

Building bridges to unity

"People in Search of Opportunity: The African-American Experience in Mercer County" is a community initiative designed to build bridges to unity. The project is a joint initiative of Pennsylvania State University Shenango Campus (PSUSC), the Mercer County Historical Society, and the Western Pennsylvania Chapter of the Afro-American Historical and Genealogical Society, Inc.

The project is threefold: a traveling exhibit, a continuing education course, and a companion text along with permanent bibliography. The multicultural project aims to provide an historical interpretation of the African American experience in Western Pennsylvania, to foster cultural awareness, and to convey empowerment through history.

Roland C. Barksdale-Hall, head librarian of PSUSC, and Robert B. Fuhrman, executive director of the Mercer County Historical Society, are making arrangements for the travelling exhibit. The plan is to use reproductions of loaned historical materials to create an 11-panel exhibit to be displayed in public gathering places such as libraries, schools, municipal buildings, and malls. Aspects to be depicted include: the family, the Underground Railroad, free black antebellum settlements, education, government service, and inventors. Site selection is underway for the exhibit.

Barksdale-Hall is currently writing a companion text (to be printed by PSUSC) that will contain a record of the exhibit. Charles L. Blockson, a former Pennsylvania State University scholar, will write the foreword. The Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh will assist in the preparation and printing of the permanent bibliography.

Submissions for this column should be made to Deborah Abston, head of current periodicals/microforms at Arizona State University, Hayden Library, Box 871006, Tempe, AZ 85287-1006; phone: (602) 965-6928/6392; fax: (602) 965-9169; Bitnet: iddxa@asuacad; Internet: iddxa@asuwm. inre.asu.edu

Racial & Ethnic Diversity

Information exchange

Deborah Abston

The project has generated considerable community support from the local media, the Shenango Valley Urban League, its Guild, the Mercer County Branch of the NAACP, the Mercer County Genealogical Society, the Farrell Area School District, and the Sharon *Herald*.

The mission of the PSUSC Library is to serve as a traditional academic library in addition to a cultural center.

The library assumes the responsibility for providing an environment for lifelong learning by making available resources and services that educate, inform, and enrich the lives of campus faculty, staff, and students, and the people of the community.

For more information concerning this project contact Roland C. Barksdale-Hall, Head Librarian, Pennsylvania State University Shenango Campus, 147 Shenango Ave, Sharon, PA 16146; (412) 983-5875; e-mail: rcb@psulias.psu.edu. ■

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