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Office of University Relations

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University Names Scholar in Residence for 'Riots and Rebirth' Project

Events to Assess Baltimore Before, During and After Unrest of 1968; Scholar Will Uncover Its Many Untold Stories

Peter B. Levy, professor of history at York College and author of numerous publications on the civil rights movement including an acclaimed book on a 1960s race riot in Cambridge, Md., will serve as scholar in residence at the University of Baltimore as it prepares for a year-long examination of the 1968 civil disturbances in Baltimore on the occasion of their 40th anniversary next year. Levy, whose teaching and scholarship focuses on several aspects of 20th century American history, including the labor movement, women's rights, civil rights, the environment, and economics, will join a team of UB professors, staff and students, and others from beyond campus in an intense, multi-faceted examination of the unrest that shook Baltimore in the days following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis in April 1968.

The city was devastated by nearly two weeks of disturbances that left six dead, dozens injured, hundreds if not thousands arrested, and a remarkable number of properties, both private and public, burned, shattered and in ruins. The events, which culminated in the deployment of thousands of armed National Guard troops across the city on the orders of President Lyndon Johnson, captured the attention of the nation, which already was reeling from similar riots in other cities across the country.

In 2008, UB will offer a close-up examination of the riots—their causes and the short- and long-term consequences—in a series of public events called "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth." The highlight of the events will be an on-campus conference in April '08 exploring the effects of the riots and the many efforts at civic healing that followed. This national gathering of experts will include scholars across disciplines as varied as race relations, civic engagement and 20th-century history.

Levy, whose book, *Civil War on Race Street: The Civil Rights Movement in Cambridge, Maryland*, received an Academic Title of the Year award from *Choice* magazine, will build on prior but incomplete knowledge about the Baltimore episode, engaging not only primary sources such as eyewitnesses but also secondary sources such as insurance and police and court records. His goal is to develop a portrait of the city both before and after the riots—one that helps explain why the city experienced such a prolonged period of anger and violence, and what resulted from it. "I hope to shed light on where the riots occurred, how intense they were and who was affected," Levy said. "It's a complicated series of events that has not received its due attention."

Levy added that he will attempt to answer the following questions:

- Were the post-assassination riots different than those that occurred in many American cities well before April 1968?
- How did the riots in Baltimore compare to the post-assassination riots in other cities?
- Did these riots lead to further official studies by federal or state commissions?
- If so, have scholars made use of these studies, or have they relied on findings released prior to King's murder?

Finally, the scholar in residence said he will consider the works and theories of disaster sociologists, with the goal of developing a theoretical framework for better understanding the Baltimore riots and their aftermath. Levy said that disaster sociologists such as Kai Erikson of Yale University have examined a variety of "catastrophic" events, ranging from hurricanes to the bombing of Hiroshima, in order to better understand how communities respond to disasters. Erikson, for example, looks beyond the physical destruction of disasters to the impact that these events have on the intangible ways that communities hold themselves together. In some cases, Erikson has discovered, the physical recovery from a disaster takes place much faster than the healing of the human psyche.

Levy said that in the months leading up to the conference, he also will work with other project members as an aid to their research and planning efforts.

"I plan to be a repository of everything we can possibly learn about Baltimore in 1968," he said.

Jessica Elfenbein, director of the Community Studies and Civic Engagement program in UB's Yale Gordon College of Liberal Arts and the lead organizer of the events, said that Levy's presence adds energy and insight to the sometimes daunting project.

"His expertise and confidence are inspiring to all of us who are looking into this difficult, tragic thing that happened to our city not so long ago," Elfenbein said. "Peter brings the historian's perspective, which is to understand that nothing is without shades of meaning, including violence in the streets. Once you grasp that, it's amazing to consider how far reaching the civil unrest was, how it resonates here today in many ways—some of which are part of the rebirth of Baltimore."

Levy holds a doctorate and master's degree in history from Columbia University, and a bachelor of arts from the University of California at Berkeley. He began teaching at York College in 1989 and was named a full professor there in 2004. Prior to that, he taught at Rutgers University.

His publications include nine books, with titles such as *America in the 1960s—Right Left and Center: A Documentary History; The New Left and Labor in the 1960s* (nominated for the Merle Curti Award, granted biannually for the best book in social history in American history by the Organization of American Historians); and *100 Key Documents in American Democracy.* He has produced more than 40 articles and reviews in scholarly publications, and a similar number of academic papers.

