## Dr. Elmer P. Martin Jr. (Posthumously)

Educator/Creator of Blacks in Wax Museum Inducted October 10, 2008

Dr. Elmer P. Martin Jr., a native of Glasgow, MO began his higher education at Lincoln University in 1965. He came under the influence of Dr. Oliver Cromwell Cox, and majored in Sociology and received his Bachelor's degree in 1969. He received his Master's degree from Atlanta University School of Social Work, and a Ph. D from case Western Reserve University.

He was a professor and chairman of the Sociology department for over 25 years at Morgan State University and author of several books and academic papers. Among its publications are: "The Black Extended Family, Social Work and the black Experience", The Helping Tradition in the Black Family and community", and "Spirituality and the Black Helping tradition in Social Work".

He was also the creator of the first wax museum in the United States dedicated to black history, life and culture. The Great Blacks in wax museum is located in Baltimore, Maryland. Dr. Martin and his wife Joanne opened the museum on July 9, 1983 with only four wax figures; Frederick Douglass, Mary McLeod Bethune, Harriet Tubman, and Nat Turner. They had the head of the figures made for them, and used old department stores mannequins for the bodies. The couple was inspired to open the museum after they visited a wax museum while on vacation in Florida. Dr. Martin wanted to teach about black history in a way that would grab children's' attention. The wax figures in the museum include likenesses from former slaves to doctors, lawyers, and business men. The museum also includes a graphic scene of a man being lynched, a controversial scene to many. Dr. Martin however believed it was necessary for children to see what many historical figures had to overcome, to fully understand how great their accomplishments were.

Dr. Martin died of a heart attack in June 2001 while he and his wife were on a trip to Egypt doing research. His wife is still running the museum, and credits his vision for all of its success, and for teaching young African American children about their history. The work he began 25 years ago as a small traveling exhibit will eventually comprise an entire city block and will continue to recount the history or courageous Africans ad African Americans.