MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

A CURRICULUM GUIDE

HONOR IN ACTION

Celebrating the Community History of Detroit's Black Bottom Neighborhood

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Celebrating the Community History of Detroit's Black Bottom Neighborhood

Michigan State University Museum, 2024

Cover photos courtesy of Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library and Detroit Historical Society.

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY MUSEUM

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Welcome!

Welcome to the *Honor in Action: Celebrating the Community History of Detroit's Black Bottom Neighborhood* curriculum guide, a joyful celebration of the people and history of the historical community in Detroit's Black Bottom!

The Michigan State University Museum is delighted to offer this engaging, primary source-based set of learning experiences designed for high school and university students, focused on honoring people in the past and today. This curriculum guide includes ready-to-use lesson plans, resource materials, and more. We hope these materials will help you to provide rich and meaningful learning experiences for your students. Thank you to everyone who contributed time and resources to this project (see "Acknowledgments").

WHAT DO WE HOPE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS WILL EXPERIENCE?

In today's world, more than ever, people need to experience connections to what came before them and how truly we "stand on the shoulders of giants." No one is self made. Learning how others in the past honored people in their communities can be a point of pride, a source of celebration, and an inspiration for today and the future. While things in the past can make us happy, disappointed, angry, sad, or neutral, there is power in remembering the common human experiences we all share and joy to be found in lifting each other up.

This curriculum guide offers students the opportunity to explore examples of honoring Detroit's Black Bottom neighborhood and how they can honor loved ones, leaders, and communities today. The lessons invite students to consider "honoring" as a concept that is more complex than colloquially understood. Using museum objects, photographs, poetry, oral histories, and more, students will engage in a variety of activities, including material culture analysis, discussion, and individual and group responses to learning.

Objects and material culture aid honoring by supporting collective memory. In these lessons, students will uncover the power of objects to help them build and preserve memory. We provide a quilt fabric reproduction, maps, poetry, photographs, and oral history audio files as part of the curriculum. Everything is designed to help students learn how these things provide tangible evidence of the honoring process. (For educators in the Greater Lansing area, activity kits are available to check out for classroom use. For those not within range of the MSU Museum, digital alternatives are provided).

The lessons are designed for active student participation. Students don't just get "talked at." They do the investigation, lead the discussion, and create products that show their learning. We hope the activities will provide outcomes that can be used to continue conversations and spark connection. Extension activities are suggested in each lesson.

WHY DID WE CREATE THIS CURRICULUM?

The MSU Museum is an innovative and experimental collaboratory that exists to catalyze creativity. Here, people can openly explore, express, and experiment with ideas across disciplines and interests and indulge their natural curiosity about the world. Since 1857, the Museum has been collecting objects and specimens and creating exhibitions that reflect our shared histories and experiences. It is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and is the state's first Smithsonian Affiliate. (https://museum.msu.edu).

At the MSU Museum, we are deeply committed to using our resources to create experiences that allow people to explore ideas important to them personally, our communities, and the world. One of the most important things the Museum does is inspire discussion around objects and specimens, by providing conversation starters, helping people find their voices, and supporting self-expression. Developing a curriculum centered on primary sources was very important to us. We also have a strong commitment to engaging our campus and greater community.

WAYS TO USE THIS CURRICULUM

Educators have many options for using *Honor in Action: Celebrating the Community History of Detroit's Black Bottom Neighborhood*. The lessons and resources may be used all together or modularly, according to your instructional needs. We encourage people to be creative. Options include:

- Integrating lessons into content-area instruction
- Using as special topics instruction
- Using materials for clubs or community organizations

Central Lesson: The curriculum begins with the central lesson, called "Name By Name: Honoring Community Members with the Detroit Signature Quilt." Students will explore concepts of "honoring" and examine the 1950s signature quilt created in Black Bottom. They then engage in activities about the history of the community where the quilt was made.

Additional Lessons: With the background students get in the central lesson, they can move on to exploring the additional lessons. These lessons provide more examples of honoring the Black Bottom community and different primary source materials. Feel free to choose the lesson(s) that will most interest your students and help you meet your educational goals.

1. Place in Poetry: Exploring Marsha Music's "The Bottom, The Valley and Hastings St. — An Elegy In Rhyme" (poetry)
2. Voices from Black Bottom: Capturing Stories That Honor Community Histories (oral history)
3. Telling Community Stories with Photographs (photographs and public exhibitions)

ACCESSIBILITY

We want all students and teachers to be able to engage with this curriculum guide. Objects often can be accessible to people regardless of language, ability, or skill. We anticipate that teachers will find the curriculum materials and resources adaptable for their community of learners. In addition, we recommend and/or provide these resources for the lessons:

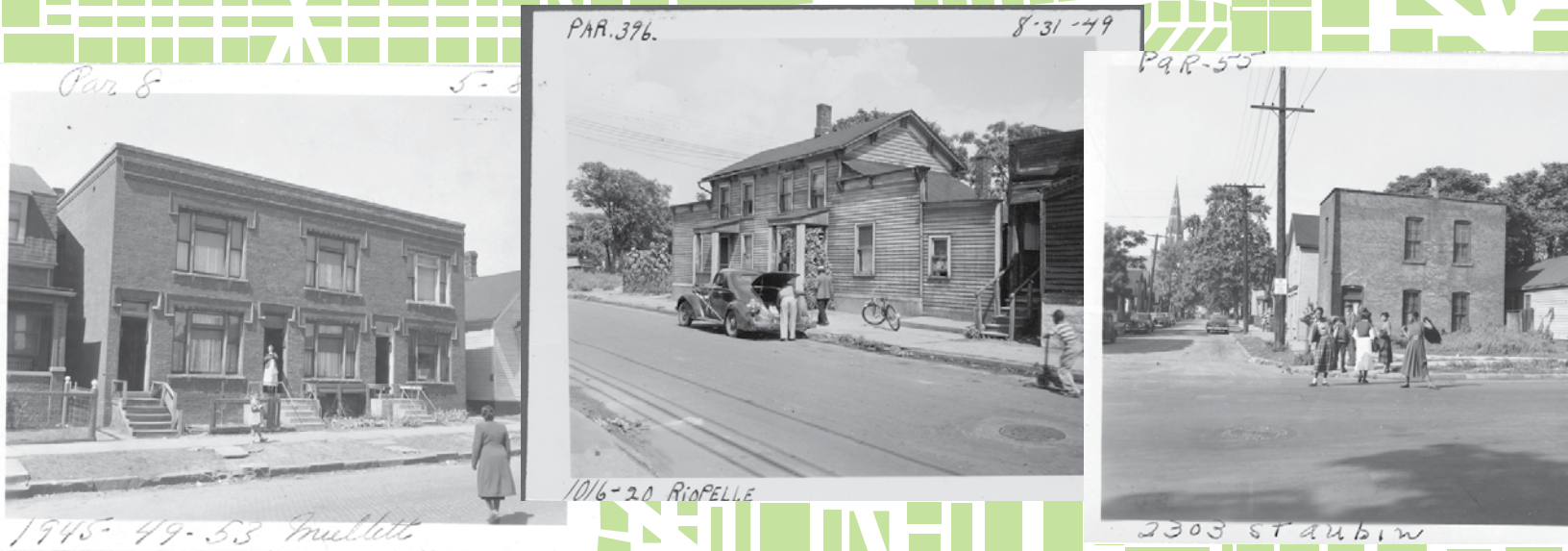
- Accessible reading experiences: Provide student access to the curriculum PDF for use with a screen reader for student activities and object descriptions.
- Accessible writing/drawing experiences: Provide student access to digital or other tools for writing or drawing according to ability.
- Physical disabilities: Students may need assistance with holding or touching objects.
- Sensory processing: If students are not able to touch objects, provide access to images instead (if appropriate for student needs).
- Tactile images included for some lesson objects.
- Videos: Use closed captioning.

VOCABULARY

Most vocabulary words are defined using the Wiktionary, the Free Dictionary (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Main_Page), used according to Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License and the GNU Free Documentation License, and in accordance with laws for educational use.

Thank you!

Thank you again for using the *Honor in Action: Celebrating the Community History of Detroit's Black Bottom Neighborhood* curriculum guide. We hope it helps you create wonderful learning experiences for your students.



Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

CURRICULUM STANDARD CONNECTIONS

MICHIGAN ACADEMIC STANDARDS

Michigan Department of Education. (2010). *Michigan K-12 Standards - English Language Arts.* https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Literacy/Content-Standards/ELA_Standards.pdf

Michigan Department of Education. (2019). *Michigan K-12 Standards - Social Studies.* https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Academic-Standards/Social_Studies_Standards.pdf

Michigan Department of Education. (2011). *Michigan Merit Curriculum: Standards, Benchmarks, and Grade Level Content Expectations - Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Theater.* https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Year/2014/06/06/Complete_VPAA_Expectations_June_2011_356110_7.pdf

LESSON PLAN 1

NAME BY NAME

Honoring Black Bottom Community Members with the Detroit Signature Quilt

LESSON PLAN 1

Name By Name: Honoring Black Bottom Community Members with the Detroit Signature Quilt

LEARNING FOCUS

Students explore what honoring is, how a material culture object (a quilt) honors people in the Black Bottom community in Detroit, and how to honor others in their communities today.

