

RICCI DE FOREST

"The legacy of [Madame C.J.] Walker was so significant that I said, let me move the legacy forward for young people to have access to this history, so I created a museum environment and still did hair there.

"[W.E.R.D.] was the soundtrack to the Old Fourth Ward...Dr. King used that station. If it weren't for WERD, King wouldn't have had a platform to use mass media because white stations weren't about to let a Negro go on and say where to boycott or deliver his non-violent message."

"...during Jim Crow, Blacks could only congregate in one area. And so all the stars came to Auburn and hung out at WERD, whether they played at the Peacock or the Odd Fellows Building."

Ricci de Forest is a hair stylist and beauty educator who is preserving an original Madame C.J. Walker beauty salon in Sweet Auburn. Above the salon, the first Black radio station in America, WERD Studio, was a platform for black musicians and voices including Dr. Martin Luther King.

*Interview by Scott Morris.
Quotes have been edited for length and clarity.
Scan the QR code below for full interview.*

