



THE NATIONAL  
GREAT BLACKS IN WAX  
MUSEUM INC.



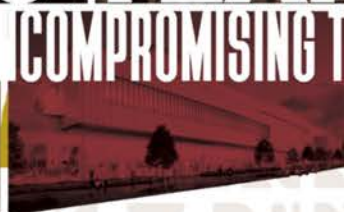
SUNRISE  
1983



# 40 YEARS OF UNCOMPROMISING TRUTH



2023  
& BEYOND



1988  
NORTH AVE.



THE BALTIMORE TIMES



# THE NATIONAL GREAT BLACKS IN WAX MUSEUM INC.



## *Message From Dr. Joanne Martin*

Dear Colleagues, Friends, and Supporters,

It seems like only yesterday that Dr. Elmer Martin and I opened our storefront Museum on Saratoga Street in downtown Baltimore. However, yesterday was 1983.

A milestone moment like this sent me on a stroll down memory lane, where I discovered memories, many unshared, some almost lost to time. A number of you know the "ring story", but how many of you know that Dr. Elmer Martin was stopped by the Beltway police for having Frederick Douglass's legs hanging out of the window of my Pontiac. Or that hearing a noise from a mechanical device Elmer and a friend had rigged up, a frightened lady ran out of the Saratoga Street Museum, leaving her baby behind in a stroller.

I remembered the twenty five or more real- life figures in wax form that I actually met, including Dr. Dorothy Height, Colin Powell, Shirley Chisholm, Benjamin Hooks, Julian Bond, FUBU, Parren Mitchell, and the legendary Rosa Parks.

Imagine the Museum being a regular feature of Charles Dutton's situation comedy "Rock". Set in Baltimore, the show displayed the characters wearing Museum hats, tees, buttons, and holding our souvenir mugs, not to mention one of our posters with Malcolm X.

What a thrill it was to learn that Lupita Nyong'o, from 12 Years A Slave, stated in an interview that she followed the advice of a fellow actor to "get down to that little wax museum in Baltimore", as the way to prepare for her academy award winning role. "So many stories, so many ways" is not only the backdrop for all Museum programming, but it also symbolizes the 40 year journey---and counting--- that The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum has been on.

We are blessed that so many people have ventured with us on this odyssey. As Great Blacks In Wax sets out on the next forty years--- and counting--- we pause to reflect on and pay homage to our ancestors, recognize their sacrifice, give gratitude to them for their wisdom, and acknowledge their hope for those who follow them.

Know too, that one of these ancestors is Dr. Elmer P. Martin!

Peace and Blessings,

*Dr. Joanne Martin*

Dr. Joanne M. Martin, Co Founder and President  
The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum, Inc.



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# About Us

The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum, founded in 1983 in Baltimore, Maryland, pays tribute to prominent African-American historical figures.

Originally established in a downtown storefront on Saratoga Street, it now occupies 1601 East North Avenue, featuring over 100 wax figures and scenes, including a comprehensive model slave ship exhibit depicting the 400-year history of the Atlantic Slave Trade.

Co-founder Dr. Joanne Martin underscores the importance of preserving Black history to provide context to historical struggles. Baltimore's first wax museum and the nation's inaugural African American history wax museum, it was initiated by Dr. Elmer Martin and Dr. Joanne Martin as a grassroots effort. The museum gained national recognition in 1983, securing grants and loans to establish a permanent exhibition.

In 1988, it settled in a renovated firehouse on the 1600 block of North Avenue, later earning U.S. Congress recognition in 2004 as The National Great Blacks in Wax Museum.





# Gen. Colin Powell inducted at Great Blacks in Wax



Photo by Dana Coleman

Retired Army Gen. Colin L. Powell, center, shown with his wife, Alma, at his right; Congressman Elijah Cummings, near the wax figure of the general in military outfit, and Mrs. Joy Bramble of the *Baltimore Times* at the extreme right, attended the unveiling ceremony at the Great Blacks in Wax Museum. From left is Frank Fountain, vice-president of the Chrysler Corp., Dr. Elmer Marten and his wife, Joanne Martin, owners of Great Blacks in Wax Museum.

