




Becoming North Nashville

A collaborative exhibit between
Fisk University and MLK Magnet
High School



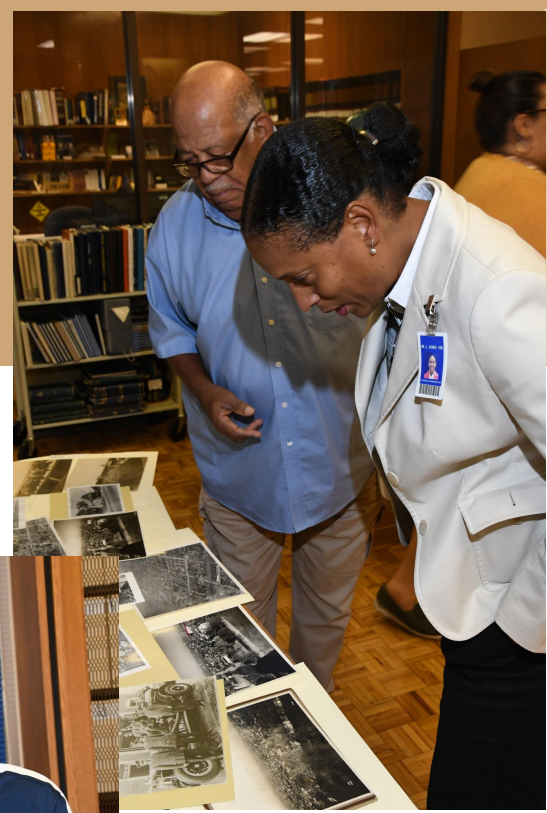
Nashville, TN
2019-2020

Faculty member: Katharine A. Burnett

Primary student researcher: Alexandria Green

3 Goals for the Project:

- Archival Preservation
- Pedagogical Innovation
- Public Engagement



North Nashville

The North Nashville neighborhood has historically been the epicenter for the African American community in Nashville.

However, in recent years North Nashville has undergone drastic changes due to gentrification and the rapid growth of the city as a whole.

As a result, many long-time residents feel the culture is being erased or lost.



Fisk University campus, aerial view, 1946, Jefferson Street Photo Project, Fisk Special Collections

Collections utilized

Franklin Library Special Collections at Fisk University

- The Jefferson Street Photo Project (1857-1982)
- Jefferson Street is the primary corridor in North Nashville
- The photographs document the history of the area for over a century



Otey's Discount Supermarket, 1953, Jefferson Street Photo Project, Fisk Special Collections

Collections utilized

Pearl High School archives located at MLK

- Pearl HS is crucial to understanding the history of Nashville, North Nashville, and black history in the area
- The archives contain official photos related to the school and photos of notable alumni, such as Perry Wallace, the first black athlete to play for the SEC



1966 Pearl basketball team, TSSAA champions, Pearl HS archives

Project overview - Part One: Archival Research and Preservation

In Fall 2019, students from an African American History course at MLK participated in a series of archival preservation sessions at Fisk University.