EDUCATOR CONTENT INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this lesson is to help students understand a historical example of honoring in a Detroit community and how they can honor loved ones, friends, and communities today. The activities are centered on the "Detroit Signature" quilt from the MSU Museum collection, which was created in the 1950s in the vibrant Black Bottom neighborhood by Black women at the Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ on Mack Avenue. Students will have opportunities to engage with each other in a variety of activities, including object and photograph analysis, whole class discussion, small group work, and individual responses to learning.

HONORING

The lesson begins with a discussion of honoring as a concept. Students are asked to think about what honoring means, who/what do we honor, and in what ways people honor others. Central concepts include that honoring is (1) an action, (2) a public process, and (3) a process that binds people together (Oprisko, 2012, Speier, 1952). Discussion allows students to consider honoring people in our lives and communities as something more complex than we normally colloquially understand it.

Objects and material culture aid in honoring by supporting collective memory. Objects often are part of ceremonies or act as memory prompts, things such as gifts, medals, public memorials and art, signs, gravestones, etc. These objects help people in the present and future by providing tangible evidence of the honoring process, remembrance of the honoree, and a way to prevent forgetting. Interpreting material culture objects, however, is dependent on the knowledge and perspective of the person doing the interpreting. Objects become imbued with meaning by the people who interpret them. Objects may seem neutral, but their meanings are not. Controversy can exist over memory, the meanings of objects, and who/what is honored and why. All of these ideas show the power of objects in memory.

BLACK BOTTOM NEIGHBORHOOD HISTORY

Detroit's Black Bottom neighborhood was a thriving integrated community in the early 1900s. One common description of the boundaries is "Gratiot Avenue and East Vernor Highway to the north; the Grand Trunk Railroad or Chene to the east; Congress or Lafayette to the south; and Brush Street to the west" (https://www.neh.gov/article/people-and-places-black-bottom-detroit). The name was given by French immigrants in the 18th century due to the rich soil found there.

As nearby neighborhoods, banks, and governments practiced discriminatory racial restrictions on housing (redlining) in the area, Black Bottom became almost exclusively a Black neighborhood. Together, current residents and newcomers from the South who arrived as part of the Great Migration created a vibrant community, full of houses, thriving businesses, and people who loved living there. It was also known as a center for the music industry.

Photo courtesy of Detroit Historical Society

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Detroit city government targeted Black Bottom and other nearby neighborhoods as part of what were called urban improvement efforts and to make way for the Interstate 375 highway. Federal government funds were used to facilitate this work. As the neighborhood was destroyed, tens of thousands of residents and business owners were forced to move to other—often more expensive—areas. Most residents were not offered alternative housing. Black individuals faced racism and discrimination in nearby neighborhoods as they tried to relocate. What was called improvement was a devastating loss of property, business, and community life.

> **"The clearance of land for urban renewal displaced tens of thousands of Detroit blacks, putting great pressure on the city's already saturated housing market...The most densely populated section of the city in the 1940s, it was a target of 'slum clearance.' City officials began condemning properties and evicting residents here in 1950 to make way for a proposed middle-income apartment complex."** (Sugrue, 2005, p. 49)

> **"Left behind was what one black businessman called a 'no man's land' of deterioration and abandonment. The announcement of highway projects came years before actual construction. Homeowners and shopkeepers were trapped, unable to sell property that would soon be condemned, unable to move without the money from a property sale. Building owners had no incentive to invest in improvements. An enormous number of buildings were condemned and leveled to make way for the new expressways."** (Sugrue, 2005, p. 47)

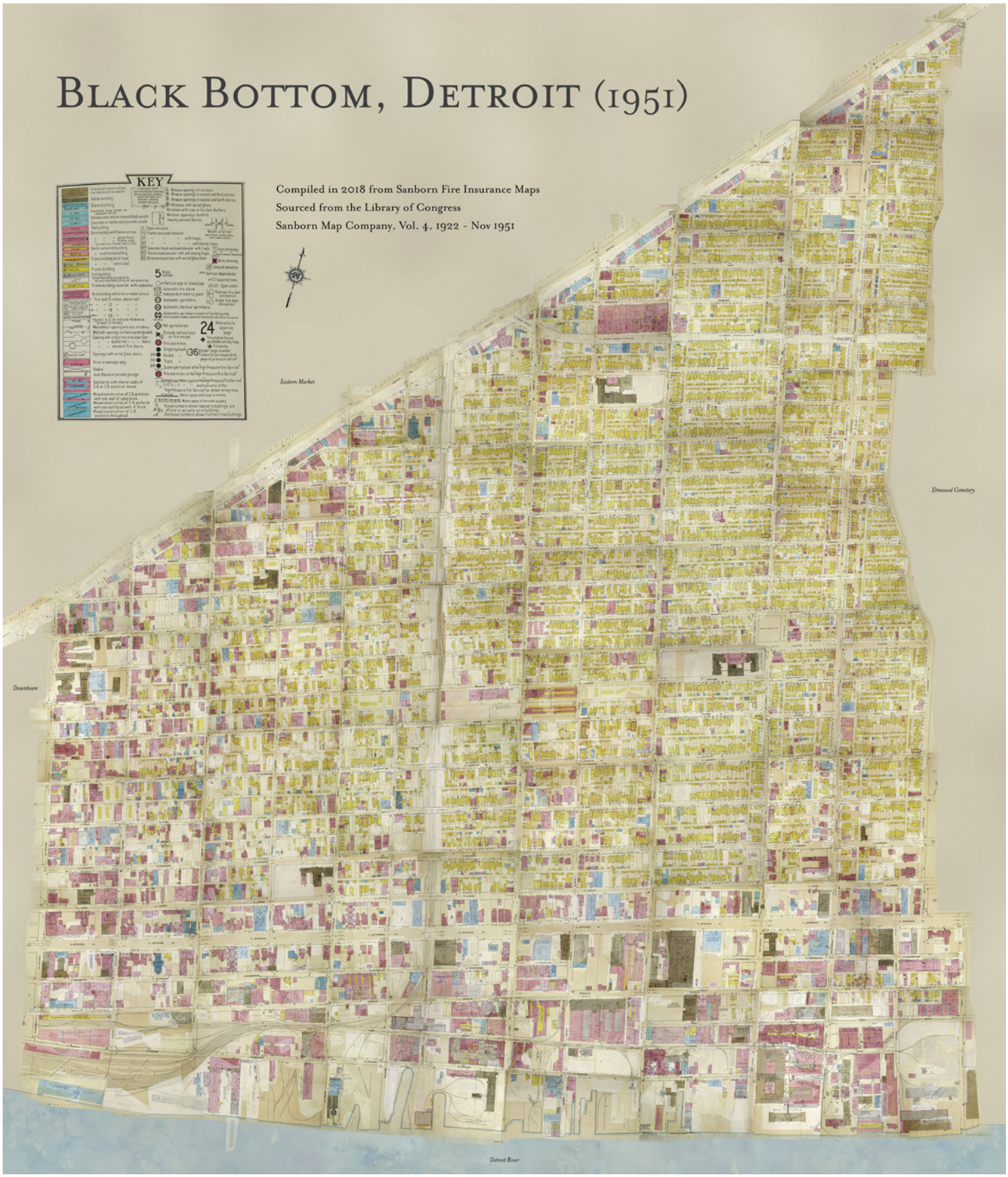


Image courtesy of Black Bottom Archives, Emily Kutil creator

Today, people in Detroit and others have captured the history of Black Bottom as it was before the destruction. See these resources for more information:

- Black Bottom Archives: https://digital.blackbottomarchives.com/
- Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library: https://detroitpubliclibrary.org/research/burton-historical-collection
- Detroit Historical Society: https://detroithistorical.org/learn/encyclopedia-of-detroit/black-bottom-neighborhood

SIGNATURE QUILTS

Signature quilts are quilts which are inscribed with the names of individuals who made the quilt, are honored or remembered by a group of people, or form part of a community associated with the quilt. Sometimes the names are actually signatures, other times the names were inscribed by others. This type of quilt became popular in the mid 1800s and is still made today. Names may be printed in ink or embroidered using thread. Red was a commonly used thread color since the dye used in red thread would not "bleed" when washed.

These quilts were made for different purposes. Examples of this type of quilt include album quilts, presentation quilts, and fundraising quilts (American Patchwork & Quilting, 2021):

1. Album or friendship quilts: Made of pieced or appliquéd blocks with the space for the names. Usually intended to be a keepsake, rather than a quilt to be used as bedding.
2. Presentation quilts: Made to honor a community member, often for a special life event, and include the signatures of people connected to the honoree.
3. Fundraising quilts: Made to raise funds for a variety of causes. The names of individuals who contributed funds to that cause were recorded on the quilt.

The information included on signature quilts often is useful in historical research. If a quilt has been separated from its place of origin, finding this information can help connect the quilt to the community that made it. Names may be investigated using tools such as the U.S. Census, property records, and genealogical records. If the quilt was made for a particular purpose, this information may be discovered through research and community members' memories. At the Quilt Index (https://quiltindex.dev.matrix.msu.edu/), you can see many different examples of signature quilts by searching for "signature" or "album" or "friendship." Use the compare tools in the Quilt Index to look at different examples made for different purposes through the decades. You also can read the article by Sikarskie et al. (2013) in the reference list below to learn more.

