

Revitalized Atlanta: All That With A Capital A

By Janice Nieder



(a lawyer by trade) is excited to share her knowledge of preserving foods and canning by offering a variety of cooking and canning classes.

Best Calorie Burner

Ditch your car and lace up your sneakers for a walk along the **Atlanta BeltLine**, one of the

nation's largest urban redevelopment programs. When finished, the BeltLine will transform 22+ miles of historic rail segments into a network of public parks and multi-use trails that will encircle the entire city.

Locals LOVE it and say nothing has changed the face of the city like the

dynamic BeltLine. So far, about 6 miles of it has been completed and it's always bustling with joggers, cyclists, and strollers. One fun addition is the "Art on the Atlanta BeltLine", the city's largest temporary public art exhibition, that features work of hundreds of visual artists and street performers.

Pssst: Stop for a tasty bite along the BeltLine at Parish Foods & Goods, a hip resto and market located in an abandoned pipe factory, filled with restored crown molding, antique Parisian sconces, and red Murano chandeliers. If you're there on the weekend, step up to the "Build Your Own Bloody Mary & Margarita Bar."



Best Sleeps

The Ritz-Carlton Buckhead

What's not to love about sleeping in a cushy feather bed, covered with luxurious Frette linens, using Asprey's bath products (The British Standard since 1781) in an oversized soaking tub or separate rain-shower; delicately pigging-out at their famous 100+ item Sunday Brunch-complete with a Bubble Bar for a Kir, Bellini or glass of Champagne;

gossiping over afternoon tea by the elegant fireplace; or ordering lunch delivered to you at the sundeck adjacent to the 60-foot indoor pool? If you're really whipped after a day of retail therapy, you have a choice between an energizing work-out at the state-of-the-art gym, or you can retreat to the Spa floor for a signature treatment such as their Southern comfort facial followed by a Sweet magnolia pedicure. For one of the world's best sleeps, book a Spa Level guestroom where thoughtful amenities include a Tempur-Pedic bed, Yoga mat, yoga blocks and DVDs, plush spa robes and a soothing Brookstone 16-sound machine.

Pssst: Trust me, it is so worth a little splurge to upgrade to the Club Level. When they say they offer "Continuous Culinary Offerings," they aren't kidding.

Daily delights include breakfast, light snacks, hors d' oeuvres, beverages (including wine, champagne, and cocktails) and sweets.

Buckhead's Mandarin Oriental Hotel combines Southern graciousness with a sophisticated Zen aura, with subtle touches of glamour such as dramatic floral arrangements. The renowned Mandarin Oriental service begins when you are greeted at the front desk with a refreshing scented moist towel and chilled bottle of water and it never stops. I brought my pile of notes to the concierge who magically organized it into a superb two-day itinerary. The only thing better than the soothingly decorated, contemporary bedroom (goose down bedding and luxurious linens by Rivolta) with a tricked-out entertainment system was the humongous white marble bathroom- with a walk-in shower, twin vanity units and a deep soaking tub, and bathroom amenities by Shanghai Tang.

The incredible spa transcends tranquility, with facilities spreading over two full floors of wonderfulness. There are 13 treatment rooms, fully equipped fitness center and aerobic rooms, steam, sauna and vitality pool as well as Yoga, Pilates, tai chi and meditation classes. Sunlight streams

in though French windows surrounding a climate-controlled 60-foot indoor lap pool. It's going to be tough trying to choose between a Southern-inspired Peaches and Cream treatment and the Oriental Essence massage featuring their signature Quintessence oil, so don't stress, book one each day.

The acclaimed Cafe and Bar features modern American cuisine with a twist on traditional dishes, such as a Cold Georgia Green Pea Soup with mint, buttermilk & smoked bacon chip.

Pssst: For a relaxing view, book a room that overlooks the hotel's private English gardens. Another welcome amenity is the complimentary private car service that operates within a two-mile radius, so no need to fight over who has to be the designated driver.

Choose Your Dream Car

The High Museum of Art is always a popular attraction, particularly since the Renzo Piano expansion in 2005, but I bet it has broken all male attendance records with its current summer show, "Dream Cars: Innovative Design, Visionary Ideas" which showcases 17 groundbreaking concept cars from the 1930s to the present by BMW, Porsche, Bugatti and others.