Levy serves as an editor for *Shapers of the Great Debates*, a multivolume series with a biographical approach to history. He is a peer reviewer for noted publications including *The*

Historian, Peace and Change and *The Journal of American History*, and has served as historical consultant to a number of special initiatives, including the Maryland chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union's Bill of Rights Education Project and the 25th Annual Conference on Black History in Pennsylvania.

More information about "Baltimore '68 Riots and Rebirth" is available by contacting Elfenbein at 410.837.5340.

University Announces Unprecedented Look at '68 Baltimore Riots Sparked by King Assassination

'Riots and Rebirth' to Assess City Before, During and After 'Cataclysmic' Events

December 14, 2006

Contact: University Relations

Phone: 410.837.5739

For two weeks in April 1968, beginning in the dark hours following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the city of Baltimore was devastated by a series of civil disturbances that left six dead, dozens injured and hundreds of properties, both private and public, burned, shattered and in ruins. The events, which culminated in the deployment of thousands of armed National Guard troops across the city on the orders of President Lyndon Johnson, riveted the attention of the nation, which already was reeling from similar riots in other cities across the country.

In 2008, the 40th anniversary of King's death, the University of Baltimore will offer a close-up examination of the riots—their causes and the short- and long-term consequences—in a series of public events called "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth." The highlight of the events will be a conference exploring the effects of the riots and the many efforts at civic healing that followed. This national gathering of experts, including scholars across disciplines as varied as race relations, civic engagement and 20th-century history, will take place on campus in April 2008, 40 years to the date of King's murder and the unrest that followed.

In addition, the University will sponsor and host a plethora of leading-edge academic activities related to these events and their aftermath, including a student-led oral history project, a

computer simulation of areas impacted by the violence and a major call for papers. UB's *Passager*, a nationally renowned literary journal for older writers, will devote an entire issue to contributed writings about these history-making events, and a one-of-a-kind traveling exhibition will be organized jointly by the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture and the Jewish Museum of Maryland. The University will unveil a dedicated "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" Web site, and a series of roundtable discussions on a variety of related topics will unfold during the weeklong conference.

Jessica Elfenbein, director of the Community Studies and Civic Engagement program in UB's Yale Gordon College of Liberal Arts and the lead organizer of the events, said that the national and international recognition of King's death presents a unique opportunity to examine an event that changed the city in ways that even now are clearly visible.

"Without a doubt, the 1968 riots were the most cataclysmic event in the history of modern Baltimore," Elfenbein said. "But for many reasons, most certainly because they denote such a terrible time for our city as well as for the rest of the country, these two weeks have, until now, been all but ignored by scholars and policymakers. Our program will present a first opportunity for the public to have a meaningful dialogue about what the disturbances did to the city, and how they informed issues as varied as school desegregation, neighborhood decay, bigotry and a host of other things that have been facts of life in Baltimore for a long time. We'll also look at what the riots inspired in the city in terms of healing, such as the City Fair, the change in political leadership and new commitments toward justice and equality. It's important to consider that the events, as destructive as they were, also sparked rejuvenation. But it was a terrible price to pay." The historical record indicates that the riots laid waste to streets and neighborhoods on both the east and west sides of the city. Grocery stores and other businesses were burned and looted, and whole blocks were cordoned off by police and the military. Thousands were arrested, but relatively few were prosecuted and even fewer convicted.

Many merchants, some of whom rode out the events with guns in hand behind the locked doors of their stores, ended up closing their businesses and leaving town, disenchanted or financially ruined. Today, the city's relatively few grocery stores and large sections of economic debilitation can be at least partially attributed to the riots—as well as to the sometimes irrational fear that followed. Perhaps most tragically, a number of racial lines were hardened by these events. A city that already was painfully segregated became arguably more so after those two weeks, and efforts to undo the damage have continued since.

As the University community plans for the 2008 commemoration, several activities are coming together to form the basis for "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth." A multidisciplinary planning committee has successfully completed research on all print media published in Baltimore pertaining to the death of King, the riots and civic engagement immediately following. Using those articles, the group has generated a comprehensive timeline that will be made broadly available throughout the community.

Currently, the committee is overseeing efforts by faculty and students to document the experiences of a range of Baltimoreans through an ambitious oral history project. In addition, the timeline is being used to create a computer simulation of riot activity, showing, for the first time, the patterns of disturbances as they moved across the city.

"Our goal is to be comprehensive in documenting and interpreting the impact of these violent episodes on our communities," Elfenbein said. "To do this, we are talking to ordinary Baltimoreans who may have been involved, including business owners, National Guardsmen, and schoolchildren—anyone who may have felt the effects."

A timetable for the conference and related activities is expected shortly after the first of the year. Further announcements concerning guest speakers, public events and related activities will be made in a timely fashion.

