

## **Maryland Commission on African American History and Culture**

Public Teleconferencing Meeting Minutes

Monday, April 12, 2021

The following Commissioners were in attendance: Maya Davis, Janice Curtis Greene, Marilyn Hatza, Edwin T. Johnson, Melvin Kelly, Lopez Matthews, Kayce Munyeneh, Adi Nkwonta, Cheryl McLeod, Barbara Paca, Anthony Spencer, Torrey Snow, Elinor Thompson, Reggie Turner, and Tamara E. Wilson.

The meeting was called to order at 11:16 a.m. by Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson.

### **Proof of Public Notice**

Accepted by general consensus.

**Welcome** - Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson.

### **Approval of the Minutes** - Chair Wilson

Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson called for a motion to accept the minutes of the February 1, 2021 Maryland Commission on African American History & Culture (MCAAHC) meeting. Commissioner Anthony Spencer made a motion to accept the minutes. Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson seconded the motion and the motion carried.

Chair Wilson began the MCAAHC Public Teleconferencing meeting by welcoming the public to its second bi-monthly meeting. She took a moment to recognize as well as gave room for Theodore Mack, Chairman Emeritus of the MCAAHC to share words.

### **Officer Reports**

*MCAAHC Chair Rev. Dr. Tamara England Wilson*

Chair Wilson reported that she, Executive Director Compton, and Vice Chair H. Russell Frisby recently had a very successful meeting with Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford.

- The Executive Leadership of the MCAAHC met with Lt. Governor Rutherford in talks of:
  - Getting further financial support of the Banneker-Douglass Museum's (BDM) initiatives
  - Providing a pin for the curator of collection's position
  - Having PPE support for the BDM reopening moving forward.

### **Director's Report**

*Executive Director Chanel Compton*

Executive Director Compton reported the following information for the BDM & the MCAAHC:

- She first recognized the small but mighty staff of the Banneker-Douglass Museum. Director Compton thanked them for their leadership, creativity and professionalism in preserving Maryland's African American Art, History, & Culture.
- A special thank you was given to the MCAAHC Commissioners, the public as well as the small private donors that gave towards the MCAAHC 2020-2021 Anti-Racism Campaign. A little over \$60,000 was raised.
- Director Compton gave a special thank you to U.S. Naval Academy's Chief Diversity Officer, Captain Tamika Lindsay for joining the MCAAHC meeting. She serves as the senior ranking black female officer in the U.S. Navy. She established their first diversity and inclusion program and will be retiring this year after 30 years of service to our country.
- In collaboration with the University of Maryland and the MCAAHC a COVID-19 Vaccination Discussion virtual program took on February 5, 2021. This program gave the commission and the public the ability to learn more about the vaccination, to ask their questions, share their concerns and thoughts as to how this vaccination will protect all especially our African American communities.

- In following the theme of the Association for the Study and Life of African American Life & History (ASALH), the MCAAHC and the BDM had a virtual program on ‘The Future of the Black Family’ which took place on February 16, 2021 with special guest speaker Matt Prestbury, Founder of the Black Father Foundation. This program addressed the needs, concerns, and struggles of blended families, intersectionality as well as black men leading in diverse times like these.
- The BDM partnered with Maryland Hall for the Creative Arts called, “The Art of Activism” where several African American Artists shared their talent by painting Black Lives Matter banners.
  - Executive Director Chanel Compton and Commissioner Tony Spencer were guest speakers at this affair.
  - A banner will also be installed outside of the BDM for the public to see the results of this gathering.
- Due to the success of the Anti-Racism coalition, BDM produced and presented its 2021 Anti-Racism Coalition. The group consisted of many great powerful leaders that are from the State of Maryland. The MCAAHC’s own Commissioner Davis is one of its leading members.
- On February 24<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> the BDM hosted a Harambee Program with the Anne Arundel County Library system.
  - The program was called, “Black Representation Matters” which explored the many great black authors and books that should be a part of our family learning time.
- The BDM garnered 42,837 individuals that listened or join programs, virtual events or discussion for the BDM Media/Marketing Reach in the month of February.
- Women’s History Month kicked off with a powerful program sponsored by the MCAAHC, BDM, and the Eastern Shore Network For Change that centered on the powerful social justice leader Ms. Gloria Richardson.
  - A timeline of the historical facts of Ms. Richardson and the Freedom Fighters were shared, discussions were had and Ms. Richardson’s family was there to represent her in her absence.
  - For Women’s History Month, the BDM garnered 11, 117 individuals to its programs and events.
- BDM is currently seeking interns for their paid internship appointments. Executive Director Compton shared that many students can’t afford to intern without pay today at museums.
  - Director Robert James and Administrative Manager LeRonn Herbert are interviewing candidates to be considered for this program.
  - This program is designed to give young adults access to museum administration and marketing endeavors especially people of color in leadership roles.
- The BDM, under the Governor’s Office of Community Initiatives, plans to reopen in September of 2021.
  - While preparing for this transition, a new cleaning contract budget is being established.
  - PPE is being sought after by donations from the public and corporate sponsors.
  - BDM HVAC repairs are being enacted with approval from Lt. Governor Boyd K. Rutherford.
- The Banneker-Douglass Museum Foundation, Inc. (BDMF) received a \$75,000 grant due to a bond bill application that the foundation applied for.
  - A special thank you was given to Senator Sarah Elfreth, Delegate Dana Jones, and Delegate Shaneka Henson for their execution, consideration, and support with this process.
- Executive Director Compton is working with A. Wheeler Consulting Group on the rebranding of the BDM, the BDMF and the Friends of the Banneker-Douglass Museum’s its fundraising initiatives.
- The African American Heritage Preservation Grant presentations have already begun starting in the month of April.
  - Deadlines for application submission is Thursday, July 1, 2021.

