

DeKalb History Center

Historic DeKalb Courthouse
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Decatur GA 30030

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Black History Month Celebration

By Tiffany Parks

DeKalb County has developed a rich, complex African American political history but it wasn't always so inclusive. This year, the DeKalb History Center celebrated DeKalb's powerful African American political legacy. The guests and generous donors were welcomed by Melissa Forgey, Executive Director; Jacqui Steele, President of the Board; and Tiffany Parks, board member. The opening speaker was the charismatic Representative Billy Mitchell, District 88, who set a relaxing tone with his witty remarks. Deborah Strahorn was the event's moderator, and she did an excellent job keeping the program flowing and the audience engaged.

The DeKalb School of the Arts' HighLeit Chorus stirred the audience to applause after singing what is considered to be the Black national hymn, "Lift Every Voice and Sing," and "I'm Going to Sing 'Til the Spirit Moves in My Heart." Jeffery Funderburk was the chorus's enthusiastic conductor.

Dr. Mary Etta Thomas, retired library media specialist, was the panel moderator. The engaging

panel members included State House Representative Vernon Jones, 91st District; Jamar Boyd II, minister and President of Georgia NAACP Youth and College Division; Janelle Jones, Regional Field Director, Republican Party of Georgia; and Smah Abdelhamid, community organizer in DeKalb. The panel discussed topics ranging from the future of African American politics in DeKalb, the Black Church and politics, DeKalb's immigrant and refugee communities and religious discrimination, and the Republican Party's strategy to recruit more African Americans.

Dr. Robert Holmes, former Georgia State House Representative for the 53rd district, and Mr. Peter Scott, *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* journalist, were the next presenters. Mr. Scott discussed what life was like politically for African Americans during and after the Civil Rights

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Panel members from left to right: Mr. Jamar Boyd II, Mrs. Smah Abdelhamid, Ms. Janelle Jones, and Representative Vernon Jones.

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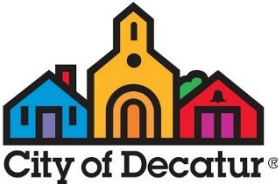
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Upcoming Events

MAY	“High Noon History” Walking Tours Every Friday in May A series of walking tours highlighting the history of Decatur Square. 12:00-12:45 pm <i>Historic DeKalb Courthouse south steps</i>	Bus Tour: Athens, GA May 18 Enjoy an all-day excursion to the Classic City complete with a full itinerary. 9:00 am—5:00 pm <i>Meet at the Historic DeKalb Courthouse</i>	Lunch & Learn: Cabbagetown May 21 Learn about one of Atlanta’s mill town communities and how they were impacted by urban development in the 19th century. 2:00-1:00pm <i>Historic DeKalb Courthouse</i>	Hops: Author Elizabeth Cobbs— The Tubman Command May 22 Listen along with the story of Harriet Tubman’s most dangerous mission. 6:00—8:00 pm <i>Historic DeKalb Courthouse</i>	DeKalb Traveler: Cabbagetown May 28 Tour the museum and 1881 cotton mill complex. 10:00-11:30 am <i>Meet at The Patch Works Art & History Center</i>
	Lunch & Learn: Early African American Heritage in Decatur Laurel Wilson, MP June 11 12:00-1:00 pm <i>Historic DeKalb Courthouse</i>		DeKalb Traveler: African American History Tour of Decatur Cemetery June 13 6:30– 8:00 pm <i>Decatur Cemetery</i>		

New exhibit opening
July 2019

Silk & Stitch: An Exploration of Embellishment in Fashion

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All funds received through memberships directly support the preservation of DeKalb County history and are tax-deductible as allowed by law. Your generous contribution to the DeKalb History Center will provide you with a year-long membership that includes our quarterly newsletter to keep you informed on all our activities. We hope that you will join our team by either renewing your membership or joining as a first-time supporter.

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Please mail this form with your contribution to: DeKalb History Center, 101 East Court Square, Decatur GA 30030

Deep Roots in DeKalb: The Flat Rock Story of Resilience

Deep Roots in DeKalb: The Flat Rock Story of Resilience explores the history of one of the oldest African American communities in Georgia. Following the aftermath of the Civil War, it was imperative to find safety in numbers and to remain a strong community of support for one another. This is what Flat Rock did and has continued to do for more than one hundred years.

Theodore A. Bryant, Sr., was an essential leader in the community of Flat Rock by establishing its development through the purchase and distribution of land to nearby families, in order to build a strong foundation of support and ensure the safety and well-being of the community.

This exhibit, located at the DeKalb History Center, includes objects collected over time from the residents of Flat Rock and explores the story of the community through aspects that defined the identity of the town as a whole. This exhibit could not have been accomplished without the generosity of Flat Rock Archives, who

graciously lent part of their collection and all of their expertise to allow us to share the remarkable story of Flat Rock.

