

Building Legacy Oral History Project

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The Minnesota African American Museum (MAAM) announced the Building Legacy Oral History Project collaboration with Public Allies, a partner with Pillsbury United Communities.

As a part of the project, five student leaders have been working since February, learning about Minnesota, its diverse African-American communities and its historians. The initial round of interviews consist of recorded interviews and videos of historians from the greater Twin Cities area. The students spent 12 Fridays receiving training from several professional experts from the community in interview skills and techniques, African-American history, and media production.

The team had the opportunity to work with Ed Irwin at Youthprise, as he passed along his many media gifts to the team. The historians on the project include Marvin R. Anderson, Judge LaJune Lange (retired), Spike Moss, and the Rev. Noah and Hallie Smith. The final work will be presented on July 19, at 9 a.m. at MAAM, 1700 3rd Ave. S., Minneapolis. The public is invited to the showing.

According to Coventry Cowens, founding board member and project chair, the importance of this project is clear.

"This project supports the mission of MAAM, and being an authentic collector of Minnesota African-American history, it identifies many unsung African-Americans that have contributed extensively in cultural, political, economic, and religious arenas that enhanced the development of the state of Minnesota. The Building Legacy Project is dedicated to uncovering and preserving their legacy."

Many African-American communities have few documents or artifacts that preserve and tell their stories of arrival, settlement, lifestyle and culture in Minnesota therefore, oral history is one of the best ways to preserve this important history and to ensure that it becomes part of Minnesota's historical record. The interviews will be digitalized and serve as resources for educators and students and will be available on the MAAM website, www.maamcc.org. The

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site features people who comment with authority on their community's composition, challenges, achievements and contribution to Minnesota's cultural landscape.

The mission of the Minnesota African American Museum and Cultural Center is to increase understanding and appreciation for the contributions made by African-Americans in Minnesota. MAAM attempts to accomplish its mission through research, acquisition, presentation and celebration of pioneering African-Americans in Minnesota and the Midwest.

In 2008, the founding board members of MAAM acquired The Amos B. Coe mansion near downtown Minneapolis to fulfill its purpose and immediately began the acquisition process, capital campaign and subsequent renovations to the property. The mansion is located on the Minneapolis Avenue of the Arts.