

Helen and Martin Schwartz Prize Nominating Statement

The Michigan Humanities Council (MHC) is pleased to present *Heritage Grants: Exploring the History of All Michigan's People* for consideration for the 2016 Helen and Martin Schwartz Prize.



Program summary:

Michigan is a state with many stories. Some stories have been told often, and others not at all. Numerous stories have historically been told from the perspective of people who did not live the experiences first-hand or feel the consequences of the actions and events that determined the course of their ancestors. In the spring of 2014, the Michigan Humanities Council embarked on a challenging journey to explore diverse stories told in authentic voices, with the goal of sharing and validating the genuine experiences and history of all of Michigan's people. By providing innovative grants and capacity-building support to grassroots organizations, MHC established connections between history and present day, between elders and youth, between public and academic audiences, and between old narratives and new stories. This exemplary effort also nurtured a network of new collaborations and partnerships throughout the state of Michigan dedicated to understanding and addressing the challenges and opportunities in diminishing inherent bias and advancing racial equity.

With funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the Michigan Humanities Council established the Heritage Grants Program to support projects that explore local histories at the intersection of race, ethnicity, and cultural identity in Michigan. Grants of up to \$25,000 are awarded to nonprofit organizations to support exhibits, digital projects, oral history programs, documentaries, youth and intergenerational engagement, facilitated dialogues, cultural ceremonies, community conversations, and other activities that aim to share the history, experiences, vitality, and authentic voices of Michigan's diverse and historically underrepresented groups. The audiences are multi-generational and involve people from diverse backgrounds. Each project is required to have a digital component, which MHC collects to share and preserve through a digital portal. By exploring history at local and state levels, projects examine connections between past inequities, present-day barriers to success, and opportunities for advancing racial equity today.

The development and implementation of the new Heritage Grants Program required MHC and its Board of Directors to think beyond the established parameters of past programs, and embrace the often veiled significance of our state's racial and ethnic history. This required venturing into unknown territory as we fostered dialogues and supported projects that dealt directly with race, ethnicity, and marginalized populations. Recognizing the need for our own organization to move forward and strengthen our internal commitment to inclusion and racial equity, the MHC board worked collaboratively with staff by engaging in diversity training and supporting the creative direction of the Heritage Grants Program, achieving new heights and far-reaching results in our public humanities work.

Introduction:

Grant-making is central to the way many State Humanities Councils provide public access to the humanities within their states. But how can we be more intentional in our grant-making to help ensure that the tools and resources of the humanities are reaching underserved groups and having impacts that resonate with present day social issues and the wider challenge of working toward racial equity?

To respond to this question, MHC secured a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to design and implement a program called *Heritage Grants: Exploring the History of All Michigan's People* (abbreviated as Heritage Grants Program or HGP). The HGP is rooted in MHC's strong and long-time role as a grant-maker and builds on this history to create an innovative program that helps address pressing social issues by working with new partners and audiences. MHC's aim in undertaking the project involved three primary goals:

1. To build the capacity of grassroots groups in Michigan to explore and share histories of race and ethnicity in Michigan, with an eye toward how these histories have led to present day inequities.
2. Affirm the experiences and identities of historically underrepresented and marginalized people in Michigan by empowering them to explore and share their history and cultural identity through their authentic voices (rather than having it told by others), with an eye toward promoting racial equity and healing. Grantees use the humanities as a central means toward changing narratives around race and identity, as a step toward solving larger racial equity challenges.
3. Expand the reach of MHC's grant-making to become more diverse and inclusive, creating a new pipeline of potential grantees and audiences for all of MHC's programs and future offerings (internal capacity building).

Following these goals, MHC has used the HGP to respond to a need across Michigan's communities for a flexible and responsive grant-making program that could focus attention on topics of racial and ethnic identities at a local level, when there are often not funds available for such projects otherwise.

Financial structure:

Heritage Grants: Exploring the History of All Michigan's People is made possible by a \$1.7 million grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF). MHC's partnership with WKKF made grants of \$25,000 available to 54 organizations across Michigan. Importantly, these grants require no matching funds from the organizations or on the part of MHC.

Programmatic structure:

To ensure the HGP would reach racially diverse audiences and push our existing applicants to expand from their typical areas of inquiry, MHC forged new partnerships to create an outside advisory group, primarily composed of statewide organizations with strong ties to social justice and racial equity work. These included the Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance, Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights at Wayne State University, the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion, and the United Tribes of Michigan. To bring added perspective to the historical work of the program, the Advisory Group also included

representatives from the Kutche Office of Local History at Grant Valley State University and the Historical Society of Michigan. A WKKF Program Officer is also included in the group.

