



UMB News

Moving History Creates Community Through Culture

July 13, 2022 | By [Jena Frick](#)

This summer, the [University of Maryland, Baltimore's](#) (UMB) [Community Engagement Center](#) (CEC) is bursting with arts and culture. In the basement, you'll hear the steady beat of a West African-inspired drum circle. On the second floor, you'll hear a strong chorus of young voices singing in harmony. And in the main dance room, you'll hear the rhythm of Baltimore Club music as children from the neighborhood learn the steps to an intricate dance routine.

The fun and excitement are the result of a partnership between UMB's [Office of Community Engagement](#) and [Moving History](#) , a locally owned summer enrichment program that teaches music, dance, voice, visual arts, and more through a historic lens that specifically teaches African culture and traditions.

"One thing we're really trying to be specific about is culture," says Breai Mason-Campbell, the director of Moving History. "Something that African Americans have struggled with is being commodified people, and that has happened to our culture. In this program, we are teaching kids about our history and showing how our culture evolved from that history. It's so important for us to be a steward of that culture so that it does not go away and it lives on in younger generations."

The day is split between several activities that hold historic significance. In one activity, participants are given instruments to play in an African drum circle. While they play as a group, they also learn about the Mali Empire and about how drumming was used as a form of communication and cooperation. Another activity involves the culinary arts, which teaches African American cooking traditions.

The program also infuses local African American culture into the curriculum such as Baltimore Club dance, which is the city's frenetic genre of movement that evolved from house music and incorporates elements of hip-hop and other fast-paced movements.

"If you go to Hawaii, you're going to see hula; if you go to Spain, you're going to see flamenco; and if you come to Baltimore, you're going to see Baltimore Club," says Mason-Campbell. "Baltimore Club is as Maryland as eating crabs. It's part of our folk heritage, which is why we teach it in this program."

The week concludes with a final performance for the families of the participants, where they can perform what they learned and explain the history. The participants also prepare a family meal based on what they learned in the culinary portion of the program. The goal is to create a shared sense of culture and community through the arts so people come away from the program with a strong sense of self and belonging.

"This is all about kids growing those roots, so they can feel more grounded as strong and really fully formed individuals," says Mason-Campbell. "I hope that they come out of this with a stronger sense of their own beauty and their own capability."



Participants in the Moving History Summer Enrichment Program at the Community Engagement Center learn about African history and culture with a drum circle.

The free program is taking place at the CEC three times this summer. The first two weeks were for elementary and middle school children and took place in June. A week of programming for high school students will be held Aug. 8-12. Interested participants can register for free at any time [here](#).

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