

# The African American Cultural Gardens

The African American Cultural Gardens are situated on a four-acre sloping site, extending from Wheelock Avenue at the highest point, down to Martin Luther King, Jr., Drive at the St. Clair exit. The Gardens are dedicated to the past, present and future of the African American community. The African American gardens site is one of more than 30 established or planned ethnic cultural gardens that are part of the 100-year-old Cleveland Cultural Gardens and its representative organization, the Cleveland Federation of Cultural Gardens.

In the making for more than 30 years, the African American Cultural Gardens site is the result of the hard work and efforts of local African American community leaders led by the late Booker T. Tall, a professor at Cuyahoga Community College, as well as the Association of African American Cultural Gardens (AAACG), with the wide support of the Northeast Ohio black community.

The site was dedicated October 1977 and a design for the gardens by architect Daniel Bickerstaff was later approved.

## Interpretation of the Three Stages/Phases of the Garden Pavilions:

The Gardens site is being developed in three phases. Phase one broke ground May 2015. It was completed and dedicated June 2016.

Each phase of the Gardens site is designed as an interpretation of the African American experience...with an eye to the future.

### Past Pavilion:

The Past Pavilion translates the experience of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade through reinterpretation of the dungeons, corridors and ultimately the Door of No Return and slave castles that were located along the western coast of Africa. A sandstone portal symbolizes the Door of No Return and the notion of unknown transition, a planned fountain — The Infinity Fountain — will represent the illusionary tranquility of the Atlantic Ocean as seen through the original Door of No Return.

### Present Pavilion:

The Present Pavilion is designed to evoke a sense of “emergence.” The sculptural form emerges from the site, echoing our emergence as a people in this country despite the myriad of challenges — past, present and future. A polished black granite pyramidal concave and cultural form will have water pumped to its apex and then cascade down, creating dramatic sound and unique movement. The granite will also depict etched images of both Africa and the North/South American continents, showing slave boat routes across the Atlantic.

### Future Pavilion:

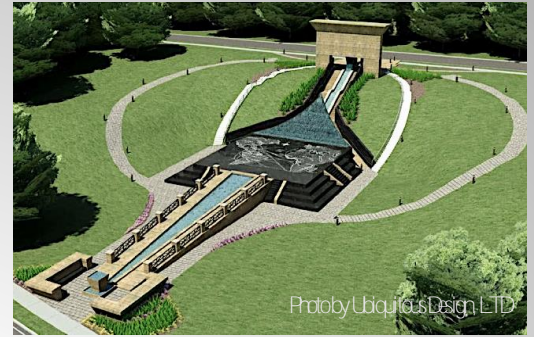
Located at the MLK, Jr., Drive end of the garden, the design of the Future Pavilion responds to the need and desire for reflection and hope through the re-introduction of a fountain and reflecting pool, contrasting and paying tribute to the Past Pavilion water feature.

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The night view of the gardens from the MLK, Jr. Drive side of the site will further illuminate the architectural highlights of the Future Pavilion, with the lighted fountain giving a sense of African American pride, power and of setting our own path.

The completion of each phase of the site will mark an important milestone for the community. In its entirety, the African American Cultural Gardens will provide a space for reflection as well as a site that can be used for educational and special events such as lectures, weddings, programs and other gatherings.

For more information about the African American Cultural Gardens and the Association of African American Cultural Gardens, see the Association's Facebook page and visit website: [www.aaacg.org](http://www.aaacg.org).





## **The Association of African American Cultural Gardens**

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## **Our Mission**

The specific purpose of this organization shall be to develop and preserve the African American Cultural Gardens. We will promote education and encourage interest in the African American culture and heritage by perpetuating a spirit of friendship among people of all nationalities. We will foster a spirit of brotherhood/sisterhood and world peace.

The Association of African American Cultural Gardens  
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