MHC worked with the Advisory Group to: 1. Assist with the early stages of the program's development and outreach to groups and organizations across Michigan and 2. To review the final applications for funding. They made the recommendations to MHC as to which projects should receive funding using a scoring rubric that focused not only on humanities themes and public impact, but also explicitly looked at how the projects addressed racial equity and social justice. The rubric was developed in consultation with members of the Advisory Group and an outside evaluation firm, Synthesis Evaluation and Research, LLC. Authentic voice was a central criteria for assessing which projects to fund. To be eligible and competitive, a project had to demonstrate that a particular identity group(s) had the primary role in the project.

Another innovation that distinguishes the HGP is the technical assistance provided to grantees, both in the application stage and throughout the life-cycle of their grant, particularly around evaluation. The program involved extensive in-person and hands-on technical assistance for applicants and grantees, which differs from the way MHC has made grants in the past. MHC greatly simplified its online application portal to make the required questions, documents, and information as streamlined as possible for users. We also travelled the state extensively to host 12 grant-writing workshops, which is significantly more outreach than done in the past. MHC also implemented a new model for assisting grantees evaluate the impacts of their projects. Rather than requiring an evaluation plan in the application, MHC worked with Synthesis Evaluation to create an in-person grantee convening/orientation. Grantees attend this meeting in Lansing shortly after their awards are announced to learn about evaluation and develop plans that are best suited to their individual projects. Bringing each cohort of grantees together for annual convenings also assists them in building in-person networks.

The cost to attend is covered by MHC and does not require the grantees to use their grant funds—helping to ensure that the maximum amount of funds possible are dedicated to the project itself and not data and information collections that are required/needed by MHC and the WKKF for reporting purposes. Additionally, rather than a standard audience survey, grantees developed evaluation plans at the orientation using a Most Significant Changes model, which collects stories from those involved with the project as well as audience members, to reflect on what they believe are the most significant changes the project has brought about internally and externally. The project team decides on the “most significant” ones and turns 2–5 of these into MHC, which then selects the ones to report back to the WKKF. This accessible method, in turn, helps the organizations reflect on their work rather than only counting numbers of participants.

Each of these features makes the overall process of applying for a grant less intimidating and burdensome for smaller organizations that may never have applied for a grant before. The hands-on process also helps build their capacity to evaluate their projects and apply for grants in the future. This in turn helps the HGP reach new audiences and organizations.

The individual grants to each organization support the development of local history products that address contemporary disparities through the examination of past inequities that have contributed to discrimination and structural racism. To be responsive to the varying needs of different communities to address these topics, there is not a set format for projects (other than that some part of it should be

able to be captured and preserved digitally—through a recording, image, video, etc.). In this sense, the program empowers individuals and organizations to begin to change narratives about race and identity in their communities through culturally appropriate history projects that share their stories and authentic voices through a variety of mediums (oral histories, exhibits, community conversations, youth projects, etc.). The program provides the impetus for community dialogues across racial and cultural lines that lead to understanding and healing by engaging organizations and individuals at the local level.

In response to a desire on the part of our grantees to find ways to continue the conversations started by their projects, during the fall of 2016 MHC will also offer smaller (maximum \$5,000) awards to past and current grantees for Community Dialogues that dig deeper into the present day issues and topics raised by their historically-focused projects. This feature was made possible from cost-savings during the first year of the program. MHC plans for this to provide a network of facilitators and engaged cohort of past grantees that will help sustain the energy from this work into the future, while also helping MHC to build on the resources and expertise of these organizations to create a new iteration of the HGP moving into the future.

Program's public impact, audiences, and content

The HGP has reached nearly every corner of Michigan through partnerships with 54 grantees, who are helping to bring unheard and little known stories across the state. A complete list and brief descriptions of the projects funded and groups of people served in 2015 and 2016 can be found using these links:

- List of funded projects 2015 (26):
<http://www.michiganhumanities.org/heritage-grants/2015-heritage-grant-recipients/>
- List of funded projects 2016 (28):
<http://www.michiganhumanities.org/heritage-grants/2016-heritage-grants/>

The projects fall into many categories and formats, from specific communities recording oral histories to partnerships between universities that merge public and academic audiences. Below are several examples of projects that illustrate the breadth and diversity of programs, both in terms of people served and project format and type.