By Ursula V. Battle  
AFRO Staff Writer

If you would like to see retired Army Gen. Colin L. Powell, the four-star general who became a heroic figure in the eyes of the American public after the Persian Gulf War in 1991, all you have to do is visit the Great Blacks in Wax Museum on East North Avenue.

While it's not the "real" Col. Powell, it's an extraordinary likeness of the nation's first African-American chairman of the Joint Chiefs.

The wax figure was unveiled Tuesday evening at the Great Blacks in Wax Mansion at the corners of E. North Avenue and Broadway Street. The mansion, which is a component of the museum, is located a half-block from the main section of the facility.

Gen. Powell and his wife were in Baltimore for the ceremony only. They toured the museum prior to the unveiling program. He

In addition to the Powells, several dignitaries attended the unveiling ceremony including U.S. Representative Elijah E. Cummings, and Mayor Kurt L. Schmoke.

"This is an historic occasion because Gen. Powell is an outstanding American and clearly a figure of history," said Mayor Schmoke. "He honors us as much as the Martins have honored him by having his figure in the museum. It's a figure that will inspire our young people to do their best in the future."

He added, "I applaud the Martin's choice, and I'm glad Gen. Powell and his wife were able to attend."

According to Dr. Joanne Martin, the wax figure cost approximately \$8,000 to make. It was commissioned by The Baltimore Times and the Chrysler Corporation. During the ceremony, a representative from Chrysler presented a check for \$25,000 to the Martins to help fund the museum's \$10 million

Dr. Martin said she will always remember the pleased look on Gen. Powell's face.

"I looked directly at him," she said. "He was very moved and touched. I feel great. If I didn't think he felt good about it, I wouldn't feel this way. We're very proud. The reward comes from knowing we did a good job."

Gen. Powell, 56, was born in Harlem to immigrant parents from Jamaica. Despite the rough life of the streets, and an average start in school, he found success in the Army. During his 35-year military career, he became one of the most decorated soldiers to ever serve in the Army.

Gen. Powell's figure joins nearly 200 other wax figures which grace the museum, which include Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Mary Carter Smith, and Rosa Parks.



*"I remember flying to Los Angeles for my 2001 appearance on the national game show "To Tell The Truth ". As the announcer uttered " And will the real Joanne Martin please stand up !", I scrambled to my feet in acknowledgment that I was the founder of the Great Blacks In Wax Museum and that the other two contestants were imposters and not the real me, all while our Joe Louis wax figure looked out at the lively studio audience."*







# THE NATIONAL GREAT BLACKS IN WAX MUSEUM INC.

## Lupita Nyong'o on 12 Years a Slave, Getting Into Character, and 'Impostor's Syndrome'

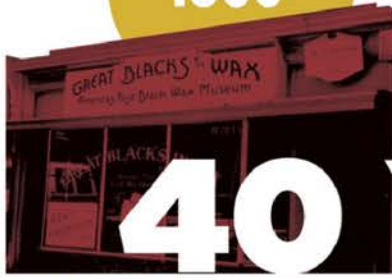
What sort of research were you doing? How did you get into the character of Patsey and embody her?