Pssst: Every third Friday is Friday Night Music Remix where you can enjoy live music as well as half-price admission.

A Touch of Eden

The Atlanta Botanical Gardens are well worth a visit if you're craving an escape from the urban frenzy. As you ramble through the 30 acres of greenery you'll discover over a dozen different gardens, ranging from the Japanese Garden to the popular Edible Garden, where they hold the Well-Seasoned Chef Cooking Series. But the real wow-factor is the fantastical "Imaginary Worlds", an over-sized menagerie of 28 topiary-like sculptures, including a 25-feet-tall Earth Goddess.

Pssst: The best time to explore Imaginary Worlds is at the Thursday night cocktail party, 6-10 p.m. when the sculptures shimmer under the night sky and you can imbibe in specialty cocktails such as the Earth Goddess, I'll Have What She's Having.

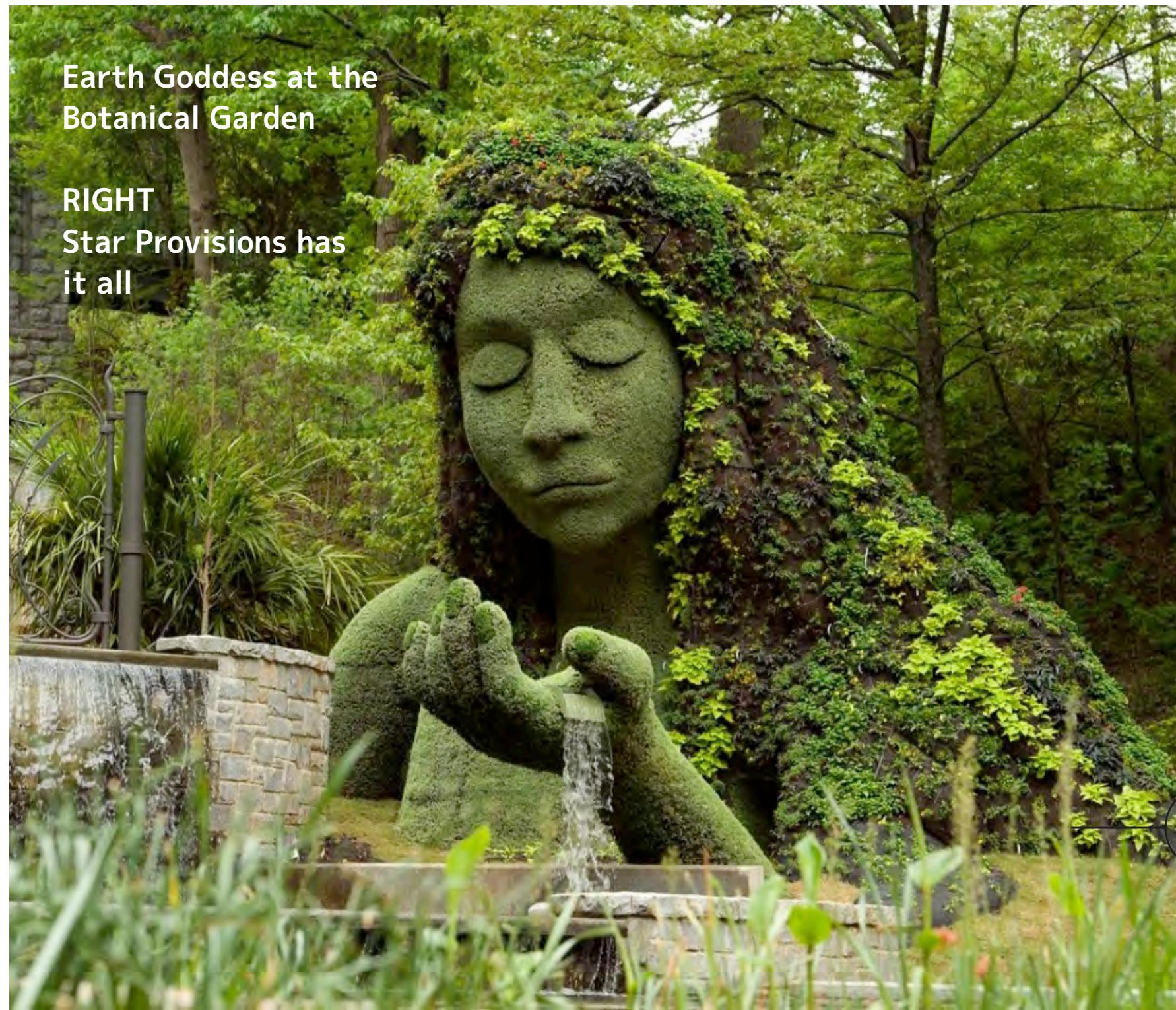
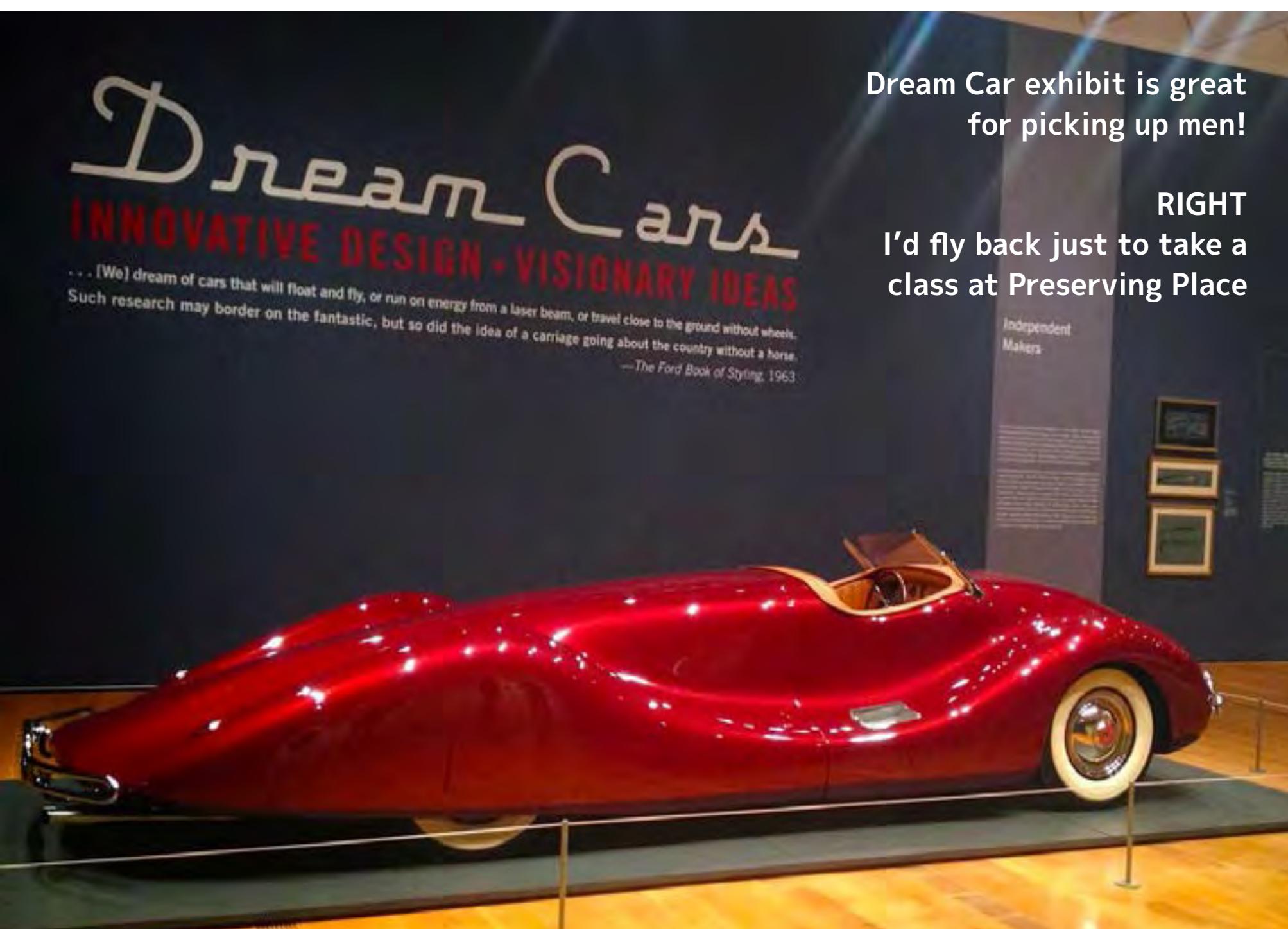
Celebrate Gone with the Wind Anniversary