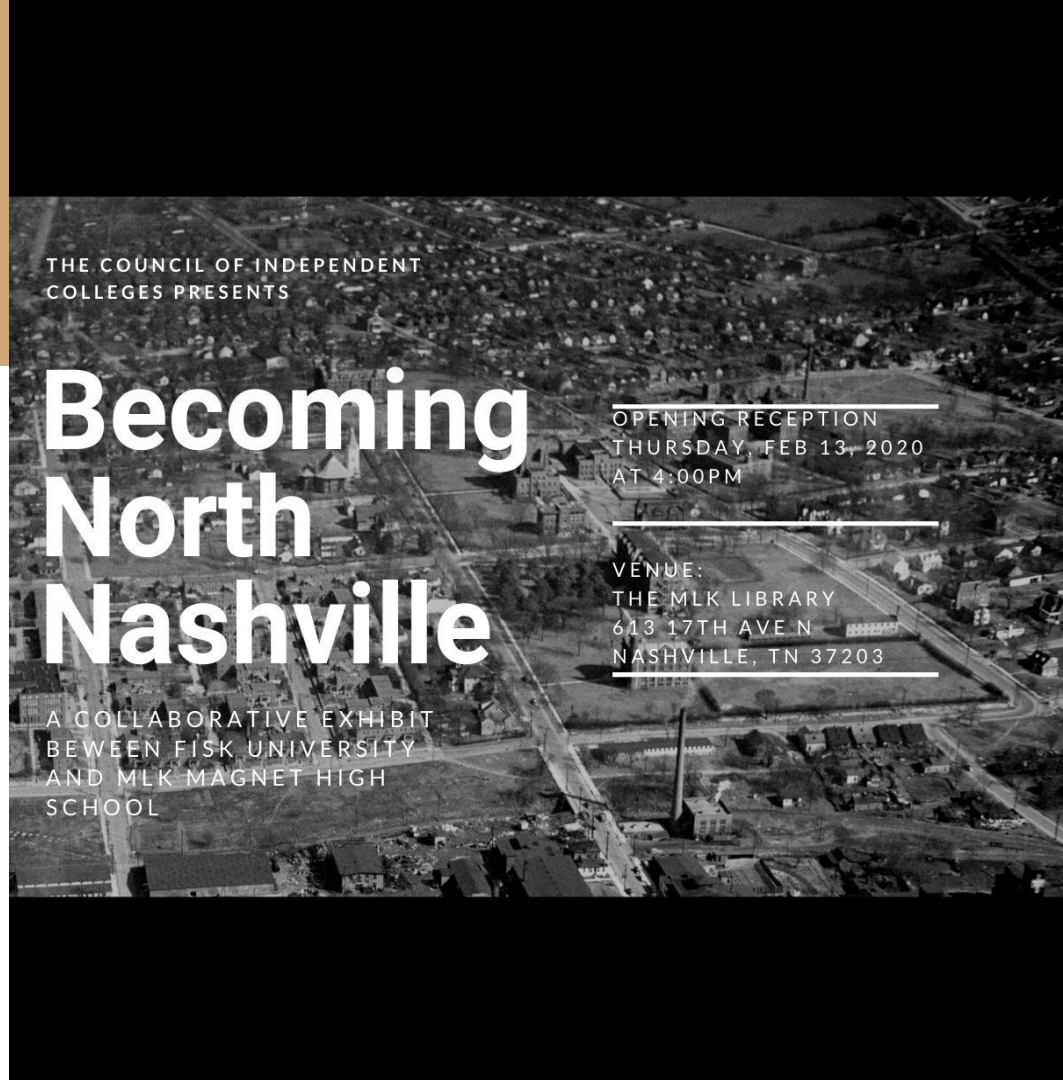
They then chose a set of photographs from the two archival collections and conducted research on the subjects.



Project overview - Part Two: Visual Art Exhibit

In Fall 2020, an Art class at Fisk curated a public art exhibit that featured the chosen photographs and creative art pieces based on the individual photos.

The creative pieces were created by a Fisk University Art class in Fall 2019.



THE COUNCIL OF INDEPENDENT
COLLEGES PRESENTS

Becoming North Nashville

OPENING RECEPTION
THURSDAY, FEB 13, 2020
AT 4:00PM

VENUE:
THE MLK LIBRARY
613 17TH AVENUE
NASHVILLE, TN 37203

A COLLABORATIVE EXHIBIT
BETWEEN FISK UNIVERSITY
AND MLK MAGNET HIGH
SCHOOL

“Becoming North Nashville”

