

Marin County Post

Color of Time – MoAD's 2018 Afropolitan Ball

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From left: Elizabeth Alexander, Monetta White, Karen Jenkins-Johnson, dancing. (Photos by Drew Allizer).

The sold-out Afropolitan Ball, in support of the Museum of the African Diaspora (MoAD), took place on the evening of Oct. 27 at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco, and honored Elizabeth Alexander, President of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and long-standing African-American gallery owner Karen Jenkins-Johnson.

It was recognized by guests as being one of the most memorable in its 13-year history—a night to celebrate the accomplishments and leadership of four extraordinary Black women, according to a press release from Nina Sazevich.

San Francisco's Mayor London Breed was welcomed to the stage to thunderous applause as the first female African-American Mayor.

MoAD Director and CEO Linda Harrison received a warm send off, as she has just been appointed the Director and CEO of the Newark Museum in New Jersey, making her the first African-American woman ever to be the director of a major, non-ethnically specific museum in the United States. Harrison, who worked for over five years at MoAD will be missed by the San Francisco Bay Area cultural community.

Alexander delivered her speech, following her introduction and tribute by Stanford University Professor Harry Elam, a scholar of African American drama. Framed in light of the synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh earlier that day and the pipe bombs that had been received by national leaders, Alexander began by acknowledging that we live in violent times in need of healing and talked about the power of art

to have a profound influence. "People are ennobled by encountering art," she said. "It's not hard to live with generosity," Dr. Alexander added, inspiring the room to think deeply about Black culture and investing in art.

Jenkins speech also was received with enthusiastic applause, as a call to action to collect and support Black art.

A \$250,000 gift from Dignity Health by Board Chair L. Wade Rose on behalf of its CEO Lloyd Dean, one of the event's honorary co-chairs, was announced. The gift establishes the Cultural Education and Artist Development Fund. The Fund will support the Museum's dedication to emerging young artists so that engaging in art—whether it be fine arts, dance, writing, or performance—is seen and understood as a viable and attractive endeavor.

With 500 guests, the Afropolitan Ball was MoAD's most successful fundraising event to date, as it broke last year's record and raised over \$1.3 million toward the Museum's mission to celebrate Black cultures, ignite challenging conversations, and inspire learning through the global lens of the African Diaspora.

Entertainment for the night included spoken word artist Marvin K. White, live saxophone by Charles McNeal, and the Medea Sirkas dance troupe with the Bay Area's Lady Ryan.

This year's theme, Color of Time, was designed by event designer Riccardo Benivades.

MoAD, a contemporary art museum, opened in 2005 in San Francisco's Yerba Buena arts district, and celebrates Black cultures, ignites challenging conversations, and inspires learning through the global lens of the African Diaspora.