A special thank you to Johnny Waits, President and Co-founder of The Flat Rock Archives, and Kelly Woodard Palakshappa, Board Member, for their bountiful guidance on the exhibit.

Deep Roots in DeKalb: The Flat Rock Story of Resilience will be on display until February 2021. ✦



Church pew and Robe of Reverend T.A. Bryant, Jr.

Flat Rock School, circa 1903.



Black History Month Celebration

Continued from page 1

Movement in DeKalb, and Dr. Holmes discussed what life was like politically for African Americans before the civil rights movement in DeKalb, including Jim Crow laws and the Primus King Case.

Zest Atlanta catered lunch for our event.

After lunch, an original film written by Tiffany Parks and edited by Ben Whisenhunt was shown: *A Short History of African American Politics in DeKalb County: From Struggle to Transformation*. The film opened with Mayor Emeritus M. Elizabeth Wilson naming some of DeKalb's often neglected, obscure, and older African American communities like Flat Rock, County Line, and Lynwood Park. African Americans did not have political power before the 1960s. Mr. Peter Scott noted that literary tests ensured that most African Americans were eliminated from voting in DeKalb. Any African Americans attempting to register to vote could be fired from their jobs, jailed, or even murdered. Many lost hope that justice would come in their lifetimes; however, the Primus King case of 1945-46, changed the trajectory of Georgia's political history. Primus King was a preacher in Columbus, Georgia. He sued his county Democratic Committee for denying his right to vote as a U.S. citizen and won, effectively eliminating the all-white Democratic primary in Georgia. The film also highlighted how the Black Church became the incubator for the ideas and tactics that would shape the Civil Rights Movement. It did not take long for African Americans to start challenging Jim Crow laws.

Mayor Emeritus Elizabeth Wilson, along with her friends, integrated the Decatur/DeKalb Library in 1962 and remembered when the Ku Klux Klan marched across Decatur Square in 1963. Wilson and her neighbors no longer feared the Klan or their tactics. Many whites and Jews in DeKalb's political circles were fervent supporters of the Civil Rights Movement, including Judge Clarence Seeliger, the first judge to remove the Confederate flag

from his courtroom, and Liane Levetan, the second CEO of DeKalb County. All of the past dreams and hopes of many African Americans were realized when Barack Obama became the first African American President of the United States. However, despite President Obama's historic win, Scott and Wilson cautioned of more work to do in the areas of voting registration and education. The future of African American politics in DeKalb and Georgia looks bright as people from all races and religions succeed in winning elections. Stacey Abrams came close to becoming Georgia's first African American Governor in 2018.

The DeKalb History Center's 11th Annual Black History Month program was well received, and it left the audience with a newfound appreciation for the long struggle and extraordinary transformation that occurred in DeKalb's African American political community.

Thank you elected politicians, community activists, donors, and audience members for making this a great event! ✦



The DeKalb School of Arts' HighLeit Chorus performing during the program.

Annual Meeting

During the Annual Meeting, new directors and officers were elected: President, John Hewitt; President Elect, Angela Turk; Treasurer, Lyle Davis; Secretary, Tiffany Parks; Past President, Jacqui Steele. The incoming board members are Lyle Davis, Amy Henderson, Michael Lehman, Frank Maddox, Tiffany Parks, Jack Regan, Deborah Van Broekhoven, Angela Walton, and Tricia Wynegar. Our Trustee for 2019 is Cathy Mullins. Thank you to the outgoing board members, Shelia Harkelroad, Sam McRae, Pete Pfeiffer, Meg Samuels, and Joe Stoner, for your service to the organization.

Generous donations from over 100 local businesses, individuals, and restaurants paved the way to help us raise over \$7,000 for the DeKalb History Center. Thank you so much for your support!

Moreover, we could not have done it without all the delicious food from our preferred caterers. Guests enjoyed food from Avalon Catering, Endive Fine Catering, Fox Brothers Bar-B-Q, Gotta Have It Catering, Low Country Catering, Oakhurst Market, Party Execs, Phenomenal Foods by Chef Holly, Sun in my Belly, and Zest Atlanta. A huge thank you also to C Brown Photo, PeachyKeen Planners & Décor, Peachtree Tents and Events, and SE Events for their décor and services during the event!

Thank you to our wonderful volunteers for the evening who kept everything running smoothly: Rick Setser, Gwen Green, Charles Turner, Lucy Larrousse, Pete Pfeiffer, Mindy Georges, Cathy Mullins, Mary K Jarboe, Tiffany Parks, Stephanie Cherry-Farmer, Timothy Patton, Caleb Martin, and Samantha Mooney.

Auction packages included items from the following donors: 2000 A.D. Inc. Concepts in Floral Art, Agave, Aikido Center of Atlanta, Aimée Jewelry & Fine Art Gallery, Alliance Theatre, Atlanta Botanical



& Silent Auction



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