Fiddle-dee-dee, it's hard to believe that this year marks the 75th anniversary of "Gone With The Wind". The Margaret Mitchell House & Museum, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, where the author lived and wrote her Pulitzer-Prize winning novel. Gone With the Wind, is celebrating the occasion with a special exhibit, "Stars Fall On Atlanta: The Premiere of "Gone With The Wind".

Pssst: For significant savings on visiting the M.M. house, and a handful of other popular attractions, check into buying an Atlanta CityPass. You can purchase it here and use it for the High museum, the Atlanta Zoo, World of Coca-Cola, etc.

The excitement keeps building as Atlantians eagerly await the opening of these next two hot spots:

Upscale shopaholics are marking off



Earth Goddess at the Botanical Garden

RIGHT
Star Provisions has it all

the days until the grand opening of the \$1 billion **Buckhead Atlanta** shopping development, the kingdom of haute! Six seductive blocks of luxury dining, entertainment, shopping, upscale office and residential towers will start opening their doors this September. Breathe in the gentrified air as you stroll the intimate, cobbled streets, lined with fashion icons such as Hermès, Louboutin, Bruno Cucinelli, and Helmut Lang. Local Spanx billionaire, Sara Blakely, put her stamp of approval on the prestigious project, when she announced they will be moving their world headquarters here and it will also be home to their flagship store. Haute shops deserve haute restaurants, so indulgent dining choices will include Le Bilboquet, Lugo Caffe, Gypsy Kitchen & The Southern Gentleman.

Pssst: Apartments are a part of OliverMcMillan's mixed-use development plan so, if you hurry, you can still snag one of the three bedroom/three bath, 1,962 square feet penthouse apts, with complimentary jaw-dropping views, at The Residence, Buckhead Atlanta.

I was fortunate enough to score a private press tour of **The Center for Civil and Human Rights** (opening June 23) enthusiastically led by Gabriel Wardell, Director of Group Sales. It is no exaggeration to say that it was a life-changing experience. The \$100 million, 43,000 square-foot museum, located next to Centennial Olympic Park, centers around three main exhibits: Voice to the Voiceless: The Morehouse College Martin Luther King, Jr. Collection, which will rotate selections from over 10,000 personal items such as King's "report card" from Crozer Theological Seminary (he only received a C+ in public speaking!) a hand-edited draft of MLK's famous "Letter from Birmingham Jail", a crumpled note from his wallet with a quote by Gandhi and a telegram from President Lyndon B. Johnson inviting King to the signing of the Voting Rights Act.

The next floor up houses Rolls Down Like Water: The American Civil Rights Movement, which is brilliantly curated by Tony Award-winning theatrical playwright and film director George C. Wolfe. Wolfe's interactive displays transports visitors back in time to the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. You really "get it" once you sit at the segregated lunch counter exhibit and put on the

headphones that spew out hideous racial slurs and verbal abuse by outraged counter protestors. You are timed as to how long you can endure the torment and can stop at any time. I only lasted two minutes, unlike the non-violent student activists who were trained to take endless hours of abuse.

At the top of the museum is Spark of Conviction: The Global Human Rights Movement which furthers the link between civil rights and human rights and how they affect the lives of every person.

When I asked Gabriel what he hopes the museum will accomplish, he succinctly replied, "We'll be doing our job if a 12-year-old girl walks out of the museum and is inspired to become the next Gandhi, Mandela or King."

Pssst: If you donate \$250 you can have your name or a message permanently displayed on a metal tile in the lobby. Check out this video for a preview of this fabulous new museum.

