

AND MAY THE TRUTH SET US FREE
Dr. Joanne M. Martin, Founder
The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum, Inc.
Speaks Out About \$900,000 Wax Figures And Other Myths

My late husband Dr. Elmer P. Martin and I set out over 25 years ago to challenge those who would say that people of African descent have no history worth preserving.

We have remained true to our mission of being “*More Than A Museum*”. This means that we deliberately located to a fragile community of East Baltimore to help black youth know that children, even in fragile communities, deserve to have a museum as a part of their everyday life.

We have fought against all efforts to force us to “whitewash” our history, opting instead to speak truth to power.

These were battles well worth fighting.

Why, now, our community-based, grassroots, make-a-way-out-of-no-way organization finds itself having to fend off lies and half truths about \$900,000 wax figures, I am at a loss to understand. I cannot imagine any museum bold enough to charge \$900,000 for a wax figure or any organization crazy enough to pay that amount. Certainly not The National Great Blacks In Wax Museum as we prepare through our planned block long expansion to tell, among other stories, “the Making of the African American Community”. And certainly not the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., a venerable sorority whose story we are proud to tell.

We have wax figures of the founders of AKA, Delta Sigma Theta, Zeta Phi Beta as well as Chi Eta Phi Professional Nursing Sorority, The Prince Hall Masons, the Links, the National Council of Negro Women, and the National Political Congress of Black Women. Each of these figures was funded by their organizations. We spotlight the history of the Presidents: Dorothy Height (NCNW; William Hayling, Nathaniel Goldston, Thomas Dortch (100 Black Men of America); Barack Obama (the U.S.A.)

Indeed our Museum details the African American Experience from Ancient African and Slavery through the Civil Rights era up to today.

We took on the AKA's "Centennial Project" to highlight the significant and important Anniversary of the nation's oldest African American Sorority, with wax figures of the President who was at the beginning of the 100 year journey, Nellie Quander, and the person who was at the helm as the Sorority heads into the next centennial, Barbara McKenzie.

It is my hope that other organizations will come on board to help us preserve their legacies as well.

For the record, they will likely be charged our standard fee that thus far has not exceeded \$25,000 per figure. The AKA's paid \$22,500 per figure for a total of \$45,000. That's a far cry from \$900,000!

Perhaps we will be able to lay this story to rest soon. There are, after all, youth who need to understand my late husband Elmer's Message to the Ancestors.