More information about "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" is available by contacting Elfenbein at 410.837.5340.

Proposals Requested for 'Riots and Rebirth' Project

2008 National Conference to Feature Wide Range of Studies, Presentations 40 Years After Cataclysmic Event

August 23, 2007 Contact: <u>University Relations</u> Phone: 410.837.5739

A formal request for proposals has been issued for the University of Baltimore's 2008 national conference, "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth." This public event, recognizing the 40th anniversary of the city's extended period of unrest that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., will take place April 3-5 of next year on the UB campus and at sites near the campus.

The RFP, available on the "Baltimore '68" <u>Web site</u> (look for the "<u>Call for Proposals</u>" heading) invites scholars, organizers and the public to contribute original ideas and approaches to mark this singular event in Baltimore's history. Sponsored by the Maryland Humanities Council, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and Baltimore Collegetown Network, the conference will draw a large and varied audience to the presentations. The event is expected to include keynote speakers, panel discussions, roundtables, poster sessions, film screenings, art installations, musical compositions, and workshops. The RFP calls for a one-page abstract for each proposal; the deadline for submissions is Nov. 1.

Proposals from presenters are expected to reflecting a variety of community perspectives. Major academic disciplines are invited and will be organized into tracks such as:

- Racism, race relations, and race politics
- Civil defense and homeland security, i.e. police, firefighters, National Guard

- Politics, i.e. Agnew, the rise of law and order, anti-war activity and more
- Health and strength of inner-city communities
- Business and economic effects of the riots then and now
- Engagement of arts, faith, and activist communities
- Federal involvement, i.e. the Kerner Commission and civil rights legislation
- Community development, i.e. land use, neighborhood issues, "smart growth"
- Depiction of rioting and social disturbances in the media
- Memory and reconciliation

Some sessions will focus on scholarly findings, while others will rely on the accounts of witnesses and those who were in leadership positions during and after April 1968. The conference will also consider the city's efforts to revitalize itself in the months and decades that followed. Comparative work that places the Baltimore experience into a national and international context is also welcome.

Learn more about "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" by visiting the Web site.

Unprecedented National Conference on '68 Riots to Foster Discussion on Civil Rights, April 3-5

Sessions and Presenters Announced for 'Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth' at University of Baltimore

January 31, 2008

Contact: University Relations

Phone: 410.837.5739

The University of Baltimore has announced the sessions and presenters who will participate in "<u>Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth</u>," an unprecedented national conference in Baltimore from April 3-5 on the causes and effects of the 1968 riots.

"Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" will begin with an opening plenary session on Thursday, April 3 at 6 p.m., entitled "Slavery, Jim Crow and the Death of a Dreamer: The Roots of a Riot," in the UB Student Center's Performing Arts Theater, 21 W. Mt. Royal Ave. It will be followed by a special screening of <u>*Pip & Zastrow*</u>, a film documentary (most recently seen at the Sundance Film Festival) showcasing two lifelong friends, one white and one black, who helped quell racial tensions in nearby Annapolis during the same period in which Baltimore erupted.

Daily plenary sessions, followed by concurrent sessions on a wide variety of topics related to the civil unrest and its causes and results, will be held throughout the three-day conference. These gatherings will feature authors, students, musicians, professors, attorneys, advocates and witnesses to the disturbances.

All of the conference events are open to the public, but registration is required. See the <u>conference Web page</u> for an online sign-up and a link to the conference brochure.

Jessica Elfenbein, coordinator of "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" and associate provost for university engagement at UB, said the purpose of the conference goes beyond a mere distillation of the history that was made in Baltimore in 1968.

"One of the primary goals of the conference is to place the events of 40 years ago within a larger historical context to allow a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of where we have been and where we are going," she said.

UB received dizens of proposals from presenters to be considered for panels, roundtables, poster sessions, film screenings, art installations, musical compositions, papers and workshops. Those submissions came from across the country—from Baltimore area high school students, to scholars and students from universities such as Boston, Columbia, Howard, Rutgers and Virginia Tech, and local institutions including UB, Coppin, Towson, MICA, UMBC, Loyola, Morgan, Johns Hopkins, CCBC, and the University of Maryland, College Park. All told, more than 100 people will be presenting during the three-day convening.

"Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" is sponsored by the University of Baltimore, along with the <u>Maryland Humanities Council</u>, the <u>Annie E. Casey Foundation</u>, <u>WYPR</u>-FM, and the <u>William G.</u> <u>Baker Jr. Memorial Fund</u>.

For more information, visit the <u>"Baltimore '68" Web site</u>, or call 410.837.4079.