## **Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission (MLRTC) Report.**

*Director Robert James*

Chair Wilson gave room for Mr. Robert James, Director of Marketing and Communications of BDM to present information on a plan for the commissions.

- Director James gave an update that the joint statement has gone to the second floor of the Governor's Office of Community Initiatives as well as has been published on the BDM, MCAAHC, and the MLRTC's website.
  - An opt ed is being produced and will be released to the public by the week of Monday, April 19, 2021.
  - Chair Wilson asked that everyone please read the report and share the report with all of the MCAAHC's various networks.

*Public Relations Committee-Commissioner Maya Davis, Chair*

Commissioner Maya Davis thanked Chair Wilson and Vice Chair Frisby for entrusting her to server on the MLRTC as the Logistics Committee Chair. As of March 19, 2021, she left the Maryland State Archives and now has now taken on the leadership position as the Director of the Riverdale Historic House Museum in Riverdale Park, Maryland. Commissioner Davis said that she is still able to serve her current position on the MCAAHC.

Commissioner Davis gave the following report from the Public Relations Committee.

- The committee recently had their meeting on March 25, 2021. where: Commissioner Maya Davis, Commissioner Kayce Munyeneh, Commissioner Dr. Barbara Paca, and Commissioner Lopez Matthews were present. Commissioners Elinor Thompson and Tony Spencer were excused.
- The focused on the following areas:
  - 1) Meeting schedule update.
  - 2) PR Committee delays-initially it was intended for "The Pendulum Newsletter" in February. Due to Commissioner Davis being made a director, things had to get temporarily pushed back due to her vast responsibilities.
    - April's newsletter is being reviewed by Chair Wilson and then submitted to GOCl for their final approval.
    - A formatting document has been sent to all MCAAHC Commissioners from Commissioner Davis and the PR Committee regarding their bios and how they are to be presented for the MCAAHC website.
      - Small steps are being done to beautify as well as structure some of the content like the MHT African American Heritage Preservation Grant recipients from 2017 to 2020.
  - 3) MCAAHC Commissioner roles and next steps
    - The PR Committee felt that it should be sharing events such as:
      - The Kunta Kinte Festival, Juneteenth Celebration and annual events of other institutions along with BDM events.
      - PR Committee be represented at various county and BDM programs and affairs that are significant to African American History of Maryland.
      - Have an identity for the MCAAHC that is specifically for the MCAAHC where GOCl sends out the MCAAHC announcements to boost the MCAAHC's social media presence.
        - GOCl governs all eight commissions including the MCAAHC.
      - Determine whether the MCAAHC can have its own YouTube Video presence like the BDM?

- Commissioner Munyeneh shared that if GOCI approves of this process it would help to boost the MCAAHC's presence throughout the State of Maryland and abroad.
  - Having a full updated photo of the full MCAAHC Commissioners on the MCAAHC's website.
  - Develop other resources of individuals from HBCU's and organizations to see what people think of the MCAAHC website, fresh ideas and new concepts for a comprehensive website.
  - Build out committee roles where if allowed:
    - An individual with manage social media.
    - One person would be responsible for press releases for the commission.
    - Another committee member work with the press such as Commissioner Torrey Snow who already works with the press.
    - Someone be responsible for graphic design, serve as a branding officer and work with, "The Pendulum Newsletter."
  - MCAAHC Commissioner needs in having name badges and business cards for all commissioners.
  - Have Mr. Herbert and Mr. James will be invited to the next PR Committee meeting sharing the various procedures on branding and materials on the MCAAHC's website and social media platforms.

