

# 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

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Dayton Emerging Fashion  
Incubator (DE-FI) LLC

# WELCOME MESSAGE

Dear Friends and Supporters,

2019 was a year of vision, voice, and validation. We opened the year by centering the community, hosting public planning sessions at the Dayton Metro Library to gather input on the creation of our first-of-its-kind fashion co-working space. Out of those sessions came a name that carried the spirit of everything we've built: The House of (DE-FI)ance: A Fashion & Design Co-working Experience.

Our work caught the attention of Five Rivers MetroParks, who invited us to be a part of their revitalization plans in the Wright-Dunbar neighborhood, just blocks from where I grew up and where my family once lived. While I knew the word "revitalization" often masked the reality of gentrification, we went into the meetings hopeful, ready to bring equity to the table and advocate for the residents already there; (DE-FI)'s leadership goal was to have a seat at the table and try to mitigate the harm done to the current residence and to help elevate them in the process.

During a tour of several spaces in the heart of the Wright-Dunbar area including the former Wright Brothers airplane factory (their 20 year plan) where they shared the details of their 5,10,15, 20, 30 year plan for the area with me and Ed Dixon. But as soon as I asked about rent control and community-based programming, the calls stopped. That told me everything I needed to know. Time will reveal the popular Black face they'll eventually choose to help sell displacement under the guise of progress...but it won't be me.

The Wright-Dunbar neighborhood was once a thriving, self-sufficient African-American community in the 1940s, '50s, and early '60s, home to Black-owned grocery stores, pharmacies, and businesses, including my own family's; my great grandparents lived in the heart of the Wright-Dunbar neighborhood, my great-granpa was friends with both Paul Laurence Dunbar and the Wright Brothere.

But during the Civil Rights era, threats of eminent domain tied to the proposed construction of Highway 35 caused panic, including within my own family, who shuttered their business in anticipation. What followed was a 30-year decline by design a slow-moving, 5,10, 15, 20,30-year plan that transformed a booming Black community into a disinvested ghetto, only to now target it again for gentrification and displacement of the very residents the system once forced into poverty. 35 eventually came through in the early 90's, the house my mom grew up in, the house I grew up in were torn down, the kids I grew up in ended up being moved to the DeSoto Bass housing projects.

2019 was also the year I began healing truly healing from the fallout of the original Dayton Fashion Week debacle in 2012. Even though we made it right with the community by launching (DE-FI) in 2013, I carried that weight for far too long. In 2019, I decided to let it go. It was time to breathe new life and purpose into the Dayton Fashion Week brand.

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# WELCOME MESSAGE CONTINUED

Also in 2019, Ed and I were invited to tour the historic Dayton Arcade as construction on its revitalization began. I submitted a detailed proposal for (DE-FI) to secure space within the Arcade, providing all requested materials precisely as instructed. Despite our thorough and timely response, we never received any follow-up or feedback.

We set our sights on December 2019 for the official reboot at the Montgomery County Fairgrounds and introduced a new, elevated structure that reflected everything we've learned over the years one where each designer received individual attention, their own show, and their own audience, modeled after the format of New York Fashion Week. We also expanded our work with the upcoming Gem City Sewing Company and the Dayton Garment & Textile District by continuing to administer sewing exams that included both written and hands-on components. We began strategic partnerships with designers, held casting calls across the city, and even implemented a Designer Crash Course incubator to make sure our participants were ready not just to showcase, but to operate like true professionals after.

Still, no matter how well you plan, life can throw you a curve. Just weeks before the reboot of Dayton Fashion Week, I got a call that our venue paid in full months earlier was double-booked due to a major internal mishap. We were forced to postpone until March 2020.

2019 was also a year of heartbreak and resilience for our city. In the wake of the Memorial Day tornadoes and the mass shooting in the Oregon District, (DE-FI) quietly stepped up to support our community, not for recognition, but because it's who we are. From assisting with tornado cleanup efforts to collecting donations and offering support to families impacted by the violence, we remained present, hands-on, and rooted in compassion, choosing service over spotlight when our city needed it most.