Many HGP projects encouraged organizations to forge new partnerships to help grassroots groups build their capacity to share their stories and implement public humanities projects.

- The Museum of Ojibwa Culture in St. Ignace worked with tribal communities and the City of St. Ignace to create an exhibit and series of dialogues intended to provide a source of healing from the experience of residential boarding schools that had devastating effects on Native communities in Michigan.
- The Tibbits Opera House in Coldwater, MI acted as a sponsor for the Arab American Society of Coldwater to implement a series of workshops and cultural events designed to give this group of people a greater sense of belonging and inclusion in this rural Michigan town, which is on the west side of the state and removed from Dearborn, the Arab-American center of Michigan.

Other projects came more directly from organizations representing particular identity groups:

- The newly founded Grand Rapids African American Museum and Archives used their Heritage Grant to record oral histories of African American women in the community who were over 80 years in age. These recordings will be among the first collections in the museum. The Heritage Grant from MHC also helped other funders come through to secure a location for the museum.
- The Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians created a documentary and community conversations about the Manda-Bee-Kee Dance Troupe, which will help preserve the knowledge, stories, traditions, and teachings of the traditional Anishinaabe songs and dances.
- Latin Americans United for Progress will create an oral history archive featuring the voices of Latino migrants and immigrants to Western Michigan, many of whom came as migrant laborers to work on the region's orchards and farms.

Still other projects worked across cultural lines to explore topics central to understanding racial equity and inclusion:

- For example, the Arab American National Museum undertook a project to record stories of "Immigration, Migration, and Displacement" not only from Arab-American communities, but also Indigenous people, African Americans, and Latinos in Metro Detroit.
www.digitaldetroitstories.org
- Heritage Works brought together youth and adults of African, Arab, and Latino American descent together for dialogue through a project that combined performance, art, and history to look at difficult topics of race and cultural identity.

Youth, school, and intergenerational programs were also a central focus of many HGP grantees:

- Fire Historical and Cultural Arts Collaborative is helping middle and high school students of color in Kalamazoo Public Schools explore their identities and write about their experiences using famous writers of color as inspiration.
- Ebenezer Community Cultural Center worked with students from Detroit to participate in the National History Day competition with a project that examined the history of race relations and redlining in the city and region.
- Flint Odyssey House is bringing together an intergenerational group of African American elders and youth to examine the past, present, and future of civil rights and the struggle for racial equity in the city through a photo voice-style project.

Several HGP projects also merged public and academic audiences through university partnerships:

- Central Michigan University's Clarke Historical Library worked with Native American students on campus to create a public exhibit.
- Michigan Technological University worked with the Center for Diversity and Inclusion on campus to create public programs for their HGP project, "Black Voices from Copper Country,"

which looks at the experiences of African Americans in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, a region typically thought of as having a very "white" history. <http://blackvoices.lib.mtu.edu/>

- Wayne State University is working with Old Redford Academy high school students to conduct primary source historical research into the 1967 uprisings in Detroit, which they will then work to transform into a collaborative performance to teach the audience about the events of 1967 and their repercussions in the present.

Together, the sum of the projects funded by the HGP present a more comprehensive, inclusive, and diverse history of Michigan, using the humanities as a tool toward racial equity, healing, and dialogue. To emphasize and share this collective impact, MHC is developing a "digital portal" that will showcase the digital components of each project for present and future generations, ensuring the sustainability and accessibility of the narratives and stories created on a local level.

While a final evaluation report and website that will share all of the projects more widely will be available in 2017, the HGP has had significant public impact in underserved communities across Michigan. One grantee, for example, described that "I have realized our project isn't simply oral history, but also has the potential for community conversations and long-term changes in attitudes and beliefs." Another described that the most significant change they experienced at the convening was a "sense of connectivity to other colleagues in Michigan working toward racial/ethnic understanding and changes in perceptions."

At another site, the Troy Historical Society worked with the Michigan branch of Asian and Pacific Islander American Vote (APIAVote-MI) to collect oral histories from immigrants to the Troy region who came as a result of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. This enabled the organization to include a set of diverse communities that make up 20% of the city's population as a part of the area's history. Rather than focusing exclusively on a largely white generation of early "pioneers" to the area, the project enabled the historical society to become more inclusive and equitable. The oral histories will be a resource in and of themselves, as well as the impetus for new exhibits and programs. As one participant described, "as a trans-racial adoptive parent, I was very pleased that this project allowed space for adoptees to tell their stories of immigration and working hard to fit into a new country. The parallels between 1st generation folks and adoptees are present, and without public discourse around that, adoptees are often left out of the conversation."

