



# Alexandria Times

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## Out of the Attic

### Preserving the present: Documenting the city's response to the killing of George Floyd

*Alexandria Times, February 25, 2021*

Image courtesy Alexandria Black History Museum

The Alexandria Black History Museum is dedicated to not only collecting the story of Alexandria's past, but also documenting its present for future generations. In the wake of the tragic killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, there was an outpouring of shock, grief, solidarity and action from the Alexandria community.

Vigils, peaceful marches, posters, signs and sidewalk messages appeared across the region. They gave voice to the feelings and emotions felt by a community at a pivotal moment in history. Much of this material was ephemeral, homemade and quickly constructed by people who felt an overwhelming need to give public voice to their personal emotions and beliefs.

Realizing both the historical importance of the events and transient nature of the material culture created, the Alexandria Black History Museum staff knew that they needed to mobilize an effort to capture the community's response for the Museum's permanent collection in order to preserve this story for the future.

The Museum put out a call to the local community to record their feelings, thoughts, artwork, photographs and objects. Staff collected some tangible objects, including Black Lives Matter masks, pins, signs, artwork and t-shirts.

However, the greatest volume of donations were digital photographs. Some are works of art, hauntingly beautiful and poignantly sad. Others are snapshots taken by people while marching or standing at vigils and peaceful protests. Many document the signs of solidarity and allyship that sprung up in the windows of shops, restaurants and homes throughout the Alexandria and Washington D.C. area. And a few are of a proud father and his young daughter standing beneath the Black Lives Matter Plaza street sign near St. John's Church in Washington D.C.

The ABHM's staff added the digital photographs and the physical objects to the Museum's permanent collection, creating the Black Lives Remembered Collection. The Collection is now available to view through our Historic Alexandria Collections Online portal. The Museum will launch a new online exhibition for the anniversary of George Floyd's death in May that documents the local community's response.

Office of Historic Alexandria staff conducted several oral history interviews with members of the community and these too will be added to the archive of voices recording these momentous events. You





## Office of Historic Alexandria City of Alexandria, Virginia

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can read the statement released on June 9, 2020 by ABHM Director Audrey Davis, which is posted on the Museum's website, as well as the statements of many city leaders who also spoke out.

You can still contribute to this collecting initiative by completing an online form available on the ABHM website or by contacting the Museum.

Learn more about the collections and the work of the Alexandria Black History Museum at our website, [alexandriava.gov/BlackHistory](http://alexandriava.gov/BlackHistory) and the work and programming of the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project which, in conjunction with the Equal Justice Initiative, is a city-wide initiative dedicated to helping Alexandria understand its history of racial terror hate crimes and work toward creating a welcoming community bound by equity and inclusion.

*"Out of the Attic" is published each week in the Alexandria Times newspaper. The column began in September 2007 as "Marking Time" and explored Alexandria's history through collection items, historical images and architectural representations. Within the first year, it evolved into "Out of the Attic" and featured historical photographs of Alexandria.*