

For Immediate Release

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Chocolate Cities Exhibition Series: The History, Legacy, and Sustainability of African American Urban Enclaves *An Artistic Exploration of History and Social Justice*

The Prince George's African American Museum and Cultural Center (PGAAMCC) is proud to present **Chocolate Cities: The History, Legacy, and Sustainability of African American Urban Enclaves**. This year-long series of exhibitions and programming will examine African American self-sustained enclaves throughout the United States, focusing specifically on Washington, DC and Prince George's County, MD.

The term *Chocolate City* has historical significance in Washington, DC. Coined in the 1970's by local radio personalities and made popular by the funk band Parliament, the term did not solely indicate the color of the population but also the vibrant communities and cultural pride among its residents. For Deejay Bobby "The Mighty Burner" Bennett, *Chocolate City* "was the expression of DC's classy funk and confident Blackness;" it was about being Black, proud, and in power. Not only were Black people the majority, but they also had strength within the city through politics, business ownership, music, and culture. Now, during a time of dramatic demographic and cultural shifts, PGAAMCC's **Chocolate Cities Exhibition Series** will explore the legacy of and track the continual changes within the nation's capital and Prince George's County.

Chocolate Cities will feature three exhibitions featuring Washington, DC and Prince George's County based artists and youth: **Chocolate Cities Group Show**, **Sacred Cows: Works by Imar Hutchins**, and **Culture Keepers Presents: Chocolate Cities Youth Exhibition**. These exhibitions will run in conjunction with PGAAMCC's two permanent exhibitions – **Sharing Our Stories: Treasures from Our Collection**, a display of objects from the Museum's Collections and **Footsteps from North Brentwood**, a photographic exhibit celebrating the history of Prince George's first African American Incorporated Township, North Brentwood. PGAAMCC Executive Director Chanel Compton states, "*As Prince George's County towns and municipalities evolve and diversify, it is ever more important to keep local history and culture preserved. Prince George's County is a model for Black mobility, and our Museum is actively preserving that history of community leadership and ingenuity for new generations of innovators.*" PGAAMCC will host a monthly series of **Chocolate Cities** public programs at the Museum for audiences of all ages and backgrounds. This exhibition program series is in partnership with Chocolate Redux, an arts and social justice non-profit located in Washington, DC.

PGAAMCC is located at 4519 Rhode Island Avenue, North Brentwood, MD 20722. Schedule your tour today or stop by during our Gallery hours: Tuesday-Saturday - 10am-5pm.

Chocolate Cities Group Exhibition - February 8, 2017-September 26, 2017

Chocolate Cities Group Exhibition is a multidisciplinary art exhibition highlighting the changing cultural and economic landscape of Washington, DC and Prince George's County, MD through the eyes of local artists. In the past decade, Washington, DC has dramatically changed due to population growth, gentrification, and government policy. It is no longer the same *Chocolate City* that the funk band Parliament referred to in the 1970s, but it still remains distinctively DC. The work included in this exhibition seeks to open up a discourse on gentrification, cultural sustainability, and economic growth in a way that recognizes individual experiences as well as collective memory. Through an examination of the history of *Chocolate Cities*, and an interrogation of current challenges such as economic segregation and gentrification as a form of cultural castration, this exhibition will open up a discourse on historical legacy as well as methods of sustainability in the face of a rapidly changing cultural and economic landscape. **Chocolate Cities Group Exhibition** is curated by Martina Dodd and showcases original works by featured artists: Tim Davis, Lloyd Foster, Omolara Williams McCallister, Lionel Frazier, Sheila Crider, Michael Booker, and Larry Cook.

Sacred Cows - February 8, 2017-May 19, 2017

Imar Hutchins' portraits are not only adorned in elaborate jewelry and colorful symbolism, but also cloaked in honor. Inspired by the reverence bestowed upon cows in India, Hutchins' latest series of collage and mixed media work – **Sacred Cows** – offers unique commentary on the treatment of Black people in America. Through the blending of species, cultures, and belief systems, the artist calls attention to the parallels and paradoxes of sacred cattle and exploited chattel. **Sacred Cows** is curated by Martina Dodd.

Culture Keepers: Chocolate Cities Youth Exhibition - June 2, 2017-September 26, 2017

The *Chocolate Cities* theme takes lead in the Museum's teen after-school program, *Culture Keepers*. Students in the program are currently researching historically African American counties, neighborhoods, and cities - locally and nationally. Under the guidance of PGAAMCC's Scholar-in-Residence and Teaching Artists, Culture Keepers students will create artwork based on their findings, which will to be featured as an exhibition at the Museum in June. PGAAMCC Education Coordinator Dr. Synatra Smith states, "*Our Students, who come from all walks of life and ethnic backgrounds, are very excited about the Chocolate Cities theme this year; they get to learn about Black history and culture through a contemporary and creative lens. For example, we just led a presentation about the Netflix show Luke Cage and explored the significance of an African American bulletproof superhero charged to protect a historically African American community: Harlem. They loved the presentation and post-discussion because it incorporated their pop cultural interests into engaging scholarly discourse.*" In partnership with Prince George's County Public Schools, the Culture Keepers after-school program takes place weekly at three school sites: Suitland, Dr. Henry A. Wise Jr., and Northwestern high schools.

Chocolate Cities Exhibition Series Public Programs:

Opening Reception

Friday, February 10th, 2017

6:30-9pm

Well Rooted: Black Townships in Prince George's County

Sunday, February 26, 2017

2-4pm

Black Wall Street: Pathways to Community Wealth

Saturday, March 11, 2017

2-4:30p

Chocolate Cities Artist Talk

Thursday, March 16, 2017

6-8pm

Designed for Decay: Unpacking Environmental Racism

Thursday, April 6, 2017

6-8pm

First Fridays with Chocolate Redux

Friday, May 5, 2017

7-9pm

Family Day: A Taste of Chocolate City

Saturday, July 1, 2017

2-6pm

Culture Keepers Opening Reception and Panel Discussion

Thursday, June 1, 2017

6pm-9pm