THE DETROIT SIGNATURE QUILT

The Detroit Signature quilt was created in the 1950s by a group of Black women from the Black Bottom neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan. The makers attended the Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ on Mack Avenue. Based on information on the quilt and memories gathered from church members in April 2022, the quilt was likely made in 1953. This was the year the church hosted a "convocation," a gathering of local Congregational Church of God in Christ congregations. The quilt may have been created as part of this event. The Michigan State University Museum currently owns this quilt (https://quiltindex.dev.matrix.msu.edu//view/?type=fullrec&kid=12-8-6640).

Photos by Pearl Yee Wong

The quilt has been described as:

> **"Twenty squares of fabric containing the signatures of the individual square makers, often followed by an address or phone number. Most of these addresses traced back to Black Bottom Detroit, a once vibrant and predominately African American community which was decimated by urban renewal programs. Of the homes whose addresses are documented on the quilt, none remain standing today; rather they are barren strips of grassy land east of bustling midtown Detroit."** (MacDowell & Sorrells, 2022)

In April 2022, the MSU Museum hosted a community story sharing event at the MSU Detroit Center to learn more about the quilt.

"The research team showed the quilt, recorded stories about the women, and digitally scanned any photographs of the quiltmakers. This research journey has uncovered the stories of the quiltmakers, showing what links them together and documenting the historical vibrancy of the community where they once lived. In amplifying the voices of the twenty women and their community, previously blank pages in their collective history have been filled." (MacDowell & Sorrells, 2022)

DETAILS OF THE QUILT:

- Documented by the Michigan Quilt Project, Michigan State University Museum Collection, and Black Diaspora Quilt History Project
- 65" wide, 80" long (165 cm x 203 cm)
- "Chimney Sweep" quilt pattern
- Quilt blocks 15.5" x 15.5" (39 cm x 39 cm)
- Cotton quilt top, filling, and backing
- Embroidery inscriptions with red and blue cotton floss

This sharing session created a wonderful opportunity for community members to remember and honor the women whose names were featured on the quilt, more than 70 years later. For more information, see this article by MacDowell, Sorrells, & Music (2023): https://quiltindex.org/view/?type=publications&kid=35-90-382

High School Learning Standards

Michigan Social Studies Standards

P1 READING AND COMMUNICATION – READ AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY
P1.2 Interpret primary and secondary source documents for point of view, context, bias, and frame of reference or perspective.
P1.4 Express social science ideas clearly in written, spoken, and graphic forms.
P1.5 Construct and present an argument supported with evidence.

P2 INQUIRY, RESEARCH, AND ANALYSIS
P2.1 Apply methods of inquiry, including asking and answering compelling and supporting questions, to investigate social science problems.
P2.3 Know how to find, organize, evaluate, and interpret information from a variety of credible sources.
P2.4 Use relevant information from multiple credible sources representing a wide range of views, considering the origin, authority, structure, and context, to answer a compelling or supporting question.

P3 PUBLIC DISCOURSE AND DECISION MAKING
P3.4 Critique the use of reasoning, sequence, and supporting details in creating a claim and the subsequent evidence used to support a claim for credibility.

P4 CIVIC PARTICIPATION
P4.2 Assess options for individual and collective action to advance views on matters of public policy and address local, regional, or global problems.

Michigan Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Theater Standards
ANALYZE
Standard 3: Analyze, describe, and evaluate works of art. (VPAA: C2, C3, C4, C5, P2, P3, R1, R2, R3, R4)
ART.VA.III.HS.1 Analyze and describe the formal characteristics of a work of art or design. (21st Century Skills: I.3, II.1, III.1)
ART.VA.III.HS.3 Critically observe a work of art to evaluate and respond to the artist's intent using art vocabulary and terminology. (21st Century Skills: I.2, I.3, I.6, II.1)

ANALYZE IN CONTEXT
Standard 4: Understand, analyze, and describe the arts in their historical, social, and cultural contexts. (VPAA: C2, C3, C4, C5, P2, P3, R1, R2, R3, R4)
ART.VA.IV.HS.1 Observe and describe artwork with respect to history and culture. (21st Century Skills: I.6, II.1, III.1, III.2, III.7, III.8, III.9, III.10)

ANALYZE AND MAKE CONNECTIONS
Standard 5: Recognize, analyze, and describe connections among the arts; between the arts and other disciplines; between the arts and everyday life. (VPAA: C2, C3, C4, C5, P2, P3, R1, R2, R3, R4)
ART.VA.V.HS.7 Analyze the impact of visual culture on society. (21st Century Skills: I.3, III.2, III.7)

Materials Needed

Please refer to the "Curriculum Introduction" for information on accessibility.

- Detroit Signature Quilt fabric reproduction, digital image, or printed image
- "Jigsaw Group Instructions" sheet
- Historical church and neighborhood images (see photographs in Lesson 4)
- Black Bottom poster map
- Copy of the "Uncoverings" article (MacDowell, Sorrells, & Music, 2023)
- Internet access

VOCABULARY

From Wiktionary (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Main_Page)

- **congregational:** any of several forms of church organization in which each congregation is responsible for its own government
- **embroider:** to stitch a decorative design on fabric with needle and thread of various colors
- **honor:** recognition of importance or value; respect; veneration

TEACHING THE LESSON (50-100 MINUTES)

For a 50-minute session, use sections marked with *. For a 100-minute session, use all sections.

*Activity 1: What is honoring? (10 minutes)

Ask students these questions about honoring and discuss their responses:

- What does honoring mean?
- Who/what do we honor?
- In what ways do we honor and why? Are there cultural differences? Can the ways people and communities honor people be controversial?

Discuss these concepts about honoring:

- **Honoring is action**: "Honoring is an action between two (or more) parties, typically an individual and a group" (Oprisko, p. 4).
- **Honoring is a public process:** "Thus for honor to arise it is essential that there be bearers, bestowers and observers of honor" (Speier, p. 37).
- **Honoring binds people together:** "Because honoring is the process whereby a group confers a value upon the individual, it represents nothing less than the means by which individuals and groups bind themselves" (Oprisko, p. 4).

Extended time activity (+5 minutes): Ask students to provide examples of these concepts.

*Activity 2: Exploring the Detroit Signature Quilt (15 minutes)

Artifact analysis (whole class or in small groups)

- Make the quilt fabric reproduction, digital image, or printed images available to the students.
- Explore the quilt.
- What do you notice about it?
- What kinds of information are included on the quilt?
- Who do you think the people on the quilt were?
- Why do you think this quilt was made?

Extended time activity (+5 minutes): Ask students to share their observations about the quilt.

Activity 3: Context Clues Jigsaw Activity (25 minutes)

Jigsaw activity (small groups): What is the community context of the Detroit Signature quilt? Alternate activity: If you do not have time to do the jigsaw activity, you can share the images and summary information from the resources below with the students.

- Divide class into 3 groups. Each group examines a question for 5 minutes, then reports back to the group. Provide an online collaborative workspace, white boards, or large sticky pad sheet where students can list links, info, etc.
- Explore the question: What kind of a community was Black Bottom Detroit?
  - Group 1: Search online or use the Black Bottom poster map for some of the information (addresses, names, etc.) found on the quilt. **[Summary information: This quilt was made in Detroit in a predominantly Black neighborhood that was called "Black Bottom." French immigrants gave the area this name because of the fertile "bottomland" soil found there. From the 1910s-1950s, Black Bottom became a vibrant neighborhood, filled with homes, businesses, cultural institutions, and an influential music industry. In the early 1960s, city officials destroyed the neighborhood by razing it for "slum clearance" and to make way for the I-375 highway, which they called urban renewal.]**

- Group 2: Examine images: Look at historical and recent images of the church and surrounding neighborhood. Describe the space/location and details that can be gained from photographs. **[Summary information: The images show vibrant neighborhoods, where people lived, did business, and participated in community life. A variety of different building styles and uses can be seen, along with people doing different activities.]**
- Group 3: Explore the history of Detroit's Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ. Find resources online or use the copy of "Uncoverings" (2023) article. **[Summary information: This is a Christian faith community founded in Detroit in 1919. The current church building was built in 1929.]** Suggested resources:
  - Facebook page historical images: https://www.facebook.com/groups/COGICHistoryPage/posts/765008250707302/
  - City of Detroit info page (PDF downloads): https://detroitmi.gov/document/zion-congregational-church-god-christ

- Jigsaw presentations: (whole class): Have groups share what they learned about this community from the jigsaw activity.

▸ ***Activity 4: Honoring with the Detroit Signature Quilt (whole class or small groups) (15 minutes)**

- Select questions from the list below for your students. Ask students to create a visual representation (drawing, diagram, etc.) of their discussion on a large sheet of paper or a white board.
  - In what ways does this quilt serve as a tool for honoring or documenting?
  - Whom or what does it honor? What makes you say that? **[Places, people, community, a church community]**
  - How does knowing the names and other information about people and places on the quilt help you to honor them, even if you don't personally know them? What do you know about your loved ones or community members from the past?
- Debrief: Share this information about the quilt and its history with students:
  - The creators were Black female members of the Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ at 2135 Mack Avenue in Detroit. The church congregation and building are still there.
  - In the 1950s, the quilt makers lived in a Detroit neighborhood called Black Bottom. It was a lively center of Black life, business, music industry, and community engagement. The community was targeted by city government leaders beginning in the 1950s. Black Bottom was destroyed in by 1960s to make way for the Interstate 375 highway and other projects, which were called urban improvement. Black residents faced racism and discrimination as they were forced out of their community and tried to move to other places.
  - Based on information on the quilt and memories gathered from church members in April 2022, the quilt was likely made in 1953. This was the year the church hosted a "convocation," a gathering of local Congregational Church of God in Christ congregations. The quilt may have been created as part of this event.
  - **"The quilt stands as a tangible reminder and enduring proof of a close-knit community that provided and cared for others in the name of faith and goodwill, which is continued and maintained by members of the church today"** (MacDowell, Sorrells, & Music, 2023, p. 172).