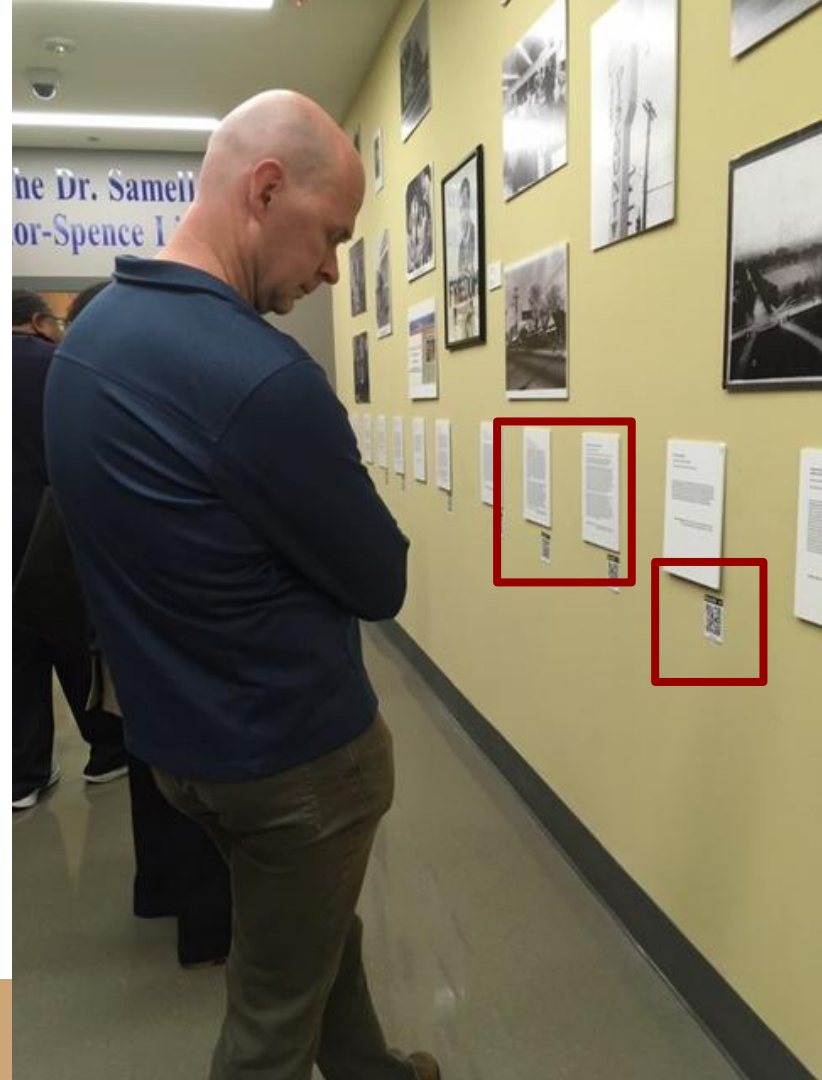
Opening: February 13, 2020

The result was a public exhibit that was part historical, part creative.



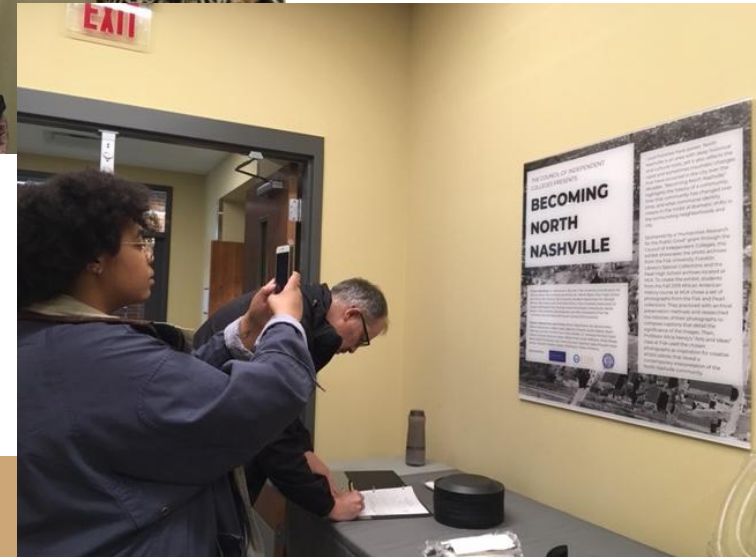
Format of the exhibit

- Gallery style hanging of colored photographs with art works on one end
- Gallery style hangings of monochromatic photographs on the other end
- Information texts and QR codes for corresponding pictures



Audience

- Local community members
- Students and faculty at both institutions
- Alumni of both institutions
- Members of the Nashville community at large



Successes

- Continuity
 - Students developing research practices (archival, qualitative, observational) and making connections between the history of the neighborhood and the present day
- Conservation
 - Students learning preservation processes
- Community
 - Students developing a personal connection to the space and the archives

From the student project evaluations (Fisk and MLK):

What did you learn or remember most from working on the project?

