirement:** High school or older

### Current volunteer opportunities posted on:

- TheWright.org
- volunteermatch.com

To donate your time in helping the Museum, please take these simple steps:

1. Call the volunteer office for orientation dates at (313) 494-5826
2. Attend an orientation session
3. Complete an application
4. Complete a Security Clearance

### Need more information?

Please contact Ms. Reba Johnson, the museum’s Volunteer Coordinator at (313) 494-5826 or via email at [rebajohnson@chwmuseum.org](mailto:rebajohnson@chwmuseum.org).

***Be a Wright Angel today!***

# Current & Upcoming Exhibitions

## *Great American Artists: An Exhibition in Three Movements*

### Opening Reception January 12, 2012 at 6 pm - Public Welcome

Great American Artists is an exhibition of new figurative works by artists Christopher Batten, Endia Beal, Halima Cassells, Alonzo Edwards, Sydney James, Gregory Johnson, Richard Lewis, Mario Moore, Sabrina Nelson and Senghor Reid. Through a series of studio visits, collaborative meetings and documentation, these artists developed a consortium with two major goals in mind: to increase collaboration among artists in Detroit and to strengthen the network of artists who employ similar themes in their work. It was understood that they would continue to create amazing works of art that would engage and inspire their audiences.



This yearlong exhibition will feature their works in a three-part series. During the past several years, each artist has collaborated to complete a portrait of a group member and to document each other's studio processes, techniques and themes. This cooperative provides the group a means of documenting and preserving each artist's image and their careers.

In declaring themselves Great American Artists, they have set the bar high. The first installation features the art of Lewis, Nelson, and Johnson, and will be on exhibit January 12 - April 29, 2012.

Richard Lewis, *My Mother Watching TV*



Gregory Johnson, *Sandman*

## *Mixing Metaphors: The Aesthetic, Social and Political in African American Art*

### Opening February 3, 2012

Organized and sponsored by Bank of America, *Mixing Metaphors* is an exhibition composed of more than 90 paintings, prints, drawings, photographs, sculptures and mixed media works by 36 artists. The exhibition draws its inspiration from the different artists' visions and their use of technique to convey compelling stories. Body politics, race, class and gender are a few of the topics that surface in these works of art, which depict moments from the extraordinary to the mundane.

In selecting works for this exhibition, guest curator Deborah Willis looked for images that captured her imagination. Her central focus was on how artists define and explore the concepts of beauty and abstraction. Willis has organized *Mixing Metaphors* into three thematic sections: Reflections and Likeness, Constructing Place and Rituals of Existence. They are designed to foster critical thinking, provide social context and engage discussion. Willis challenges the viewer to investigate the role that art plays in society and how art affects our interpretation of what we see. The term, "Mixing Metaphors" is used to encourage the viewer to think of ways in which art and storytelling illustrate experiences. Art often serves as an instrument of memory, and as a means of interpreting ideas and exploring visual metaphor.



Some of the artists in this exhibition base their work on stories about family life or ideas about music and love. Others document experiences that transformed the twentieth century and inspired the next generation. Indeed, *Mixing Metaphors* will be a thought-provoking experience.

Charles "Chuck" Stewart  
(American, b. 1927)  
*John & Alice Coltrane*,  
1966



Benny Andrews  
(American, 1930-2006)  
*Rehearsal (Music Series)*, 1997

# Museum Donors September 1 - November 30, 2011

The Museum would like to extend its sincere appreciation to those donors who have made gifts to support our exhibits, programming and special events. Listed here are the names of contributors who made gifts of \$500 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!*

## \$100,000.00 +

Ford Motor Company Fund  
United States Department of Education

## \$25,000.00 +

Erb Family Foundation  
General Motors Corporation  
General Motors Foundation

## \$10,000.00 +

Mrs. Yvette Bing  
DTE Energy Foundation  
Edsel Ford II Fund  
Hudson Webber Foundation  
MGM Grand Detroit Casino  
Richard & Jane Manoogian Foundation

## \$5,000.00 +

Art Van Furniture  
Charter One Bank  
City of Detroit - Employee Donations  
Mr. Peter Remington & Ms. Peggy Daitch  
Mr. Walter Douglas  
Fifth Third Bank  
Moroch & Associates, Inc  
The Pepsi Bottling Group  
PVS Chemicals Incorporated  
Siebert Brandford Shank & Co LLC  
Dr. Lorna L. Thomas  
Mr. and Mrs. Barry Zekelman