Extended time activity (+5 minutes): Allow students extra time for this activity.

- ***Activity 5: Honoring in communities today (whole class discussion) (10 minutes)**
    - In the 1950s, this quilt was a contemporary effort by the makers to honor their community members.
        - How do you or can you honor your communities today? List examples.
        - What cultural elements might impact your efforts? In what ways?
        - What can you take from this lesson to apply to your own life or community life?

Extended time activity (+10 minutes): Allow students extra time for discussion.

Response/Product/Engagement

- Participation in quilt and photo exploration
- Participation in class discussions and activities
- Written responses and/or artifact creation

Extension Ideas

- Document efforts that honor people or groups in your communities today.
- Create a plan to honor people or groups in your communities today.
- Document a quilt with inscribed names made to honor a person or to support a cause and add it to the Quilt Index (www.quiltindex.org)—a resource with images and information on over 90,000 quilts. Anyone can register their quilts in the Quilt Index. Go to "Add Quilts" from the top navigation bar, then in the dropdown list select "Submit a Quilt," then follow the instructions. The Quilt Index team recommends that you print a copy of the documentation form and fill it out before you input data online. The Quilt Index Guide to Documenting Quilts guides you through filling out all of the fields (https://kora.quiltindex.org/files/51-150-1/Quilt_Index_Guide_To_Documenting_Quilts.pdf). You will be a part of documenting and preserving quilt history.

Community members at story sharing session in Detroit. Photo by Marsha MacDowell

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JIGSAW GROUP INSTRUCTIONS

BIG QUESTION:

What kind of a community was Black Bottom Detroit?

GROUP 1: ONLINE OR MAP SEARCH

- Search online or use the Black Bottom poster map for the information (addresses, names, etc.) found on the quilt.
- Make a list of your sources and what you learned.
- **Hints:**
  - Search for addresses stitched on the quilt. What is there?
  - Search for people by name.
  - Try an image search.

GROUP 2: IMAGE INVESTIGATION

- Look at historical and recent images of the Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ and surrounding neighborhood.
- Write at least two descriptions of the space/location and details you see in the photos.
- **Hints:**
  - What buildings do you see? People?
  - What activities are happening in the photos?

GROUP 3: HISTORY OF ZION CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF GOD IN CHRIST

- Explore the history of Detroit's Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ. Find resources online or use the "Uncoverings" (2023) article.
- Make a list of your sources and what you learned.
- **Hints:**
  - What kind of a faith community is this?
  - How long has the church building been there?

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Sister
Roberta Wilson
Detroit Michigan
Sister
ETHEL WIGGINS
Detroit
Michigan
Sister
ADELE Anderson
Detroit
Sister
Irene Gibson
Sister
Ruth Randall
Detroit Michigan
Sister
Phyllis Shaffer
Detroit Michigan
MRS Mollie Mason
Detroit Michigan
Sister
Julia Rogers
Detroit
Michigan
Sister
Mattie Rogers
3139 St Aubin
Detroit, Michigan
DOLLIE PARKER
Detroit
Michigan

LESSON PLAN 2

PLACE IN POETRY

Exploring Marsha Music's "The Bottom, The Valley and Hastings St. – An Elegy In Rhyme"

Hastings Street, 1959. Courtesy of Detroit Historical Society.

LESSON PLAN 2

Place in Poetry: Exploring Marsha Music's "The Bottom, The Valley and Hastings St. – An Elegy In Rhyme"

LEARNING FOCUS

Students experience and respond to an imagery-rich poem written by Marsha Music about her life in Black Bottom Detroit.

EDUCATOR CONTENT INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this lesson is to give students opportunities to explore Marsha Music's poem that celebrates and honors the Black Bottom neighborhood. This neighborhood was a large, predominantly Black community in Detroit from the early 1900s until its destruction for what was framed as urban renewal in the 1950s-60s. Students will read the poem and discuss its meanings. They will create a visualization using the names, places, and more recorded in the poem. Sharing their work offers more ways to consider how the poem honors these people, places, and things.

WHO IS MARSHA MUSIC?

Marsha Music is a Detroit native who grew up in Highland Park, Michigan. She describes herself as a "primordial Detroiter" and a "Detroitist" (https://marshamusic.wordpress.com/). Music began doing activist work as a teenager and was later a founding member of the iconic League of Revolutionary Black Workers and a labor union president. She has done extensive work as a writer, poet, scholar, speaker, musician, performer, and media contributor. Her honors are many, including the Kresge Literary Arts Fellowship and a Knight Arts Challenge Award.

Marsha Music, in Detroit. Photo from the collection of Marsha Music. Used with permission

THE POWER OF PLACE

Places are central to the human experience. People make sense of the world through the places they inhabit. Although people often use the words “space” and “place” interchangeably, Tuan (1977) said that space is considered what is knowable and perceivable by the body, while place is the imbuing of space with value. Space becomes place through human actions.

Burton Historical Collection,
Detroit Public Library

Power (political, economic, and social) is the force that creates space and place. Deliberate decisions create our environments. There are no neutral spaces. Space communicates what it is designed to communicate (Renade, 2007). People learn these messages from space, such as who is welcome or not welcome and what can happen in spaces. These messages can endure over time, as Spain (1992) wrote, “Although space is constructed by social behavior at a particular point in time, its legacy may persist (seemingly as an absolute) to shape the behavior of future generations” (p. 6).

Because of these realities, spaces and places are very powerful parts in people’s lives. Where we live, work, and play has a great impact. We celebrate and invest in place. We remember the places of our past. Places often shaped us in ways that we can point to as having great importance in our lives. This lesson will challenge students to consider the power and celebration of place in Marsha Music’s poem and their own personal experiences.

EXPERIENCING THE POEM

Poetry can be experienced and taught in a variety of ways. Like any other text, poems may be analyzed for structure, themes, and meanings. Readers may compare and contrast a poem with other texts or look for how an author uses source material. Above all, the poem as a literary art form allows readers to experience content and form in unique ways.

> **“Poetry, like all art forms, sits on the shoulders of a long history. Poets draw from whatever corner they’ve learned from or that they prefer: maybe a lineage of poets they identify with, their teachers, poems that shaped who they are, or poems they aspire to write.”** (Shoemaker, 2024)

In this lesson, students will explore Marsha Music's poem through the lenses of place and material culture. They will read a poem and create a visual representation of the place names, people, objects, and other elements mentioned in the text using art materials. Through the creative process, students will describe and document the social issues in the poem and express their individual and collective understandings.

High School Learning Standards

Michigan English Language Arts Standards
READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE 6-12
Key Ideas and Details: 2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text (Gr. 9-10). 2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text (Gr. 11-12).

Craft and Structure: 4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings (Gr. 9-10). 4. Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful (Gr. 11-12).

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 9. Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (Gr. 9-10)

WRITING STANDARDS 6-12
Production and Distribution of Writing: 4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (Gr. 9-10, Gr. 11-12)

Research to Build and Present Knowledge: 9. Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research (Gr. 9-10, Gr. 11-12)

Michigan Social Studies Standards
P1 READING AND COMMUNICATION – READ AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY
P1.2 Interpret primary and secondary source documents for point of view, context, bias, and frame of reference or perspective.
P1.4 Express social science ideas clearly in written, spoken, and graphic forms.

P4 CIVIC PARTICIPATION
P4.2 Assess options for individual and collective action to advance views on matters of public policy and address local, regional, or global problems.

Michigan Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Theater Standards
CREATE, Standard 2: Apply skills and knowledge to create in the arts
ART.VA.II.HS.8 Explore social and global issues through the application of the creative process. (21st Century Skills: III.7, III.8, III.9, III.10)

Materials Needed

Please refer to the "Curriculum Introduction" for information on accessibility.

- "The Bottom, The Valley and Hastings St. - An Elegy In Rhyme" by Marsha Music (website or printed version)
- Black Bottom poster map
- Art materials (including scissors, glue sticks, tape, paper, markers) or digital alternatives for creating art
- Paper copies of the photographs for students to use as materials in their visualizations

VOCABULARY

From Wiktionary (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Main_Page)

- **elegy:** a mournful or plaintive poem
- **honor:** recognition of importance or value; respect; veneration
- **theme:** a subject, now especially of a talk or an artistic piece

TEACHING THE LESSON (50 MINUTES)

- **Activity 1: The Author's Background (5 minutes)**
  Share Marsha Music's website with the students (https://marshamusic.wordpress.com/) or use information from the "Teacher Content Introduction."
  - Who is Marsha Music?
  - What community does Music come from?
  - Why do you think Music calls herself a "Detroitist"?

