



ABOUT THE WRIGHT

The Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History (The Wright) is a museum and cultural institution with powerful exhibits and collections, dynamic public programs, and ripple effects that impacts a robust audience of approximately 100,000 visitors, members, and key stakeholders both within our doors, and through our digital imprint each year.



The Wright was founded in 1965 by Dr. Charles H. Wright, an obstetrician and gynecologist who founded the institution as Detroit's International

Afro-American Museum. Inspired by his own travels Dr. Wright envisioned using the power of African American culture to instill respect, wonder and a sense of self-knowledge amongst children and youth. Initially operating out of a converted residence, and then through exhibitions in a mobile home, the museum experienced decades of growth and now lives in an iconic 122,000 square foot facility in the heart of the Midtown Cultural District.

Today, our mission is to open minds and change lives through the exploration and celebration of African American history and culture. This mission really fuels a larger vision that we can create a world in which the adversity and achievement of African American history moves each of us toward greater understanding, acceptance, and unity.

KEEPER OF STORIES: PRESERVING OUR HISTORY

We often describe the Wright as the keeper of stories. Stories of a lived experience largely untold to the world around us. These histories are a missing link that does not erase what has been told before but adds a critical piece to the American narrative. African American history not only puts our shared past in a more complete context but adds much needed clarity to our current moment of political, social and cultural uncertainty.

The Wright was founded to teach our children and our children's children the incredible story of the Africans who became a seminal part of the American dream. Within this story we see the perseverance, pride, and spirit of innovation now so much a part of each of us that the world over recognizes these traits and values as distinctly American.

Unfortunately, The Wright, one of the first and largest museums of its kind in the United States, has been chronically underfunded for decades. This is notwithstanding the valiant efforts of many individuals and institutions within our community who provided the support to keep our doors open. The irony was that it was long known that short-term solutions would not translate



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into long-term sustainability. However, there was hope that a solution would become clearly outlined over time.

In October of 2019 the Wright would be named by the Ford Foundation as one of America's Culture Treasurers a designation that recognizes 20 organizations "without whom our nation's

cultural landscape would be irreparably changed. This was not only due to the national footprint The Wright has had on our sector, but also recognizes its impact on our local and regional community. Notably, The Wright's rotunda is the site of the final viewing ceremonies for such American luminaries as Rosa Parks, Aretha Franklin, Judge Damon Keith among others.



Following that designation, The Wright experienced an influx of support that temporarily paused the anxiety and threat of immediate closed doors, and created a post pandemic path that could extend the life of the institution for an additional few years. That temporary respite is quickly coming to an end.

THE ROAD AHEAD

Currently, at The Wright we are furiously working to address the repair and restoration needed literally and figuratively. Slowly but surely, we make progress on over 25 million dollars of deferred maintenance, but it is only a fraction of what is required to fully address overall repair and on-going maintenance. Notably these costs are escalating 5-8% each year they are not addressed.

Our team continues to grow, and The Wright has been able to both attract and retain incredible talent who could leverage the institution's potential to attract and produce world class programming. And while we are hopefully exiting the years where we operated with 1/3 less staff, our long-term viability requires more resources.

The Wright is poised to bring our programming into the 20 century and reimagine parts of our core exhibition utilizing some of most cutting- edge technology available in exhibition design field. We are poised to realize Dr. Wright's visions of giving our young people a sense of who they are in the world and how that identity has made America a better place for all of us.

Our path forward will require an urgent effort to strengthen our capacity to attract and manage the levels of financial and human capital necessary to maintain our work at an unparalleled level of excellence in perpetuity.

What is a dream for most institutions, now feels like a true hope and possibility for The Wright.

We are the caretakers of a legacy that was created before many of us were born and will , with your help, continue to affect thousands of children and adults for decades to come.