Police Photos Reveal New Perspectives on City's '68 Unrest

More Than 100 Pictures, Most Not Seen in Decades, Archived at UB and Available for Public Viewing Online

March 11, 2008

Contact: University Relations

Phone: 410.837.5739

A cache of more than 100 photographs taken by the Baltimore City Police Department in the wake of Baltimore's 1968 civil unrest—many of them not widely seen since they were taken—have been loaned to the University of Baltimore's Langsdale Library, where the Special <u>Collections</u> department has scanned them and posted them <u>online</u>. The photos, which depict scene after scene of burned-out, looted and vandalized stores and residences caught up in the civil disorder, as well as police and military activity and glimpses from various news conferences about the events, are part of the growing collection of materials being showcased as part of UB's "<u>Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth</u>," a public convening slated for April 3-5 to mark the 40th anniversary of the events that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

The photos are from the collection of Lt. James Kelly of the Eastern District police station. Kelly is an amateur collector of artifacts related to the riots. Other items from his collection will be on display in Langsdale April 3-5.

Special Collections contains a wealth of information about the events of 1968, including footage from WMAR-TV, clippings from *The* (Baltimore) *Sun*, the *News American* and other print media outlets, records from neighborhood associations and personal recollections from witnesses to the disturbances. All of these materials are available online or by scheduling an appointment with Special Collections.

The complete line-up of events for "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" is available <u>here</u>. On-line registration also is available on that page. Further announcements about the convening will be made in the coming days.

Clement Price, Expert on Race Relations and History, to Deliver Keynote Address for 'Baltimore '68' April 4

Rutgers Professor to Speak on 'History and Memory'

March 24, 2008

Contact: University Relations

Phone: 410.837.5739

<u>Clement Price</u>, professor in the Department of History at the Newark campus of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey and an acknowledged expert on race and ethnic relations and black history, will present a keynote address, "History and Memory: Why It Matters That We Remember," as part of the University of Baltimore's "<u>Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth</u>," a public convening slated for April 3-5 to mark the 40th anniversary of the events that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Price will speak on Friday, April 4 at 12:30 p.m. in the Preston Room, 25 W. Preston St. The event is a highlight of the conference. (Attendance information available on the conference Web site.)

Price serves as a Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor, professor of history, and director of the Rutgers Institute on Ethnicity, Culture, and the Modern Experience at Rutgers-Newark. He has written a number of publications focusing on black history, race relations and modern culture in the United States and in New Jersey. His writings include two books, *Freedom Not Far Distant: A Documentary History of Afro-Americans in New Jersey* and *Many Voices, Many Opportunities: Cultural Pluralism and American Arts Policy*.

In 1999, Price was named the Council for Advancement and Support of Education Professor of the Year for New Jersey. Among his many examples of service is his leadership as consulting historian for the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority's public arts and history project, the Civil Rights Garden at the historic Carnegie Library in Atlantic City, N.J. The project has been called the most significant public commemoration of the modern civil rights movement in any northern state.

Working with Giles R. Wright of the New Jersey Historical Commission, Price founded the Marion Thompson Wright Lecture Series in 1981. It stands as one of the country's top scholarly programs devoted to the advancement of the historical literacy of a local community.

Price is an active member of the Smithsonian Institution's Scholars Advisory Committee of the African American Museum on the Mall. His dedication to public service has also led him to involvement in a variety of civic, cultural, educational and humanities organizations, including the Urban League of Essex County, the New Jersey Council on the Arts, the New Jersey Performing Arts Center, the Newark Museum and the Newark Public Library.

Price is a graduate of the University of Bridgeport (bachelor's and master's degrees) and Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey (doctorate). In 2006, he was inducted into the Rutgers University Hall of Distinguished Alumni.

The complete line-up of events for "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" is available <u>here</u>. On-line registration also is available on that page. Further announcements about the convening will be made in the coming days.

Lewis Museum to Present 'Ashes of a Dream' Exhibit During 'Baltimore '68' Conference

Traveling Display Shows Civil Rights Movement in City

March 27, 2008 Contact: <u>University Relations</u>

Phone: 410.837.5739

The <u>Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture</u> will present "From the Ashes of a Dream: Race and Revitalization Since MLK" as part of the University of Baltimore's "<u>Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth</u>," a public convening slated for April 3-5 to mark the 40th anniversary of the events that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. The exhibit will be at UB for the duration of the conference, in the fifth floor lobby of the University's <u>Student Center</u>, 21 W. Mt. Royal Ave. The display is free and open to the public.