- **Activity 2: Explore the Poem (20 minutes)**
  - Read "The Bottom, The Valley and Hastings St. — An Elegy In Rhyme" from the website or printed version (https://marshamusic.wordpress.com/black-bottom-hastings-st-and-paradise-valley-an-elegy-in-rhyme/). Show students the Black Bottom neighborhood poster map to help them visualize the location.

- **Activity 3: Visualize Elements from the Poem (25 minutes)**
  - Have students think about the poem elements or themes, figurative or connotative meanings, or source material they would like to visualize. They can choose to focus on place names, people's names, objects, etc. For example, they might create a visualization of all the music-related elements of the poem.
  - You may choose to allow students to focus on the entire poem or a section/sections.
  - Encourage students to create something artistic, not just written lists.
  - Provide the art materials or digital alternatives for students to use for making their visualizations. Allow students to use paper copies of the photos, if desired.

- **Response/Product/Engagement**
    - Participation in class discussion
    - Participation in reading the poem
    - Creation of poem visualization

- **Extension Ideas**
    - Have students display and view each other's poem visualizations.
    - Discuss with students how they might create something similar to this poem to honor a place, people, or community.

References

Michigan Department of Education. (2010). *Michigan K-12 Standards - English Language Arts.* https://www.michigan.gov/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Literacy/Content-Standards/ELA_Standards.pdf

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Renade, S. (2007). The way she moves: Mapping the everyday production of gender-space. *Economic and Political Weekly, 42*(17), 1519-1526.

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The Bottom, The Valley and Hastings St. — An Elegy In Rhyme by Marsha Music

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Long ago but not forgotten
Was a wondrous part of town
Called Black Bottom, long before we came
Hastings was the avenue
Jazz and Gospel and
the Blues
Nightclubs after dark in Paradise Valley

Hastings Street was live and jumpin'
Old Black Bottom's thoroughfare
Businesses and enterprise all day
In the Valley, Paradise
were Black & Tan clubs for a price
Fun and frolic, dance and cabaret

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In the city of the car
Long before that – very far
Was a land of dark and fertile soil
T'was a place of swamp and fog
Mist and antediluvial bog
This, the place of birth of old Black Bottom.

Here primordial mist and rain
Verdant marsh the land became
Honey locust trees, a canopy
Water from the river's rush
Made the flora green and lush
Bottom soil black – and so the name

Near the river flowing fast
betwixt here and Canada
Native people dwelled there at the shore
Furs and trapping near its banks
British called its name, The Straits
French though, said it this way – La De'troit

O'er the years the people came

building homes of brick and frame
Of a style t'was called Victoriana
Europeans came to dwell,
Middle Easterners as well,

Jews and Greeks, and folks of all humana

Blacks enslaved escaped from South,

joining brethren here in chains
Making way through railroads underground
Crossing o'er the river wide,
Rushed to Canada to hide
But most still here, in old Black Bottom stayed.

A cornucopia of folks
From many lands they brought their hopes
The poor and unemployed here were reborn
Then Henry Ford did sound a call
Five dollar days I'll give you all!
The populace exploded in Detroit

Black Bottom teemed with immigrants
and folks escaping old Jim Crow
A melting cauldron of our humankind
Some prospered and they moved away
but Blacks were therein forced to stay
Through segregation's covenants and laws

*

So now we had this neighborhood
Replete with quite a brotherhood
Of folks who'd cleaved together to survive
A culture had therein arisen
Black folks who knew just how to listen
& learn what it would take them, to survive.

They looked towards old Hastings Street
The place where folks would meet and greet
And businesses sprung up on all its blocks
An avenue of energy and wondrous musicality

And even my own father's record shop.
So Hastings was the kind of place
Both hip, and righteous had their space
The sinners and the sanctified they lived
Rev. CL Franklin hooped and squalled
and working girls walked past nightfall
And House of Diggs received <u>all</u> in the end.

Aretha Franklin, with her dad,
the hold they had was ironclad
on gospel fans that listened Sunday nights
New Bethel Church the epicenter
My dad recorded them, remember
And they all three were legends, overnight

John Lee Hooker would come and stop
In front of old Joe's Record Shop
Where Blues was sung and sold and they'd get down
And up the street, if you've forgot
They hung at Sunnie Wilson's spot
The legendary, longest bar in town

The Detroit Count a local bard
walked Hastings Street like his own backyard
'rhythmin' and a' rappin' all the way
And many others made the stop
Inside my father's record shop,
To cut a tune or maybe just to play

But not just songs were cultivated
Hastings Street was concentrated –
Businesses and Black entrepreneurs
With restaurants and pharmacies
And beauty shops and stores you see,
The hustle and the enterprise endured

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Their numbers grew and not too far
They partied in the clubs and bars,
The nightlife was exciting, Black & Tans
The big names came to make some fun,
from Lena Horne to Ellington
And Washboard Willie had his one man band.

They had a contest for the name,
To celebrate the fun and games
And enterprise on every street and alley
The time drew near to thus denote
A name, decided by a vote
And thus came to be called the Paradise Valley.

The ghosts of this triumvirate,
those three great places, gone but yet
must never be forgotten or denied
Our own Black Wall Street, here was born
Despite the animus and scorn
We persevered and met each day with pride

But time doth bring about a change
And those in power spark outrage
The city leaders tore Black Bottom down
And in an effort to delete
A decade later Hastings Street
Was buried 'neath a freeway service drive

The money and the influence
of those who owned Black businesses
Was too much for those powers that did be
The wealth that builds through generations
Businesses, small corporations
Ceased for all those prosperous families

And then another decade past
The Valley's ending happened last
Demolished to make way for sports and games
The night clubs and the shops now gone
And what remains is but a song
And memories of that life back in the day

But now we have the legacy
Of those three notes of history
Of music, and of commerce, and of home
The spirit of those times you see
Lives on inside us, you and me
Black Bottom, Hastings Street And Paradise Valley.

LESSON PLAN 3

VOICES FROM BLACK BOTTOM

Capturing Stories That Honor Community Histories

Photo by Baltimore Heritage.
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LESSON PLAN 3

Voices from Black Bottom: Capturing Stories That Honor Community Histories

LEARNING FOCUS

Students will hear an oral history from Black Bottom Detroit and learn how to capture stories through oral history best practices to honor their community histories.

EDUCATOR CONTENT INTRODUCTION

This lesson gives students the opportunity to hear voices from the past sharing their stories of Black Bottom Detroit. This neighborhood was a large, predominantly Black community in Detroit from the early 1900s until its destruction for what was framed as urban renewal in the 1950s-60s. Students will listen to an oral history and practice collecting oral histories from their peers, an exercise in history making, empathy, and active listening. They will discuss how oral histories can be used to honor people and communities.

WHAT IS ORAL HISTORY?

You may have heard of projects like StoryCorps that collect audio stories from people across the United States. These stories are *oral histories*. "Oral history is a field of study and a method of gathering, preserving and interpreting the voices and memories of people, communities, and participants in past events" (Oral History Association, 2024). Collecting oral histories gives people a way to keep voices from the past alive. These histories are gathered from all kinds of people, preserving memories of everyday life, historical events, place memories, cultural traditions, and more. Oral history can be a great resource for students exploring history, storytelling arts, or how to document and honor community histories.

Photo by Getty Images

As in any other discipline, people who work in oral history have developed best practices over time. These methods include designing the project, researching the topic, practicing interviewing techniques, preparing for the interview, making sure you have proper permissions (legal, if necessary) from the interviewee, doing the interview, and preserving the audio file for future access. The Smithsonian Institution Archives has good resources that will be used in this lesson to introduce students to these topics. Here are some additional resources:

- "Oral History and the Historical Process" - University of Texas at Arlington (https://uta.pressbooks.pub/historicalresearch/chapter/oral-history/)
- "Oral History Best Practices" - Oral History Association (https://oralhistory.org/best-practices/)
- "Oral History Research" - Harvard Library (https://guides.library.harvard.edu/oralhistoryresearch)

Getting permission from interviewees is very important. Consent should be given in writing on a paper form that the person signs and verbally when the interview recording session begins ("Do I have your permission to record this interview?"). You may want to design a form that allows people to withdraw their consent in the future. Also, if the person collecting or giving the oral history is under 18, they will need permission from a parent/guardian to have their voice recorded, posted online, etc. Here are two sample release forms:

- Oral History Archives at Columbia
  https://guides.library.columbia.edu/ld.php?content_id=46588057
- Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage
  http://folklife-media.si.edu/docs/folklife/interviewing_guide/InterviewReleaseForm.pdf

Oral histories are made to be preserved and used! One of the best things people can do is have a plan for how stories will be made available to a public audience. Adding stories to established databases, such as through libraries, museums, historical societies, and universities, is a good option. If new storage options are created, it is important to think about the cost and effort of maintaining the digital data storage and protecting it from damage. If you are interested in oral history projects and repositories, here are some examples:

- "History Now: The Pandemic Diaries Project" - New York Public Library
  https://www.nypl.org/pandemic-diaries
- "Michigan Oral History Database" - Michigan Oral History Association
  https://www.database.michiganoha.org/index.php
- StoryCorps https://storycorps.org/

THE DETROIT HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY PROJECTS

The mission of the Detroit Historical Society (DHS) "is to tell Detroit's stories and why they matter" (https://detroit1967.detroithistorical.org/oral-archive-home). Since 2015, the DHS has collected oral histories for a variety of projects, including "Detroit 1967" and "Neighborhoods: Where Detroit Lives." History often focuses on the narratives of governments and political figures. The DHS wants to expand the historical record by including the voices of people who might not ordinarily be included (Wall-Winkel, 2024). The audio files for these projects were mostly collected in the community by DHS staff members and interns.