“research isn’t just online”

“research goes beyond the surface”

“seeing my grandmother’s picture in her graduating class”

“touching the photos at Fisk”

“learning more about my people”

Challenges



- Institutional collaboration (actually getting the students together and negotiating the disparate schedules)
- Navigating bureaucratic procedures (particularly with the Metro Nashville Public School system)
- Time limitations
- Of course, the pandemic

Adapting to the Pandemic

LITERARY ARTS



A collaborative exhibit between Fisk University and Martin Luther King, Jr. Academic Magnet High School (MLK). Faculty member: Katharine A. Burnett | Student researcher: Alexandria Green

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Fisk University campus, aerial view, 1946, Jefferson Street Photo Project, Fisk Special Collections

COLLECTIONS UTILIZED

Franklin Library Special Collections at Fisk University

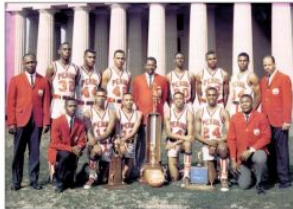
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1966 Pearl basketball team, TSSAA champions Pearl HS archives

Project Members

- Dr. Katharine A. Burnett, Fisk University (coordinator)
- Ms. DeLisa Harris, Fisk University (librarian)
- Mr. Melvin Black, Pearl High School (archivist)
- John Davies, Fisk University (student researcher, archival portion)
- Alexandria Green, Fisk University (student researcher, exhibit portion)
- Mr. Randall Norton's African American History course, MLK (student researchers)
- Prof. Alicia Henry's Arts and Ideas course, Fisk University (student researchers)
- Dr. Angela McShepard-Ray, MLK (principal and project consultant)
- Dr. Yann R. Newkirk, Fisk University (administrator)

Project Overview-

Part One: Archival Research and Preservation
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They then chose a set of photographs from the two archival collections and conducted research on the subjects.



Project Overview-

Part Two: Visual Art Exhibit

In Fall 2020, an Art class at Fisk curated a public art exhibit that featured the chosen photographs and creative art pieces based on the individual photos.

The creative pieces were created by a Fisk University Art class in Fall 2019. The result was a public exhibit, "Becoming North Nashville," that was part historical, part creative.

Format of the Exhibit

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Research Questions (Archival)

Pedagogical:

- To expose students (high school and university-level) to local history



- To introduce students to innovative research practices (primary and secondary sources, hands on archival research, interdisciplinary approaches, preservation/conservation)
- To encourage creative processes and expression through new pedagogical methods

Community-based:

- To highlight the archival collections, both of which are under-utilized and unfamiliar to the community at-large
- To bring more scholarly attention to these holdings and open them to those in the surrounding community whose histories are represented
- To highlight the history of a vibrant community in flux and change the narrative of North Nashville by placing the focus on the individuals and institutions who live in and define the community

Successes (Archival)

- Continuity: Students developing research practices (archival, qualitative, observational) and making connections between the history of the neighborhood and the present day
- Conservation: Students learning preservation processes
- Community: Students developing a personal connection to the space and the archives

Acknowledgements

A huge thank-you to all of the project members, in particular the MLK team members:

- Mr. Melvin Black, whose expertise with the Pearl HS archives was invaluable
- Mr. Randall Norton, for coordinating the project and exhibit with his MLK students
- Dr. Angela McShepard-Ray for advising and coordinating throughout the project
- MANY thanks to the Fisk University Art students and the MLK History students for contributing their time and talents.

And of course, thank you to the Council of Independent Colleges for the "Humanities Research for the Public Good" grant that sponsored this project.

The "Women of Rosenwald" Exhibit at Fisk University

<https://womenofrosenwald.omeka.net/>

"Women of Rosenwald: Curating Social Justice through the Arts, 1928-1948," utilizes materials from the Special Collections housed at Fisk University's John Hope and Aurelio E. Franklin Library to narrate the stories of eleven female African American writers, artists, performers, and scholars who received a Rosenwald fellowship between 1928 and 1948.

The exhibit traces the ways in which these women broke professional barriers and gave back to their communities in the fields of music, fashion, literature, sculpture, painting, and dance. While not all of the artists of focus reached international celebrity or achieved long-term financial success after their fellowship period, the Rosenwald Fund provided each the vital opportunity to grow their talents, shape their respective fields, and touch their communities.

To complete this project, Professor Boston collaborated with Fisk librarians and recruited and trained six undergraduate students to participate in metadata input, exhibit curation, document analysis, and writing (biographies and explanatory text).



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