



6th Annual State of Africatown A Huge Success

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Africatown Seattle presented their annual report card to the community on Saturday in the form of the 6th Annual State of Africatown at Langston Hughes. The State of Africatown is where the organization reports on their 2018 successes as well as to foreshadow what is on the horizon for 2019.

This year's State of Africatown was well attended by community members as Langston Hughes Performing Arts Institute was just under capacity. The community was joined this year by City of Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan as well as Seattle Police Chief Carmen Best among many other municipal, nonprofit, and community stakeholders who were in the building. **Recognizing Elders**

Every year Africatown honors elders for their commitment to the enrichment of our community over the decades. This year Africatown honored Dr. Norwood Brooks and Muriel Softli with the Elders of Distinction Award for their dedicated work for to the advancement of our community.

Looking back to move forward

There were several presentations that outlined specific project and program successes last year including the Africatown Education Plan overview and the announcement of the Africatown Communiversy launch by Dr. Marcia Arunga, Heal to Rebuild presented by Cynthia Winters of Institute for African Centered Thought, Rite of Passage Inaugural Cohort presented by Black Starline.

The Youth Speak Up

The future of Africatown was shining as youth displayed their recent creations as a part of the I Am Africatown art workshop held during winter break. Artist and instructor Leshawn Gamble stressed the need for providing the cultural awareness and affirmations of their identity. Africatown Youth Ambassador alumni turned program lead, Cashayla Rodgers, gave a moving speech about her family's struggle to keep her brother out of the school to prison pipeline and the need for community based solutions. The young leaders of the Black Star Line Rites of Passage Program demonstrated one program that has risen from years of work in the community.

Economic Empowerment

Troy Dawson gave updated the community on the progress of the Direct Impact Dollars Initiative developed by the Elevate Movement founded by Debrena Jackson-Gandy. The DID initiative has successfully raised its first pool of funds directly from community members and are looking for businesses that need capital. Evelyn Allen provided updates on the work of the Black Community Impact Alliance and Mr. Kwadwo Oware Jr, of the Washington Coalition of African Leaders spoke on the work

to unify the African diaspora in Washington state and the importance of working towards unity for our collective well being.

This years State of Africatown also saw the new Africatown Media Network officially unveiled and launched to the community. The Africatown Media Network was created just a few short months ago as a platform to activate the community to action around core issues and as well to reclaim the Black communitys narrative from the mainstream media around our community and our people. The Africatown Media Network will primarily focus on delivering content via new media platforms which includes, Podcasts, Streaming Media, Social Media, as well as Mobile Apps, SMS, and IPTV.

Using Mobile to Mobilize

Africatown also updated the community on their text message platform that was launched in November in direct response to the crashing of the Liberty Bank Building phone lines. Since its inception hundreds of community members have texted HOME to 206 309 6324 to get housing resource information and as well to stay up to date for opportunities to mobilize and activate around the cause of affordable housing. Africatown has added text BIZ and text ART to provide resources for those seeking business and art opportunities in the community.

2019 and beyond

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The keynote address was delivered by Africatown Community Land Trust President,, K. Wyking Garrett who outlined several key projects and milestones including the leasing up of the Liberty Bank Building, successful events reconnecting those with CD roots with the Imagine Africatown Midtown Activation which included Paint the Block Party, the Reunion on Union, Black Market pop-ups, Holiday Soul Market and Earls 30 Year Anniversary event. Garrett also updated the community on Africatowns current progress of the Africatown Plaza affordable housing development which is slated to break ground in 2020 on 23rd and Union.

Key goals for 2019 include activation and transfer of Fire Station 6 to become the William Grose Center for Cultural Innovation and Africatowns work to revitalize Seattle Vocational Institute as a center of community education, cultural and economic development and preserving the Prince Hall Masonic Temple as a community asset.

Africatown has set a broad agenda for 2019 and looks forward to the communitys support to achieve the organization's goals of continuous economic, educational, and mental growth of our community.