## \$2,500.00 +

Comerica, Inc.  
Dakkota Intergrated Systems, LLC  
Goldman, Sachs & Co  
Greektown Casino  
Mr. and Mrs. William Jones  
Mayfield Gentry Reality Advisor  
Ms. Marjorie Rose  
Southeastern Michigan Area Combined Federal Campaign

## \$1,000.00 +

Ms. Rhonda Alford & Mrs. Donna Alford  
The Honorable Barbara-Rose Collins  
Mr. and Mrs. David Fike  
Mr. Benson Ford  
G. R. N'Namdi Gallery  
Global Automotive Alliance  
Mr. and Mrs. John James  
Mr. Dennis Johnson  
Michigan First Credit Union  
Mr. and Mrs. Melvin Murphy  
Mr. John Obee  
Omega Psi Phi Fraternity  
Dr. Glenda D. Price  
Mr. Gregory J. Reed, Esq.  
Ms. Pamela Rodgers  
Mr. David Rudolph  
The Skillman Foundation  
Tappers Fine Jewelry Inc  
TYJ LLC

## \$500.00 +

Mrs. Elizabeth Brooks  
Dr. Christina L. Clark  
Ms. Pauline Coleman  
Dr. Shauna R. Diggs PC  
Ms. Zillah Fluker  
Mr. Jeffrey Fratarcangeli  
Mr. Marvin H. Glass & Mrs. Shirley H. Glass  
Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Hannan  
Mr. Kenneth E. Harris  
Dr. Sherryl D. Hinton, M.D.  
Mrs. Carol Jenkins  
Lewis & Munday, P.C.  
Linda Solomon Photography Inc  
Ms. Barbara J. Mahone  
Ms. Denise W. Mallett  
Mr. George McCrary  
Ms. Juanita Moore  
Music Hall Center for the Performing Arts  
Mrs. Priscilla Phifer  
Plymouth Educational Center Charter School, Inc  
PNC Financial Services Group  
Dr. and Mrs. Mark Smith  
Mr. and Mrs. Walter Stanfield  
Ms. Sandra C. Taylor  
In Memory of Levon Thompson, Sr.  
Universal Parking of Michigan LLC  
Mr. Coleman A. Young II



This newsletter and museum programming are made possible by the generous support of our community partners. Thank you!  
JOIN US! To become a member, make a donation or volunteer, please call (313) 494-5800 or visit [TheWright.org](http://TheWright.org).



Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History  
 Membership Department  
 315 East Warren Avenue  
 Detroit, MI 48201-1443

NON-PROFIT ORG  
 U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
 DETROIT, MI 48201  
 PERMIT NO. 3832

**CURRENT & UPCOMING EXHIBITIONS & EVENTS**

***The Chris Webber Collection:  
 Exceptional People During  
 Extraordinary Times,  
 1755-Present***  
 Now - April 29, 2012

***Great American Artists - An  
 Exhibition in Three Movements:  
 The Art of Richard Lewis,  
 Sabrina Nelson, and  
 Gregory Johnson***  
 January 12 - April 29, 2012