“One of the first things I did, I went to the **Blacks in Wax Museum** in Baltimore. My friend had told me that it was worth it and that you could get a kind of three-dimensional experience of slavery. So I went there and — indeed, I walked into the museum and the first thing I saw was a bale of 500 pounds of cotton, and that’s what Patsey was known to pick every day. And it was taller than me and it was thicker than me. And it was way wider than me. I was just, like, met with, “Yeah, this woman was really lofty to do this kind of thing and live so fully in that moment and then at the same time want to die and be relieved of her pain.” So that was a real influence, that place. And you see they have extracts from different diaries. These men on the ships and everything, they kept diaries of their experience, so they’re talking about how they killed the slaves and put the heads on stakes, and you see in the Middle Passage how everyone was chained together and people would die and everything would fester and all the disease and sickness. So the people who made it to the New World were made of really strong stuff. So that gave me an overview of slavery and other aspects of African-American history that we don’t really hear about. Like the fact that one of the first people on the North Pole was a black man. There were lots of Africans that got here that weren’t slaves, explorers and stuff. And we never hear about them. I read other accounts of slavery from the female perspective, as well. And the rest is about finding the physicality, the voice, and that kind of thing to make her real.”



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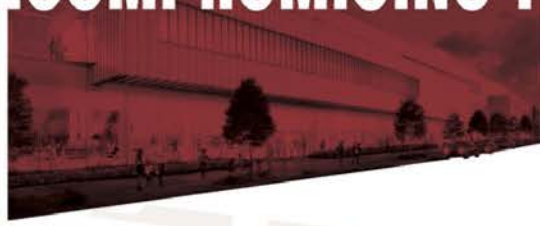
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## Event Schedule

11:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Mix and Mingle w/Mimosas  
Brunch

Welcome Opening Remarks – Dr. Kevin Daniels

Remarks and Proclamation from Mayor Brandon Scott

Dr. Joanne Martin – Museum History

Rayner Wharton – Museum Expansion

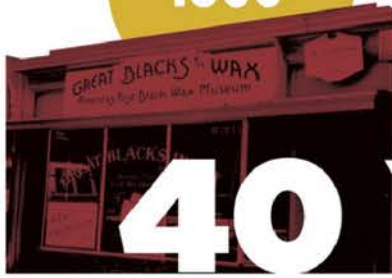
Dr. Joanne Martin – Awards Presentation

Spoken Word Artist – Rotica Lewis

Chrishna Williams – Call to Action

Closing Remarks – Dr. Kevin Daniels

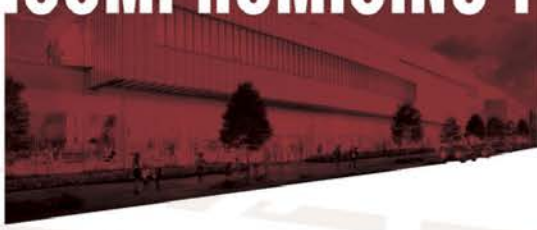
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As we celebrate our long history of telling the stories of African Americans unapologetically, and serving the communities of Baltimore and beyond, we would like to take a moment to reflect on the last 40 years. From traveling exhibits to a block-long expansion, the Museum has become a national treasure visited by thousands of people every year. There is no better time than right now to be proud, grateful, and forward looking!

The More Than a Museum Campaign is a multiphase, \$76 million dollar campaign that will enable us to open a new facility spanning an entire block of East Baltimore.

The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum has proudly served the communities of Baltimore and beyond for 40 years. The founders understood the importance of creating a place that will educate culturally disadvantaged communities about their heritage and the significant contributions that people of African descent have made to civilization. They also recognized that helping young people make important connections between the past and the present will shape a better future.

Our new facility will allow us to create more opportunities for innovative programming, exhibits, community activities and event space. Developing an even greater institution for the 21st century for the City of Baltimore and beyond. In memory of our visionary Co-Founder, Dr. Elmer P. Martin.



# Master of Ceremony

**Dr. Kevin Daniels** is a native of inner-city Baltimore and is Lead Episcopate for the St. Martin Church where the vision is “Moving from Healing to Wholeness;” former Senior Fellow with the National Center for Health Behavioral Change (Kellogg Foundation), Science Analyst for the National Security Agency (NSA), and current International Fellow with the International Institute Human Sciences. Recently received the National Community Service Award from the Rainbow PUSH Coalition as well as the International Community service award United Nations for Mental Health Curriculum ( DSM- 5 /V-Code 62.89) (Montreal, Canada).

