

Telling the Kalamazoo Community RACE Story: A History Detectives Oral History Project

Program Guidelines

Project Description

The 2009-2010 History Detectives Oral History Project: *Telling the Kalamazoo Community RACE Story* will provide young people with the opportunity to learn about diversity and community through interviews they will conduct with Kalamazoo's citizens of color. They will be mentored by journalism interns from Western Michigan University and Kalamazoo College and receive training in doing oral histories. The product of the *Telling the Kalamazoo Community RACE Story* project will be tapes and transcripts, a soft-bound book with interview excerpts, articles, and biographies that will be distributed at the community forums and discussions being scheduled around the RACE Exhibit to encourage dialogue and understanding about the racial and ethnic realities of the interview subjects. Material from the interviews will also appear online in columns in *Community Voices* and video excerpts on the Public Media Network, the RACE Exhibit Initiative website, and the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society website for use by other community groups to engage discussion and dialogue prior to the exhibit's arrival.

Project Directors

Project directors, Donna Odom and Sue Ellen Christian will partner to oversee both the university and high school level students as they work in the community.

Donna Odom is president of the Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society. She has conducted community oral histories for the last five years. In 2007 she was chosen to attend the week-long 'Passages to Freedom' seminar on the Underground Railroad at Yale University. She was recently awarded a scholarship for the 2009 Oral History Association Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. Five years ago, Ms. Odom formed the

Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society to serve as a vehicle for the research and documentation of the history and contributions of African Americans of the area. She serves as a board member of the Kalamazoo County Historical Society and the steering committee for the Kalamazoo Race Exhibit Initiative. She writes a column on local history for Kalamazoo's *Community Voices*, an on-line community newspaper and gives workshops on memoir writing and writing family history. She will train participants in oral history techniques and oversee Kalamazoo College history interns. Contact information: heritagesociety@charter.net; phone 873-2327

Sue Ellen Christian is an associate professor of journalism at Western Michigan University. Prof. Christian is a former professional journalist who has served on the staffs of the Chicago *Tribune*, the Los Angeles *Times* and the Detroit *News*. She has guided students through reporting on race and ethnicity in the community for several years, launching the student newspaper diversity series called "Common Ground" that paired WMU undergraduate journalism students with Loy Norrix High School's student newspaper reporting staff as well as leading WMU journalism students in an off-site reporting semester in the community. Prof. Christian has won local and national awards for her teaching and scholarship of diversity issues in journalism. She will oversee Western Michigan University journalism interns. Contact information: sueellen.christian@wmich.edu; office phone is 387-3110.

Application to the *Telling the Kalamazoo Community RACE Story* is open to high school students who have completed their freshmen year. Five young people will be chosen to participate. The program will provide participants with the opportunity to gain skills in interviewing, interpersonal communication, collaboration and diversity issues and provide a partial record of dialogues around RACE Exhibit programming. The students will be selected after application and interview. Chosen students will receive a stipend to cover expenses. The program will begin in October of 2009 and end in April of 2010. During that time, the five participants chosen will meet for two oral history training sessions.

Selection Criteria:

- a. Excellent academic record in language arts subjects.
- b. Ability to express ideas clearly.

- c. Willingness and ability to commit to the project in terms of schedule and transportation.
- d. Prior experience or training in journalism classes is helpful.

Terms and Conditions

1. Applications must be received by September 28, 2009. They may be e-mailed to: heritagesociety@charter.net or sent by regular mail to: The Southwest Michigan Black Heritage Society, 612 N. Park Street, Kalamazoo, MI 49007.
2. Applications must be accompanied by the parental consent form and two completed recommendation forms from classroom instructors. (These forms may be duplicated if necessary.)
3. Applicants must be available for an interview on Saturday, October 3, 2009 at the Public Media Network offices in downtown Kalamazoo. Contact Donna Odom (269/ 873-2327) if this date poses a serious scheduling conflict for you.