The Lenawee County Historical Society was able to forge new relationships with Latino individuals and families through an oral history and exhibit project that focused on comparative stories of immigration, discrimination, and overcoming barriers in both the Latino and German communities in this rural area. The project, which served 200 people, allowed this group to share their stories of ethnic identity and see themselves represented in the community's central historical space. One participant's experience in the project illustrates some of the impact on individuals' sense of self, history, and identity. They wrote, "Growing up in Adrian Michigan in the '50s and '60s, there was a stigma attached to all of us Mexicans and I felt ashamed of who I was and where I came from and felt that I had to live it down. I couldn't identify with or be proud of my heritage because we were always made to feel inferior because of our race and because of poverty. This project has made me feel proud of the contribution that my grandfather, Ramon R Navarro, made to this community by starting the first protestant Hispanic church in Lenawee County....this project has made me rediscover my roots, and has given me cause to take

pride in my own accomplishments...I am proud to call myself Mexican American and can tell my children and grandchildren to be proud of who they are too.”

Stories and impacts such as these illustrate just a few of the ways the HGP has worked to create a more complex and deeper understanding of Michigan’s past by empowering groups whose stories are often untold or remain unseen to share the history of Michigan from their perspective.

Program links:

Heritage Grants Website: <http://www.michiganhumanities.org/heritage-grants/>

Articles by Issue Media Group that demonstrate the content and breadth of the funded projects:

1. <http://www.secondwavemedia.com/southwest-michigan/features/Students-ready-to-find-their-voices-as-they-learn-of-great-writers-1105.aspx>
2. <http://www.secondwavemedia.com/metromode/features/macomb-muslims-103115.aspx>
3. <http://www.rapidgrowthmedia.com/features/102915grandmasvoice.aspx>
4. <http://www.rapidgrowthmedia.com/features/111215muralpartnership.aspx>
5. <http://www.secondwavemedia.com/southwest-michigan/features/Cultura-program-fosters-pride-for-Arab-Americans-1203.aspx>

Other coverage:

Michigan Radio feature on Black Voices from Copper Country: <http://michiganradio.org/post/michigan-tech-works-include-black-voices-history-copper-country#stream/0>

Heritage Grants Blog (with posts from project directors):

<http://www.michiganhumanities.org/heritage-grants/heritageblog/>

Images:



Post-performance dialogue at Heritage Works in Detroit.



Grand Rapids African American Museum and Archives' Executive Director George Bayard interviews two women for an oral history project.



Arab-American Youth from the small town of Coldwater, MI visit the Arab American National Museum for the first time as a part of a HGP project sponsored by Tibbits Opera House and Arab American Society of Coldwater.

Adrian:
Lenawee County Historical Society

Albion:
Albion College

Coldwater:
Tibbits Opera House

Dearborn:
Arab American National Museum

Detroit:
Living Arts Detroit
Hartford Memorial Baptist Church
Loyola High School
Ebenezer Community and Cultural Center
Heritage Works
Matrix Theatre Company

East Lansing/Flint:
Michigan State University School of Journalism

Grand Rapids:
Hispanic Center of West Michigan
Grand Rapids Urban League
Grandville Avenue Arts and Humanities

Harbor Springs:
Harbor Springs Area Historical Society
Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians

Houghton:
Michigan Technological University

Kalamazoo:
Society for History and Racial Equity
Fire Historical and Cultural Arts Collaborative

Macomb:
Song and Spirit Institute for Peace

Mt. Pleasant:
Central Michigan University
Saginaw Chippewa Tribal College

Saginaw:
Mashall Fredericks Sculpture Museum

St. Ignace:
Museum of Ojibwa Culture

Troy:
Troy Historical Society

West Bloomfield:
Jewish Historical Society of Michigan



Funded Organizations 2015-16

www.michiganhumanities.org



Alpena:

Community Foundation of Northeast Michigan

Ann Arbor:

African American Cultural & Historical Museum of Washtenaw County

Baraga:

Baraga County Historical Society

Battle Creek:

Burma Center

Coldwater:

Tibbits Opera House

Dearborn:

University of Michigan - Dearborn

Michigan Opera Theatre

Detroit:

Wayne State University

Arts League of Michigan

David L. Head Foundation

Living Arts

Focus: Hope

Heritage Works

Metropolitan Detroit:

Council of Asian Pacific Americans

Chaldean Heritage Foundation

Escanaba:

CUPPAD Regional Commission

Flint:

Buckham Fine Arts Project

Flint Odyssey House

Grand Rapids:

West Michigan Asian American Association

West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology

Hancock:

Right Start UP

Holland:

Latin Americans United for Progress

Kalamazoo:

Kalamazoo Historic Preservation Commission

Monroe:

River Raisin National Battlefield Park

Foundation

Muskegon:

Foundation for Muskegon Community

College

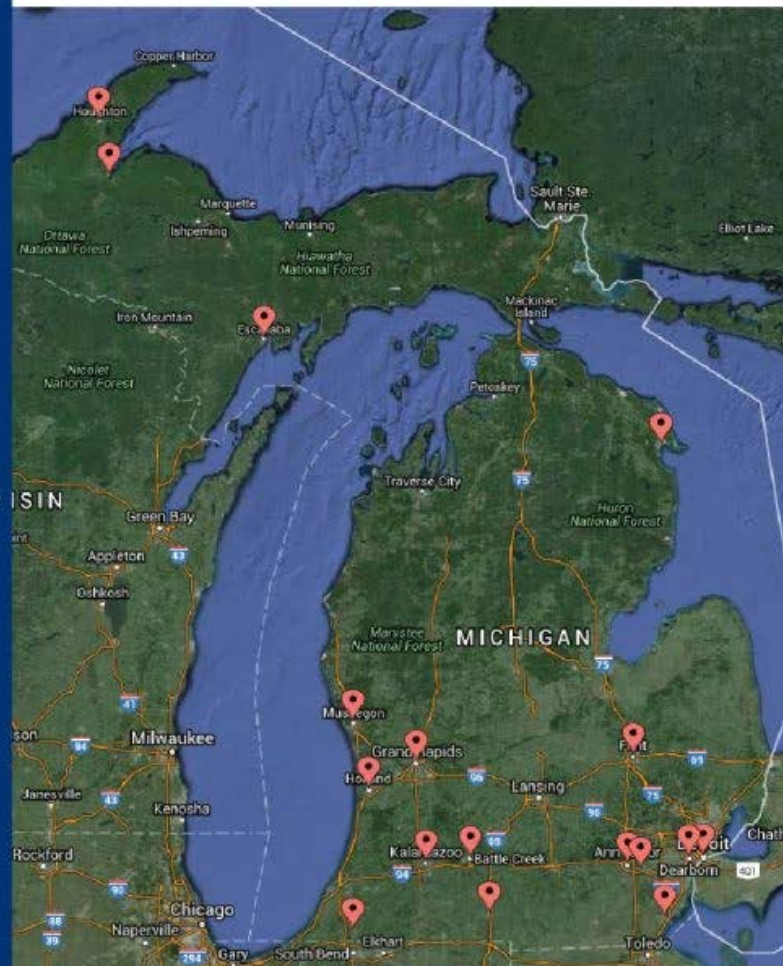
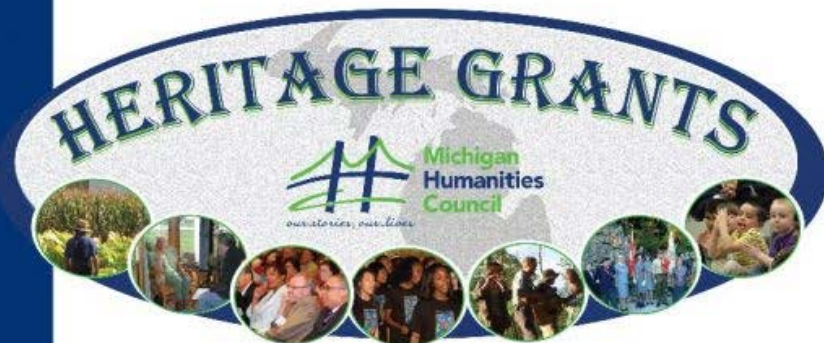
Niles:

Niles History Center

Ypsilanti:

Ypsilanti Housing Commission

Ypsilanti District Library



Funded Organizations 2016-17

www.michiganhumanities.org



HERITAGE GRANTS



Michigan
Humanities
Council

our stories, our lives