Currently, Tenured Professor at Morgan State University, School of Social Work, teaching across BSW, MSW, Ph.D. programs – specialized in both Clinical and Community among Urban populations. Also, developed entire curriculum for Spirituality, Religion, and The Helping Tradition (Critical Thinking & Clinical), and Urban Communities and Organizations curriculum and is Curriculum Chair. He holds a State of Maryland’s License as a Social Worker & Counselor.

During the COVID pandemic, Dr. Daniels coordinated and developed “Healing Us Together (HUT) Trauma Informed Community Conversations,” along with the Behavioral Health Systems of Baltimore (BHSB) and Johns Hopkins University. Lastly, Dr. Daniels is a part of the Curriculum Committee for The Joint College of African American Clergy; and is published in several journal articles.



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# Spoken Word Artist



**Rotica D. Lewis** was born and raised in Baltimore City. At a very young age, she recognized her passion for the arts, specifically poetry. She began writing poems at the age of 8 and has developed that passion into spoken word artistry.

She believes there is no greater power than the ability to express yourself and allow others to feel it. She believes that her ability to create poetry is her “superpower”. Rotica has leveraged this superpower to deliver presentations in high school, college and in the corporate sector.



The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum Inc.

# Meet Our Awardees



**Legacy Keeper Award**  
**Eryn Naomi Reid**

Eryn Naomi Reid, dual enrolled high school sophomore and first year college student at Catonsville Community College Baltimore County, loves music, history and is an avid reader. Eryn Naomi has been a member of the Growing Griots Literacy Learning Program since 2017 and has been a youth docent at the National Great Blacks In Wax Museum since 2020. Eryn Naomi is a recipient of the National Association of Black Storytellers Baba Jamal Koran Harambee Youth Award 2021, the Youth Empowerment Group and Witness Change Leadership Award 2023, and the 2022 Folklife Apprenticeship Award along with her storytelling mentor Janice Curtis Greene, the official griot for the state of Maryland. After graduation, Eryn Naomi plans to study Early Elementary Education and continue their professional storytelling career.



**Legacy Keeper Award**  
**Xavier Reid**

Xavier Reid, a dual enrolled high school senior and first year college student at Catonsville Community College Baltimore County, has been a member of various National Great Blacks In Wax Museum programs since 2017, including the Growing Griot Literacy Learning Program (2017 - 2021), Virtual Motor Coach docent training (2020), and has been a youth docent at The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum since 2020. Xavier has also received The National Association of Blackstorytellers Baba Jamal Koran Harambee Youth Award (2021), Leadership Award from the Youth Empowerment Group and Witness Change (2023), and the Arundel Homeschool Group Gold Level Science Fair Award (2023). An avid reader and gamer, after graduation Xavier plans to study Finance at Morgan State University, Baltimore, MD.



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**Freedom Bound Public Service Award  
Senator Cory McCray**

Cory V. McCray is the senator of Maryland's 45th Legislative District. Born and raised in Baltimore, he attended Fairmount-Harford High School in East Baltimore. By the tender age of 20, he had not only acquired his first home but has also invested in multiple rental properties, revitalizing the very neighborhoods where he had grown up. After completing a rigorous five-year apprenticeship with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Cory's thirst for knowledge led him to Baltimore City Community College, where he proudly earned his Associate's degree in Business Administration. During his tenure in the legislature, he has spearheaded the successful passage of over sixty bill proposals with broad subjects such as raising the minimum wage, transportation funding, protecting the environment, increasing snap benefits for families, and greater access to public libraries. He cherishes every moment with his loving wife and four children in Northeast Baltimore.