Dr. Tommie Johnson, courtesy of Detroit Historical Society

In this lesson, Dr. Tommie Johnson's 2016 oral history describes her daily life in the Black Bottom and Paradise Valley neighborhoods (https://detroit1967.detroithistorical.org/items/show/436). Full description and a transcript are available on the webpage. (Used with permission from the Detroit Historical Society.)

More voices from Black Bottom may be heard at *Black Bottom Archives* (https://digital.blackbottomarchives.com/interviews/).

High School Learning Standards

Michigan English Language Arts Standards
READING STANDARDS FOR LITERATURE 6-12
Key Ideas and Details: 2. Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text (Gr. 9-10). 2. Determine two or more themes or central ideas of

a text and analyze their development over the course of the text (Gr. 11-12).

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: 9. Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (Gr. 9-10)

WRITING STANDARDS 6-12
Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research (Gr. 9-10, Gr. 11-12)

Michigan Social Studies Standards
P1 READING AND COMMUNICATION – READ AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY
P1.2 Interpret primary and secondary source documents for point of view, context, bias, and frame of reference or perspective.
P1.4 Express social science ideas clearly in written, spoken, and graphic forms.

P2 INQUIRY, RESEARCH, AND ANALYSIS
P2.1 Apply methods of inquiry, including asking and answering compelling and supporting questions, to investigate social science problems.
P2.3 Know how to find, organize, evaluate, and interpret information from a variety of credible sources.
P2.4 Use relevant information from multiple credible sources representing a wide range of views, considering the origin, authority, structure, and context, to answer a compelling or supporting question.

P4 CIVIC PARTICIPATION
P4.2 Assess options for individual and collective action to advance views on matters of public policy and address local, regional, or global problems.

Materials Needed

Please refer to the "Curriculum Introduction" for information on accessibility.

- Access to the Smithsonian Institution Archives' "Oral History at Home - Five Easy Steps" video (Byrne, 2024): https://siarchives.si.edu/history/how-do-oral-history
- Access to Dr. Johnson's oral history audio file from the Detroit Historical Society https://detroit1967.detroithistorical.org/items/show/436
- Copies for each student of the "Oral History Listening Record" (or digital equivalent)
- Copies for each student of the "Oral History Questions" sheet

VOCABULARY

From Wiktionary (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Main_Page)

- **anecdote:**a short account of a real incident or person, often humorous or interesting
- **honor:** recognition of importance or value; respect; veneration
- **narrative:** the systematic recitation of an event or series of events
- **tradition:** a part of culture that is passed from person to person or generation to generation

TEACHING THE LESSON (50 MINUTES)

- **Activity 1: What Is Oral History? (10 minutes)**
  - Watch this video introduction to oral history (2:15 minutes): https://siarchives.si.edu/history/how-do-oral-history
  - Ask students:
    - What do you know about oral history?
    - What is a narrative?
    - What examples of oral history can you give?
    - How might oral history be used to honor individuals and communities?

- **Activity 2: Listening to voices from Black Bottom Detroit (15 minutes)**
  - Give each student an "Oral History Listening Record" to write things they hear as they listen to the oral history. Briefly discuss the categories: anecdote, date, personal name, place name, tradition, other.
  - Introduce the oral history collected from Dr. Tommie Johnson about her life in Black Bottom (https://detroit1967.detroithistorical.org/items/show/748). She was born in 1925 and grew up in Detroit. Dr. Johnson worked for the city of Detroit and also was a teacher.
  - Listen to Dr. Johnson's oral history. Recommendation: Listen from 0:00-6:30.
  - Discuss students' reactions to what they heard and what they wrote on their sheets.

- **Activity 3: Collecting Oral Histories from Your Peers (25 minutes)**
  - Give each student an "Oral History Questions" sheet. The questions are from the Smithsonian Institution Archives' *How to Do Oral History* website.
  - Divide students into two teams. Team 1 will be the interviewers, and Team 2 will be the interviewees. Allow students 10 minutes for the session.
  - Team 1 interviews Team 2 using their "Oral History Questions" sheet. Students shouldn't create actual audio files of the interviews—this is just practice.
    - What did your community look like outside of your family?
    - How did you meet them?
    - What types of activities would you do together?
    - Tell me about your neighborhood.
  - Switch the team roles. Team 2 becomes the interviewers. Allow students 10 minutes for the session.
  - Debrief (5 minutes): Have students share what the experience of collecting oral history from a peer was like.
    - What did you learn about the process of collecting oral history?
    - How easy or hard was the process?
    - Did you feel a connection to the person you were interviewing?

- **Response/Product/Engagement**
  - Participation in class discussion
  - Participation in the oral history listening session
  - Participation in the practice oral history interviews

- **Extension Ideas**
  - Have students develop a proposal for creating a family or other personal archive. What would the archive be like? What work would need to be done? What tools/software would they need to use? How would they honor stories of their elders? How would they share the archive?
  - Discuss with students how they might contribute to an oral history archive in their community, either individually or as a class project.

References

Byrne, Hannah. “How to Do Oral History,” Smithsonian Institution Archives, 13 September 2024, https://siarchives.si.edu/history/how-do-oral-history.

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Oral History Association. (2024). “Oral history defined.” Waco, Texas. https://oralhistory.org/about/do-oral-history/

Wall-Winkel, W. Field Curator at the Detroit Historical Society. Personal communication with Denice Blair. September 18, 2024.

ORAL HISTORY LISTENING RECORD

Anecdote	**Date**
Personal Name	**Place Name**
Tradition	**Other**

ORAL HISTORY QUESTIONS

- **1. What did your community look like outside of your family?**

- **2. How did you meet them?**

- **3. What types of activities would you do together?**

- **4. Tell me about your neighborhood**.

From: Byrne, Hannah. "How to Do Oral History," Smithsonian Institution Archives, 13 September 2024, https://siarchives.si.edu/history/how-do-oral-history. Used with permission.

A CURRICULUM GUIDE
HONOR IN ACTION
Celebrating the Community History of Detroit's Black Bottom Neighborhood

LESSON PLAN 4

TELLING COMMUNITY STORIES WITH PHOTOGRAPHS

Image courtesy of Black Bottom Archives, Emily Kutil creator

LESSON PLAN 4

Telling Community Stories with Photographs

LEARNING FOCUS

Students examine photographs from Detroit's Black Bottom neighborhood and learn about how they are used to tell community stories, while exploring how to tell stories that honor their own families, communities, and histories.

EDUCATOR CONTENT INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this lesson is to teach students about the importance of photographs in celebrating and documenting the history of Black Bottom. This neighborhood was a large, predominantly Black community in Detroit from the early 1900s until its destruction for what was framed as urban renewal in the 1950s-60s. Students will examine historic photographs through "close looking" and explain what story or stories they believe the image is telling. They will learn about the "Black Bottom Street View" exhibition, which uses images from the Detroit Public Library's Burton Historical Collection to share a photograph-based experience of Hastings Street. The goal is to help students understand the power of photos in telling stories and to encourage them to use images to honor their own personal and community histories.

PHOTOGRAPHS TELL STORIES

Since the first methods for fixing photographic images on metal, glass, and paper were developed in the nineteenth century, photos have played a central role in capturing people, time, and place. Until recently, producing photos was an expensive and time-consuming process. The idea that people could take as many photos as needed (as with digital cameras and phones) was unheard of. Not everyone had money and access to a camera. Photos were often priceless keepsakes of family members, homes, special occasions, and travel. Most people have at least some photos from their past. Iconic photographs have become part of the collective memories of communities and cultures.

Today, with cell phone photos so easy to take, store, and share, images are still a big part of helping to preserve memories. Physical photos are still produced, either by using film cameras or by printing digital images. Historic photos are kept by individuals and places like libraries and archives. The materials used to produce photos, such as film and paper, degrade over time. Special care is needed to preserve these materials from damage and the effects of time. It is important to preserve paper photos properly so they can be experienced by people now and in the future (https://www.loc.gov/preservation/care/photo.html). Digital images require their own conservation methods (https://www.loc.gov/preservation/digital/).

Although they may seem like unbiased documentation of the past, photographs show what the photographer chose to center in the lens at a certain time and place. Some things were included and others left out. When examining photos, it is important to think about why these choices were made and why. Also, small details in photos are easy to miss without careful examination or "close looking." Clues to where, when, and why photos were taken can often be found by close looking.

Museums, libraries, and other exhibition-producing organizations use objects, including photographs, to tell stories. For example, a series of photographs of people might tell visitors the story of community life. The images are carefully chosen by the exhibition curators to create a narrative. Because photos can quickly convey a lot of information, curators often choose to use them instead

of a lot of text to describe something. This lesson will provide an example of how photographs were used to create an exhibition that tells the story of Detroit's Black Bottom neighborhood.

DETROIT PUBLIC LIBRARY'S DIGITAL COLLECTION

The Detroit Public Library has many publicly available resources in its Digital Collections (https://digitalcollections.detroitpubliclibrary.org/). Anyone with internet access can explore the digitized collections. The Digital Collections website includes basic and advanced search functions, ability to mark items as "favorites," and copyright information. Library staff members are available to help with inquiries.