***Moving to His Own Beat -  
 Fela: The Man, The Movement,  
 The Music***  
 January 13 - April 1, 2012

***Mixing Metaphors: The Aesthetic,  
 Social and Political in African  
 American Art***  
 February 3 - June 3, 2012

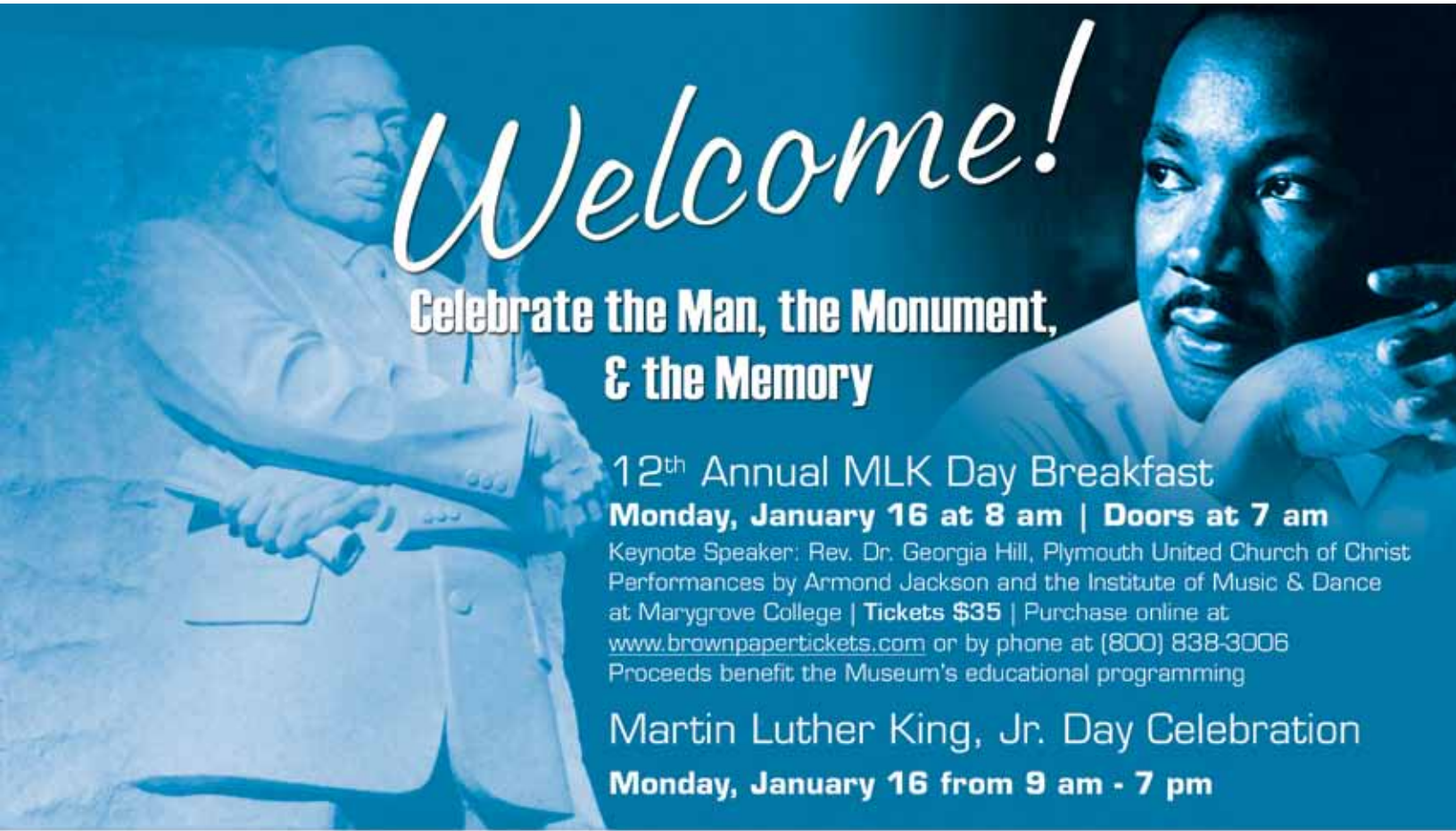
***Great American Artists  
 Opening Reception***  
 Thursday, January 12 at 6 pm

**Great Michigan Read Presents  
*Arc of Justice Sweet Trials  
 Reenactment***  
 Saturday, January 14 from 1 - 5 pm

**12th Annual Martin Luther King,  
 Jr. Day Breakfast (\$)**  
 Monday, January 16 at 8 am

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day  
 Celebration**  
 Monday, January 16  
 from 9 am - 7 pm

**Black History Month**  
 Open every day of February  
 Call (313) 494-5800 or visit  
 TheWright.org for event schedule



**Welcome!**

**Celebrate the Man, the Monument,  
 & the Memory**

**12<sup>th</sup> Annual MLK Day Breakfast  
 Monday, January 16 at 8 am | Doors at 7 am**

Keynote Speaker: Rev. Dr. Georgia Hill, Plymouth United Church of Christ  
 Performances by Armond Jackson and the Institute of Music & Dance  
 at Marygrove College | **Tickets \$35** | Purchase online at  
[www.brownpapertickets.com](http://www.brownpapertickets.com) or by phone at (800) 838-3006  
 Proceeds benefit the Museum's educational programming

**Martin Luther King, Jr. Day Celebration  
 Monday, January 16 from 9 am - 7 pm**

**For more information please call (313) 494-5800 or visit [TheWright.org](http://TheWright.org)**

**Museum Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 9 am - 5 pm | Sunday 1 - 5 pm | February Only: Monday 9 am - 5 pm**  
**Museum Admission: Adults (13 - 61) \$8 | Seniors (62+) \$5 | Youth (3 - 12) \$5 | Members and children under 3 are admitted free**