"From the Ashes of a Dream" offers highlights of the local history of the civil rights movement, in a series of informative and richly illustrated panels. The display follows the movement from the rise of King's influence in the early 1960s, to his historic visit to Baltimore in 1963, to the changing mood of the country as civil rights coalitions split and reformed as the turbulent decade wore on. It also contains insights into the nation's reaction to King's death, and how that reaction played out in the city—directly linking to the period that is integral to the "Baltimore '68" convening.

Other parts of the exhibit will consider the role of the media in the public's understanding of these events, a local timeline of the civil unrest that followed King's death, and a look at continuing efforts to revitalize the city. The complete line-up of events for "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" is available <u>here</u>. On-line registration also is available on that page. Further announcements about the convening will be made in the coming days.

New Play Heightens Drama, Spurs Memories of Baltimore's 1968 Unrest

Cast Features Students from Local High Schools

March 31, 2008

Contact: University Relations

Phone: 410.837.5739

One Particular Saturday, an original play based on witness accounts of the civil unrest that rocked Baltimore in April 1968, will be performed as an artistic highlight of the University of Baltimore's "<u>Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth</u>," a public convening slated for April 3-5 to mark the 40th anniversary of the events that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. The play, written and directed by **Kimberley Lynne**, a published playwright and theater veteran who serves as UB's theater events coordinator, transforms the language and memories of six witnesses to the disturbances, recalling the drama and uncertainty of those days while also encouraging a frank and open discussion about race and history.

The play, cast with students from UB, the Baltimore School for the Arts and Baltimore City College, will be performed twice during "Baltimore '68"—on Friday, April 4 at 7 p.m., and in a matinee on Saturday, April 5 at 2:45 p.m. Both performances will be held in the Performing Arts Theater in the University's <u>Student Center</u>, 21 W. Mt. Royal Ave. Ticket information below.

Lynne said she was inspired to write the play after she read some eyewitness accounts of the riots. These authorized and transcribed accounts—some videotaped, some audio recordings—were conducted by UB students in an urban history class led by <u>Elizabeth M. Nix</u>, a visiting assistant professor in the Community Studies and Civic Engagement program. Nix's students

had convinced a number of eyewitnesses to share their memories of the unrest from their individual perspectives. Forty years after the events, Lynne shaped the accounts of a National Guardsmen, a college student, a white store owner, and three black youths into a powerful, transformative play about the clash of perspectives and the searing experience of violence.

"When I read these accounts, I was immediately taken back to 1968—I felt like I was there again and the disturbances were taking place all around me," Lynne said. "It was so clear that for these people, the riots in Baltimore were not something that was just mentioned in a history book or recalled as a couple of 'bad days' that they'd like to forget about. It really happened, and it deeply affected them. It changed the city in indescribable ways. I grew up here—I know what happened. I knew that to hear their words on a stage, spoken by students, would have a power. It would bring these explosive events into the present, and allow all of us to consider what happened and how we—and they—must work together to make sure that it never happens again. These were the worst times during a very bad time in our nation's history, but good can come out of it."

The play has no set, and the actors wear nondescript outfits in order to keep the focus on their portrayal. A small chorus reflects the events onstage, and generated video and photographic images heighten the experience.

The cast:

- Nick Pepersack (UB student) as Joe DiBlasi, a 20-year-old white National Guardsman
- Will Glasgow (Baltimore School for the Arts student) as Ed Fishel, a 20-year-old white Loyola College student and student activist
- **Brayden Simpson** (Baltimore School for the Arts student) as Bernard Gibson, and eighth-grade African American boy

- Vanecia Leonard (Baltimore City College student) as Lillie Hyman, an 18-year-old African American girl
- Patrick Martyn (local actor) as Herman Katkow, a 50-year-old Jewish store owner
- Chantel Dean (Baltimore School for the Arts student) as Devon Wilford-Said, a 14year-old African American girl

The chorus features **Terry Barnes** (Baltimore School for the Arts student), **Nia Hampton** (Baltimore City College student), **Maddie Tavis** (Baltimore School for the Arts student) and **Chris Rykiel** (UB student).

Plans are underway for future performances of *One Particular Saturday*. Details are forthcoming.

Ticket cost is included in the conference fee. Those who are not attending the conference but wish to attend the play should send an e-mail to <u>spotlightub@ubalt.edu</u> to reserve a seat on a will-call list. General seating tickets are \$5 each and will be available for purchase and pick up a half hour before the show. The April 4 performance also will be interpreted for the deaf.

The complete line-up of events for "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" is available <u>here</u>. On-line registration also is available on that page. Further announcements about the convening will be made in the coming days.