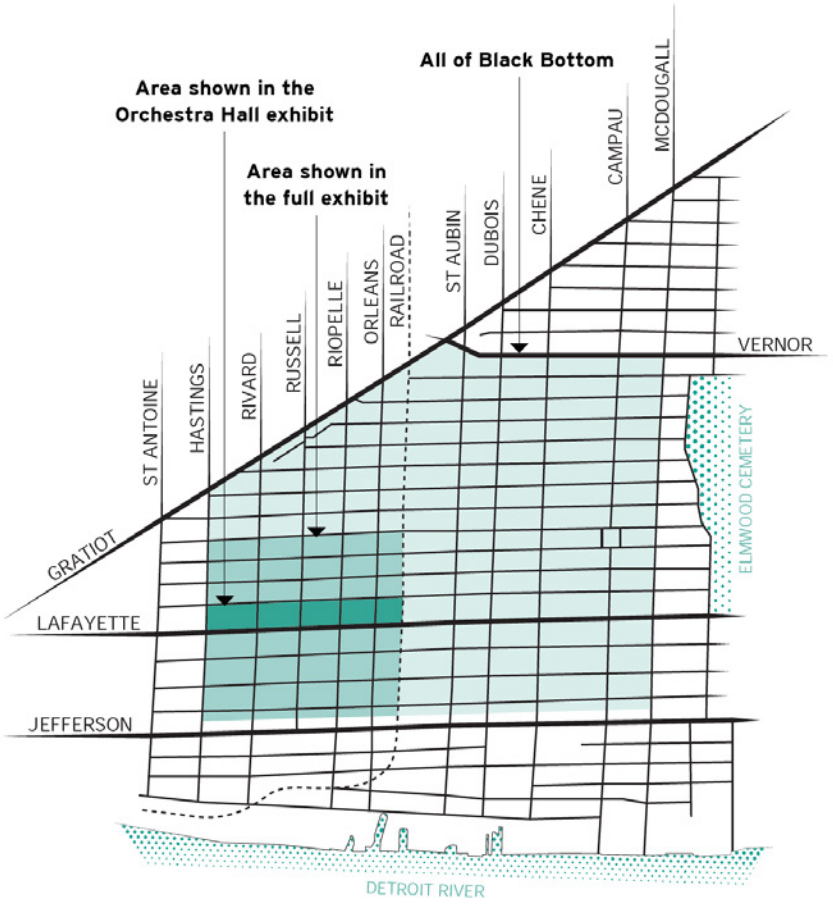
The Library's Burton Historical Collection includes thousands of images of Detroit's Black Bottom neighborhood. Many of these images were taken in 1949-50 before the neighborhood was razed for the building of highways and other destructive activities. The photographs were made as part of the process to acquire private property for public use ("eminent domain") and show homes, businesses, people, and more. Together, these images are a powerful collection that documents the Black Bottom neighborhood and landscape of the people whose daily lives, businesses, schools, and community were centered in this place.

THE "BLACK BOTTOM STREET VIEW" EXHIBITION

Image courtesy of Black Bottom Archives, Emily Kutil creator

Images courtesy of Black Bottom Archives, Emily Kutil creator

The "Black Bottom Street View" (BBSV) exhibition features more than 2,000 photographs from the Detroit Public Library's Burton Historical Collection that were taken in 1949-50 to record the properties marked for destruction (https://www.blackbottomstreetview.com/). Emily Kutil, a Detroit-based architect and university educator, is the creator of BBSV. She began the research work on the photos in 2014, and the exhibition was built in 2018.



Courtesy of Emily Kutil

By stitching together the photographs in panoramic views, the exhibition displays 20 "blocks" of the destroyed neighborhood. This traveling exhibition, available through Black Bottom Archives (http://www.blackbottomarchives.com/blackbottomstreetview), has 32 plywood portals that hold the photographic panels. First displayed in 2019 at the Detroit Public Library's Main Branch, the exhibition allows visitors to experience walking the neighborhood and seeing the buildings as they once related to each other in real life.

Images courtesy of Emily Kutil

Additionally, the exhibition opens up opportunities for visitors to share memories and honor the history of the neighborhood. People are invited to contribute their stories to the Black Bottom Archives. Curator Emily Kutil said that for people who grew up in Black Bottom, "It can be kind of cathartic to put yourself in that place again" (Hester, 2019). The exhibition continues to offer opportunities for more stories to be told and provides a model for making past places and spaces come alive.

These resources provide more information about "Black Bottom Street View":

- Exhibition specifications: "Black Bottom Street View Info Doc" https://docs.google.com/document/d/12omw9tjAil54nMqcnZuRsuuzzaBDpTnVYO5WBeO3dCw/edit
- "Revisiting Detroit's Black Bottom Neighborhood, Decades after Demolition: A New Installation at the Detroit Public Library Conjures a Lost Community" https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/black-bottom-detroit
- "Black Bottom Street View Exhibit Returns to Bert's Warehouse in Detroit" https://michiganadvance.com/briefs/black-bottom-street-view-exhibit-returns-to-berts-warehouse-in-detroit/

High School Learning Standards

Michigan English Language Arts Standards
WRITING STANDARDS 6-12
Production and Distribution of Writing: 4. Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience (Gr. 9-10, Gr. 11-12)

Research to Build and Present Knowledge: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research (Gr. 9-10, Gr. 11-12)

Michigan Social Studies Standards
P1 READING AND COMMUNICATION – READ AND COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY
P1.2 Interpret primary and secondary source documents for point of view, context, bias, and frame of reference or perspective.
P1.4 Express social science ideas clearly in written, spoken, and graphic forms.

P4 CIVIC PARTICIPATION
P4.2 Assess options for individual and collective action to advance views on matters of public policy and address local, regional, or global problems.

Michigan Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Theater Standards
CREATE, Standard 2: Apply skills and knowledge to create in the arts
ART.VA.II.HS.8 Explore social and global issues through the application of the creative process

Materials Needed

Please refer to the "Curriculum Introduction" for information on accessibility.

- Access to these web pages
  - Black Bottom Archives: https://docs.google.com/document/d/12omw9tjAil54nMqcnZuRsuuzzaBDpTnVYO5WBeO3dCw/edit#heading=h.mquf7i84qzv3
  - Michigan Advance: https://michiganadvance.com/briefs/black-bottom-street-view-exhibit-returns-to-berts-warehouse-in-detroit/
- Access to video "Black Bottom Street View Exhibit 2019": https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUEUm0_LdYQ
- Set of Black Bottom Detroit images
- Copies of "Photo Questions" for each student, pair, or group of students
- Paper
- Pens or pencils
- Art materials

VOCABULARY

From Wiktionary (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Wiktionary:Main_Page)

- **curator:** a person who manages, administers or organizes a collection, either independently or employed by a museum, library, archive or zoo
- **eminent domain:** the right of a government over the private property within its jurisdiction
- **exhibition**:a large-scale public showing of objects or products
- **honor:** recognition of importance or value; respect; veneration
- **panorama:** a picture or series of pictures representing a continuous scene

TEACHING THE LESSON (50 MINUTES)

- **Activity 1: The Power of Photographs (5 minutes)**

  Begin a discussion with the students about what part photographs play in their lives.
  - How many photos do you take in a day?
  - Why do you take these photos?
  - How do you use these photos?

  Talk about how photos have always been a big part of helping preserve memories. In the past, taking photos was expensive and time consuming. Today, most families have at least some photos from their past. Photos can tell the stories of individuals, communities, and cultures.

- **Activity 2: The "Black Bottom Street View Exhibit" (10 minutes)**

  Students explore the exhibition by curator Emily Kutil, a designer, educator, and researcher in Detroit. The exhibition uses historic photographs from the Detroit Public Library's Burton Historical Collection to bring Black Bottom's Hastings Street back to life. Black Bottom Archives currently manages the exhibition.
  - Show the students the exhibition area map on p. 41. Point out the area of Black Bottom included in the exhibition.
  - Explore web pages about the exhibition and how the photos are used.
    - Black Bottom Archives: https://docs.google.com/document/d/12omw9tjAil54nMqcnZuRsuuzzaBDpTnVYO5WBeO3dCw/edit#heading=h.mquf7i84qzv3
    - Michigan Advance: https://michiganadvance.com/briefs/black-bottom-street-view-exhibit-returns-to-berts-warehouse-in-detroit/
  - Watch the video from 1:40-3:30 and 11:00-13:11. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUEUm0_LdYQ

- **Activity 3: How Do Photos Tell Stories? (20 minutes)**

  Give each student, pair, or small group one of the Black Bottom images from the Detroit Public Library.
  - Ask students to examine their photo by looking closely to observe as many details as they can. Using the "Photo Questions," have them write their observations on the sheet (or digital equivalent).
  - What do you notice in the photo? Describe any people, buildings, objects, etc.
  - What clues do you see about where, when, and why the photo was taken?
  - What "story" is the photo telling?
  - What other information might people need to understand the photo?
  - Using the information they gathered from their Black Bottom photo, have students write a short description label (2–4 sentences) on paper about the story their photo is telling. This is their "exhibition label." They can use art materials to create drawings, graphics, or other materials to go with their photo and description label.