**Freedom Bound Lift as We Climb Award  
Dr. Tiffany Mfume, Johns Hopkins University**

Tiffany Beth Mfume, DrPH is the Associate Vice Provost for Student Success and Retention Initiatives. Mfume is responsible for expanding collaborations to implement a systems-thinking approach to student success. She supports, develops, leads, and coordinates efforts that make it possible for students to thrive, with attention to the needs of first-generation, limited-income, international, and underrepresented students. Mfume's portfolio includes Student Data Analytics, Success Coaching and Academic Advising (SCAA), First-generation and Limited Income (FLI), Johns Hopkins Underserved in the Medical Professions (JUMP), Student Outreach and Support (SOS), and the Center for Student Success (CSS).



The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum Inc.

# Meet Our Awardees

## Continued...

With 24+ years of experience in higher education, she has implemented and led the adoption of numerous student success technologies such as EAB Navigate, Starfish, and Degree Works. She has served on numerous national committees including the NASPA Advising Technology Working Group, the College Board Colloquium Planning Committee, the EDUCAUSE Program Committee, EAB's Student Success Innovation Council, the Executive Committee for the Commission on Information, Measurement, and Analysis (CIMA) of Association of Public and Land Grant Universities, and the USA Funds Advisory Council. Dr. Mfume is a frequent contributor and speaker at higher education conferences and author of the nationally recognized books, *The College Completion Glass—Half-Full or Half-Empty? Exploring the Value of Postsecondary Education* (2019) and *What Works at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs): Nine Strategies for Increasing Retention and Graduation Rates* (2015), both published by Rowman & Littlefield.



### **Freedom Bound Helping Tradition Award Dr. Mama Deborah Pierce-Fakunle Afropella Griot, Sister Pierce's Daughter Black Mother of Black Doctors**

"I am because we are and because we are I am." My Doctors Martin -- "Doc" and "Jo"-- are my "Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud" parents, teachers, and mentors. Continuously, I appreciate and share the lessons, the learnings, and the Black Extended Family Love you give.

Thank you for allowing me to "DiscoverME/RecoverME" and to rear "our children" within Baltimore's prominent institution: the National Great Blacks In Wax Museum. And because we are, I remain Grateful, Hopeful, and Helpful. "The eye never forgets what the heart has seen." (African Proverb)



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### **Freedom Bound Community Activism Award Dr. Marie J. Washington**

Dr. Marie J. Washington, a dynamic figure in the Baltimore Metropolitan Community, seamlessly integrates educational and economic development with human capital enhancement. Holding degrees in History, Social Work and Planning, and Public Health Administration, she directs development projects at East Baltimore Enterprise Incorporated (EBEI). Noteworthy initiatives include the East Baltimore Medical Plan (EBMP), a 55,000 square foot health facility, and the development of 372 Garden Town Homes (Ashland Mews), serving as a cornerstone for expanded home ownership in Baltimore.

Dr. Washington has played a pivotal role in the redevelopment of Gay Street blocks, overseeing projects like Chapel Green in Johns Hopkins Biotechnology Park.

Her extensive professional affiliations include leadership roles on various boards, committees, and task forces, reflecting her dedication to community development and public service. Notably, Dr. Washington serves on the Board of the National Great Blacks in Wax Museum. Her expertise extends globally, as evidenced by her presentation on workforce development at the Migration Committee of the European Parliament.



