

History Center Lake Forest-Lake Bluff Awarded Pandemic Recovery Grant to tell Local African American History from the American Historical Association

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Lake Forest, IL – **The History Center of Lake Forest-Lake Bluff** has been awarded funding from the American Historical Association’s Grants to Sustain and Advance the Work of Historical Organizations Program, which provides relief to institutions adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. This opportunity was made possible with support from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.

“This grant is the culmination of our tireless commitment to undoing the deficits in our collections and bringing to light the rich and diverse experiences of life in Lake Forest for the hundreds of African American families that have called the city home since the 1870s,” says Carol Summerfield, Executive Director of the History Center Lake Forest-Lake Bluff.

“Lake Forest benefited economically and socially from the small, strong community of African American residents, who were a consistent part of the community beginning in the late 1800s,” explains Summerfield. “But their stories have been absent from most of the historical records and narratives presented in the city’s history, including those at our museum.”

During the past two years, the History Center staff has worked to create meaningful relationships with some of the leadership voices within the Black community in Lake Forest to begin to correct that gap in the historical narrative. “We are thrilled to be selected as an AHA grant recipients so we can get to work on telling this important story.”

Deeply Rooted and Rising High will dimensionalize the history of the people and places of the African American community in Lake Forest, Illinois. The project is being developed and designed in partnership with [Ragdale](#), a nationally acclaimed artist residency program in Lake Forest. The project will include a series of lectures and conversations, performances, walking tours, and panel installations on historically significant African American sites.

The History Center of Lake Forest-Lake Bluff is one of fifty grant recipients, which include site-based organizations, membership associations, and history departments at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Awardees will implement short-term projects that explore new ideas or build on experiments initiated during the pandemic—from online programming or publications to using new technologies or expanding audiences and accessibility.

“The past two years have been challenging for small history organizations,” said James Grossman, executive director of the American Historical Association. “Our awardees have made compelling cases for their status as essential resources, making vital contributions to public culture. The American Historical Association (AHA) is pleased to provide funding for our colleagues to promote historical work, historical thinking, and the presence of history in public life.”

“NEH is grateful to the American Historical Association for administering American Rescue Plan funding to help history organizations around the country recover from the pandemic,” said NEH Chair Shelly C. Lowe

(Navajo). “Small museums, historical societies, college history departments, historic sites, and community archives are essential to keeping and telling America’s story. These ARP awards will allow these institutions to develop new programs and resources that will expand access to this important history.”

To learn more about the History Center’s grant project please visit www.lflbhistory.org.

About the History Center Lake Forest-Lake Bluff: The History Center is a significant resource for regional academic researchers and engaged public who are seeking to better understand local and regional history, across numerous themes. We provide an archive that offers humanities-based materials and learning experiences for more than 2000 on-site researchers and 3500 on-site visitors to the museum. We have materials that help academic and public researchers who are working across a broad range of humanities topics including immigration, suburbanization, women’s studies, and urban history. The History Center holdings include photographs, family histories and genealogies, government records, organization and business archives, periodicals, maps, blueprints, and scrapbooks, which will help inform the researchers for this project.]

About the American Historical Association: Founded in 1884 and incorporated by Congress in 1889 for the promotion of historical studies, the [American Historical Association](#) provides leadership for the discipline and promotes the critical role of historical thinking in public life. The Association defends academic freedom, develops professional standards, supports innovative scholarship and teaching, and helps to sustain and enhance the work of historians. As the largest membership association of professional historians in the world (nearly 12,000 members), the AHA serves historians in a wide variety of professions and represents every historical era and geographical area.

About the National Endowment for the Humanities: Created in 1965 as an independent federal agency, the National Endowment for the Humanities supports research and learning in history, literature, philosophy, and other areas of the humanities by funding selected, peer-reviewed proposals from around the nation. Additional information about the National Endowment for the Humanities and its grant programs is available at www.neh.gov.

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