- **Activity 4: Create a Photo "Exhibition" (15 minutes)**

  Students use their images to create an exhibition in the classroom.
  - Place the photos, description labels, and any other materials students create around the classroom to create a photo exhibition.
  - Students can move around the room to see all the photos and read the labels.

- **Response/Product/Engagement**
  - Participation in class discussion
  - Participation in watching the video
  - Participation in examining a historic photo
  - Participation in viewing the class photo exhibition

- **Extension Ideas**
    - Discuss how students could use photos from their school or home communities to create an exhibition that honors their history.
    - Find examples of other physical and online photography exhibitions that tell the stories of individuals or communities. Describe the photos that are used and how the exhibitions were created.

References

Hester, J. L. (2019, Jan. 24). Revisiting Detroit's Black Bottom neighborhood, decades after demolition: A new installation at the Detroit Public Library conjures a lost community. *Atlas Obscura*. https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/black-bottom-detroit

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Michigan Department of Education. (2011). *Michigan Merit Curriculum: Standards, Benchmarks, and Grade Level Content Expectations for Visual Arts, Music, Dance, and Theater*. https://www.michigan.gov/mde/-/media/Project/Websites/mde/Year/2014/06/06/Complete_VPAA_Expectations_June_2011_356110_7.pdf

PHOTO QUESTIONS

1. **What do you notice in the photo? Describe any people, buildings, objects, etc.**

2. **What clues do you see about where, when, and why the photo was taken?**

3. **What "story" is the photo telling?**

4. **What other information might people need to understand the photo?**

A CURRICULUM GUIDE
HONOR IN ACTION
Celebrating the Community History of Detroit's Black Bottom Neighborhood

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

1021 Chene St

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library


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PAR. 501.
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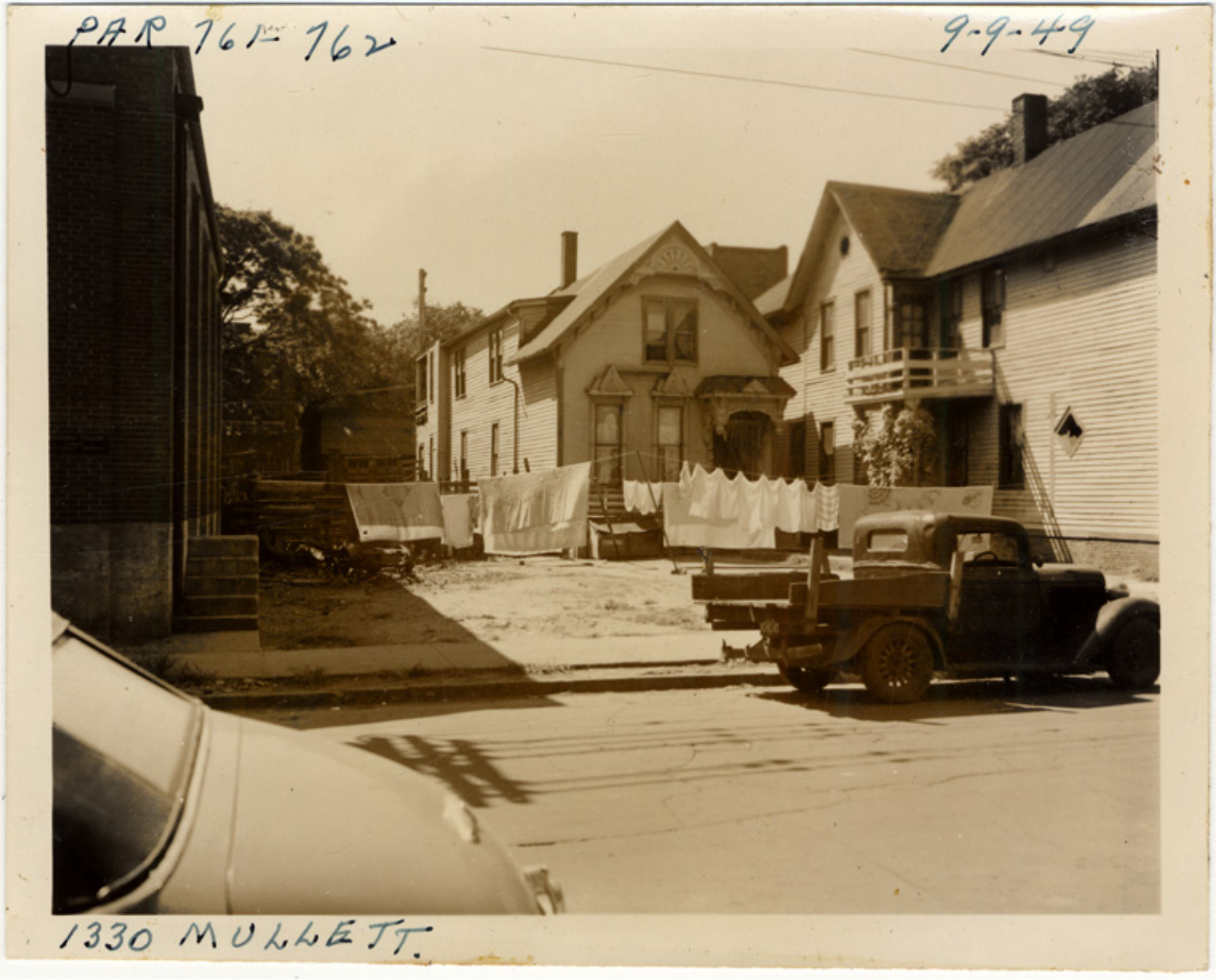
Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library


PAR 761-762
9-9-49
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PAR. 750
10-19-49
1446 MULLETT. REAR OF 1444 MULLETT.


PARCEL 727
8-26-49
HALL COAL CO
1836 MULLETT.

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library


Par 35
5-8-50
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DETROIT
OWL MOVING & STORAGE CO.
PACKING
SHIPPING
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CANDY
S & L CUT RATE DRUG CO.
CHOICE WINES

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library


PAR. 24
4-28-50.
GENERAL
AUTO REPAIRING
TEXACO
TEXACO
1000 ST. AUBIN.

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

PRIMARY SOURCES LIST

Black Bottom, Detroit (1951) map
(Lessons 1, 2, 3, 4) A historical map created from Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps sourced from the Library of Congress (Sanborn Map Company, Vol. 4, 1922 - Nov 1951). Courtesy of Black Bottom Archives, Emily Kutil creator (https://digital.blackbottomarchives.com/historical-map/)

Black Bottom neighborhood photographs
(Lessons 1, 4) Set of Black Bottom Detroit images taken in 1949-50 before the neighborhood was razed for the building of highways and other destructive activities. Courtesy of Detroit Public Library—Burton Historical Collection (https://digitalcollections.detroitpubliclibrary.org/)

"Black Bottom Street View" exhibition images
(Lesson 4) Images of the "Black Bottom Street View" exhibition development and installation at the Detroit Public Library in 2019. Courtesy of Black Bottom Archives

"Black Bottom Street View Exhibit 2019" exhibition video
(Lesson 4) A video describing the "Black Bottom Street View" exhibition and documentation of a public program at the Detroit Public Library (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QUEUm0_LdYQ)

"The Bottom, The Valley and Hastings St. — An Elegy In Rhyme" poem
(Lesson 2) An imagery-rich poem written by Marsha Music about her life in Black Bottom Detroit. Courtesy of Marsha Music (https://marshamusic.wordpress.com/black-bottom-hastings-st-and-paradise-valley-an-elegy-in-rhyme/)

Detroit Signature quilt reproduction, printed image, or tactile image
(Lesson 1) A quilt created in the 1950s by a group of Black women from the Black Bottom neighborhood in Detroit, Michigan who attended the Zion Congregational Church of God in Christ on Mack Avenue. Original is made from cotton fabric and cotton thread. Size is 65" x 80" (165 cm x 203 cm). Courtesy of MSU Museum (https://quiltindex.dev.matrix.msu.edu//view/?type=fullrec&kid=12-8-6640)

Oral history audio file (Dr. Tommie Johnson)
(Lesson 3). An oral history audio file of Dr. Tommie Johnson describing her daily life in the Black Bottom and Paradise Valley neighborhoods. Courtesy of Detroit Historical Society (https://detroit1967.detroithistorical.org/items/show/436)

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Denice Blair, PhD, Director of Education, MSU Museum

Liv Furman, PhD, Post-Doctoral Researcher - African American and African Studies Department (AAAS), MSU and Assistant Project Director - Quilt Index Black Diaspora Quilt History Project

Marsha MacDowell, PhD, Curator of Folk Arts and Quilt Studies, MSU Professor, and Director - The Quilt Index and the Michigan Traditional Arts Program

CURRICULUM PRODUCTION TEAM

Chloe Arielle Foster, Graphic Designer

Lauren Coin, Copy Editor

MSU MUSEUM SUPPORT

Devon Akmon, Museum Director

Jeff Lambert, Fiscal Officer and Human Resources Officer

Stephanie Palagyi, Communications Manager

Kristin Phillips, Digital Communications Coordinator

Lynne Swanson, Cultural Collections Manager

Carrie Wicker, Museum Educator

Mary Worrall, Director of Collections

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The Quilt Index

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CONTACT INFORMATION

For more information about the *Honor in Action: Celebrating the Community History of Detroit's Black Bottom Neighborhood* curriculum, please contact:

Education Team
MSU Museum
museumed@msu.edu
517-432-1472

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