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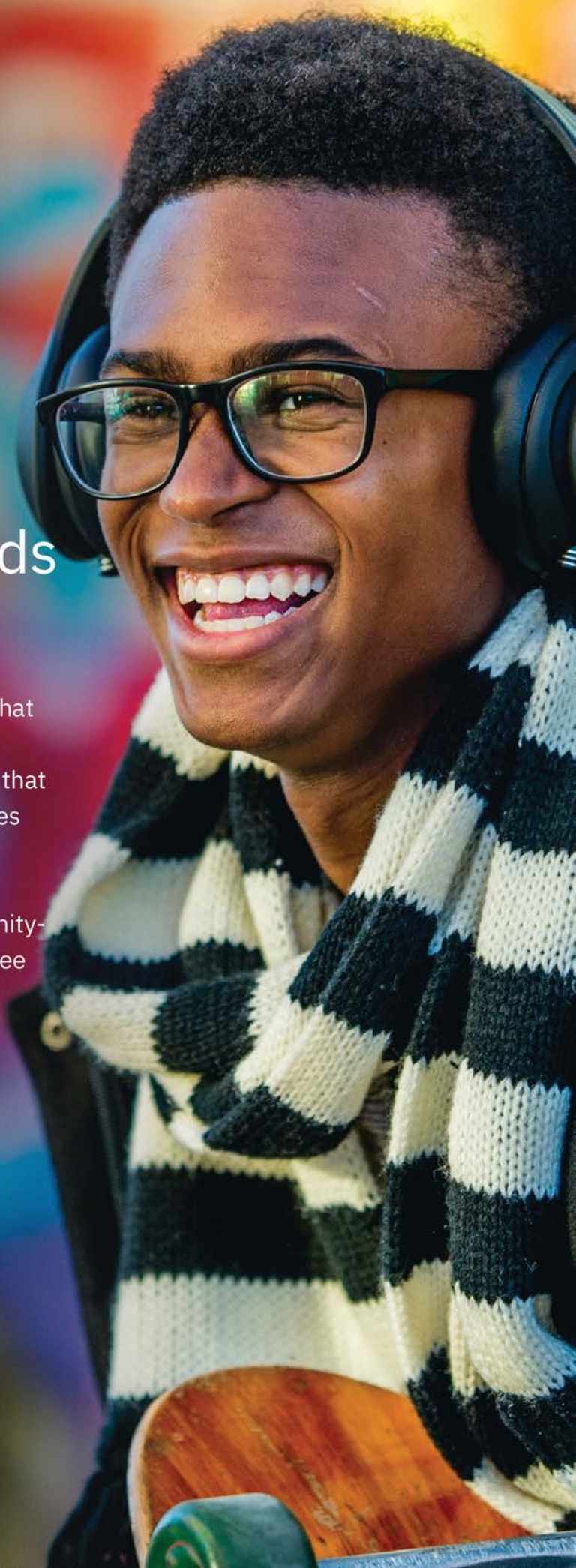
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Salutes the

# Great Blacks in Wax Museum

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## 40th Anniversary Celebration

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*Frances (Toni) Murphy Draper, CEO and Publisher*



# WDG

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Congratulations to the National Great Blacks in Wax on their 40th Anniversary!



The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum Inc.

# THE BALTIMORE TIMES

Happy 40th Anniversary!

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Congratulations National Great Blacks In Wax Museum!



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*Enrichment Through the African Oral Tradition*



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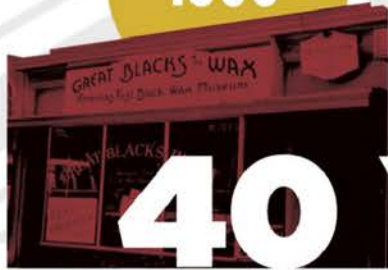
**We genuinely thank our advocates,  
champions, patrons and community for their  
unwavering support over the last 40 years.**

**We are looking forward to continuing this  
journey with you all for the next 40 years.**

*Dr. Joanne Martin*

Dr. Joanne M. Martin, Co Founder and President  
The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum, Inc.

SUNRISE  
1983

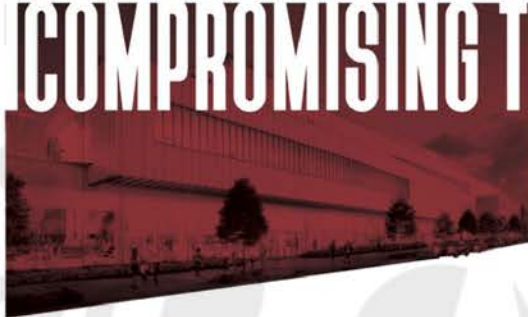


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