In 2019, I was honored to be named one of the Dayton Business Journal's Top 40 Under 40 recipients. This recognition not only affirmed the years of work poured into building (DE-FI) but also served as a reminder that impact, innovation, and resilience do not go unnoticed, even when the path isn't traditional. It was a moment of encouragement to keep pushing forward.

Through it all, we never stopped pouring into our community. We kept showing up, building, and moving forward not at someone else's pace, but at our own. And that, to me, is the heart of what we do.

With gratitude, and (DE-FI)ance,  
Caressa L. Brown  
Owner/Director of the Dayton Emerging  
Fashion Incubator (DE-FI) LLC

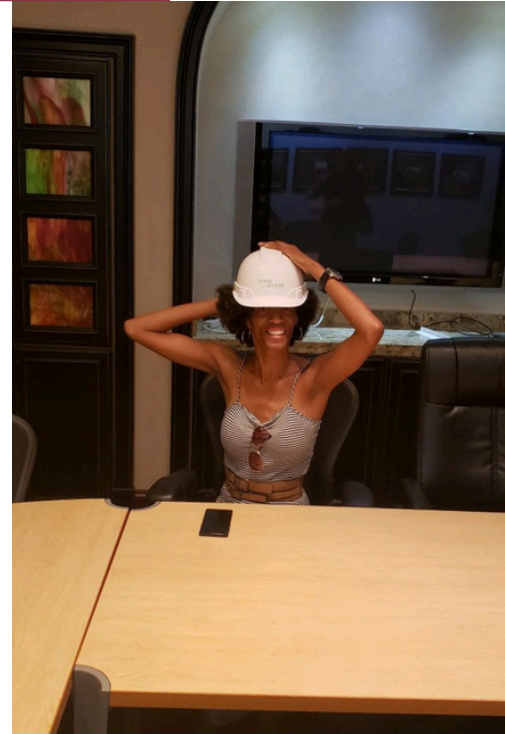


(DE-FI)



# THE 2019 EXPERIENCES

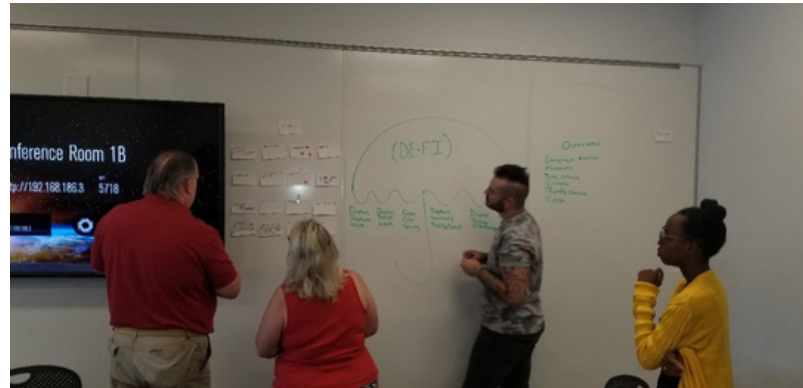
(DE-FI)<sup>®</sup>





# THE 2019 EXPERIENCE

(DE-FI)<sup>®</sup>



# THANK YOU

## 2018 Photography Team

Pete Bradow  
John Flynn  
Misti Leigh  
Lamar Pacley  
Chris Kuettner

## Advisory Board (2018)

Cindy Kirk Gabory  
Ed Dixon  
Mohammad Al-Qirawbe

## 2018 Collaborative Partners

Shutter Eye Photo  
Industry Events  
Audio Etc.  
Creative Images  
Circle of Vision Keepers Re-Entry and  
Recovery Program  
Cloverstorm photography  
Edward A. Dixon Gallery

## 2018 Leadership & Core Team

Owner/Director: Caressa L. Brown  
Director of Logistics: Sybil Martin  
Director of Photography: Lamar Pacley  
Director of Web Dev & Graphic Design:  
Jason Penix  
Director of Beauty: ShaTerra Jenkins  
Model Coordinator: LaToya Stephens  
Administrative Executive: Danielle  
Simpson  
Director of Community Outreach:  
Khadijah Ali  
Accountant: Lori Adtkins Steele  
Director of Communication: Dalisse  
Humphrey

## Contact Us

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