*BDM Committee Report-Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene, Co-Chair*

Commissioner Janice Curtis Green shared that she and Commissioner Edwin T. Johnson are the co-chairs.

- She also said that BDM Committee consists of the following members: Commissioner Maya Davis, Commissioner Cheryl McLeod, Commissioner Adi Nkwonta, and Commissioner Dr. Barbara Paca and the BDM staff.

She reported that the group collectively met on April 9, 2021 to prepare the MCAAHC's fall program.

- It was suggested that this program would focus on healing and reconciliation from the effect of COVID-19 on the African American community.
- The MCAAHC's program would focus on ASALH's theme, "The Black Family, Rebirth, and Reconciliation and Renewal."
  - The ideas that were presented were to:
    - Have a candlelight service out in front of the museum on Franklin Street
    - Present Hybrid programs virtual and inside the BDM where there will be music, poetry, and bells that would be rung to celebrate the African American family.
    - Ask Dr. Sherita Golden, Chief Diversity Officer from John Hopkin's University, to possibly speak on the technology divide for African Americans in facing COVID-19.
    - Devise a timeline at the BDM Committee's April 29<sup>th</sup> meeting for the various sponsored BDM-MCAAHC upcoming programs.
- Commissioner Greene shared that she has been working with Reverend Osborne Robinson, Pastor of St. James African Union Methodist Protestant Church in East Towson.
  - Saint James is the second-oldest church operating in Towson and the oldest of the area's Black congregations.
  - The original church members lived in East Towson—a small settlement was founded and built by Black men and women that were held in slavery on Hampton estate before their emancipation in Maryland in 1864.
  - Pastor Robinson is interested in the process of having St. James declared as an Historical Landmark. Dr. Charlotte Lake of Maryland Historical Trust is working with me on this project and has provided names & resources.

- Commissioner Janice Curtis Green is also working with Mr. Kenneth Abrams, of the Towson University African American student Alumnae Association.
  - They are working with Karen Darden and the Friends of Lutherville Colored School #24 on a restoration project.
- Commissioner Greene is hoping to collaboratively bring these two entities together so that the rich African American history of Towson, Maryland can be shared abroad.
- Commissioner Greene said that she, Commissioner Cheryl McLeod, Commissioner Tony Spencer, Commissioner Elinor Thompson, and Commissioner Hatza will be working as judges for the African American History annual contest.
- Last but not least Commissioner Greene has been appointed by Governor Larry Hogan to serve another four years on the MCAAHC.

### *Individual Commissioner Reports*

Commissioner Torrey Snow reported:

- The Frederick Douglass Foundation, of which he serves as the president of the Anne Arundel County location, has petitioned the Anne Arundel County Public Library system. His organization recognized that there were only six Frederick Douglass books total in all of the various county libraries. Monies were raised by the community at large and from this public initiative the Anne Arundel County Library has engaged itself in having more African American History materials as well as Frederick Douglass books and materials present.
- Commissioner Snow shared at the MCAAHC public meeting that he is devising a letter of support for the history of the Rosenwald Schools to be shared throughout the entire Anne Arundel County Library system.
- He is specifically requesting that the Anne Arundel County Library system identify and circulate additional literature items related to the Rosenwald project as well as have the backing and support of the MCAAHC Commissioners with a letter.
  - Chair Wilson opened up the floor for the MCAAHC Commissioners to have dialogued on this matter as well as a vote to be taken.
    - Commissioner Torrey Snow made a motion that MCAAHC support this endeavor by writing a letter for this initiative.
    - Commissioner Tony Spencer seconded for the letter of support and the motion carried.
      - All MCAAHC Commissioners were in favor for the Rosenwald Book project letter.

A larger narrative was discussed by Commissioner Cheryl McLeod where she was concerned as to whether there were more Frederick Douglass and Rosenwald School materials in all of Maryland's public libraries.

- From Commissioner Snow's report, he, Commissioner McLeod, Commissioner Janice Curtis Greene and Commissioner Elinor Thompson would research this matter and report back to the MCAAHC with their findings.

Commissioner Cheryl McLeod made a motion for adjournment, it was seconded by Commissioner Torrey Snow, and the motion carried.

The public meeting was adjourned at 12:43 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

LeRonn Herbert, Special Assistant