



"Flourishing Roots of Our Past:" The Kinsey Collection at FAMU is at Meek-Eaton Black Archives. MEEK-EATON SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL BLACK ARCHIVES

Growing roots

UNTOLD STORIES SPRING TO LIGHT AT BLACK ARCHIVES

Amanda Sieradzki Council on Culture & Arts

The best part of Dr. Nashid Madyun's day is uncovering the untold stories housed within the Meek-Eaton Southeastern Regional Black Archives. Madyun is the director of the black archives and research center, and as a historian, his own research is focused on African-American's contributions in the military during the 20th century.

■ "I think we overlook the leadership that came from these individuals and the confidence they had re-integrating into society," says Madyun, who presented on the roles of African-Americans in the Spanish American War at the Museum of Florida History last month. ■ Shedding light on these seminal histories is just one facet of Madyun's role at the archive. He also oversees the Kinsey Collection, an assemblage of historical artifacts, documents and art that celebrates African-American culture. **See ARCHIVES, Page 3C**



Madyun

If you go

What: "Flourishing Roots of Our Past:" The Kinsey Collection at FAMU

When: 10 a.m.-5 p.m., Monday through Saturday

Where: FAMU Meek-Eaton Southeastern Regional Black Archives and Museum

Cost: Free

Contact: For more information, call 850-599-3020.

Archives

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"Flourishing Roots of Our Past" displays valuable documents such as manumission papers from the post-civil war reconstruction era alongside works from painter and cartographer Grafton Tyler Brown and Zora Neale Hurston's literary letters. The collection has traveled the U.S. and abroad and is currently on display at FAMU.

"Auction block papers let us know that we're not too far removed from an era where people were dehumanized and stripped of their dignity," states Madyun. "These are documents that you won't find anywhere else. It reminds us that there are a lot of stories yet to be told. The stories behind those documents are what are important to me."

As director, Madyun's responsibilities involve discovering artifacts to support research, taking that research and presenting it to the public and finding financial support to grow the collections. His passion for history stems from his parents' contributions to the field. Madyun's mother was a local historian and his father ran an African-American newspaper in the late 1970s.

Additionally, two innovative women shaped him early on in his career and influenced his personal style as a director. The first was Bobbie Heffington, former deputy director of the Department of Arkansas Heritage. Madyun admired Heffington's ability to manage different types of museums from living history exhibits to collections on Southern culture. The second was Deanie Parker, President of Soulsville in Memphis when Madyun was Director of the STAX Museum of American Soul Music.

"[Deanie] was more dynamic and innovative in terms of marketing and audience development and [Bobbie] was very practical and structured as far as how museums should and are expected to work," says Madyun. "I like to think I embody some of both and think of those two often."

Madyun first worked with the Department of Arkansas Heritage before working for the Delta Cultural Center as a historian and curator. He provided hands-on southern culture to audiences on the topics of blues, delta geography folkways and folk life.

While at the STAX Museum, Texas State History Museum and Hampton University's museum, he developed custom exhibits and grew audiences for each of their unique historical offerings. Now managing the 13 galleries



"Flourishing Roots of Our Past" is part of the Kinsey Collection at FAMU MEEK-EATON BLACK ARCHIVES



Zora Neale Hurston's Five Letters THE KINSEY COLLECTION

and archives at FAMU, he hopes to give locals and visitors to the southeastern region a reason to keep coming back.

"As I look to develop new exhibits, I always want to see how it can blend and connect to the community," says Madyun. "Is there an exhibit that can be slick enough to keep the attention of adults and children alike, but also bring some unique content that people can walk away and say, 'that was special, I'll remember that?'"

Partnerships are how

Madyun hopes to keep the archives a consistent part of Tallahassee's cultural fabric. Additionally, he's proud that the archives are collaborating with Leon County schools social studies classes to provide history in the classroom. The archives also partnered with TMH to highlight the significant contributions of African-Americans in the arts and sciences.

One exhibit focuses on patents in engineering and medicine, while another rotates new and emerging artists. Each



A group takes a tour of the Meek-Eaton Black Archives. SUBMITTED PHOTO

collection, including the expansive Kinsey collection, adds another dimension to the histories of African-Americans throughout slavery, the Civil War, Reconstruction, segregation, civil rights and beyond. A scavenger hunt for students and adults alike provides another accessible entry point for visitors to the museum and archives.

"Some are looking for traditional tours, others are looking to spice up their day," says Madyun. "With partnerships and research we can really make a lot of stories, books and texts that have just been sitting there come to life."

These "flourishing roots" continue to grow

as the archives receive more donations of art and artifacts. Madyun is excited by the prospect of what these new additions will provide to future exhibitions, as well as what they will contribute to the longevity of the institu-

tion. Moreover, he is inspired by the ability of the arts and humanities to enlighten society and highlight the significant contributions of African-American to U.S. history.

"A strong society and citizenry understands not only their culture but the cultures of others," says Madyun. "As we interact in our work places and politics, I think we have the responsibility to know how our vote counts and how it impacts other people. To find balance, there has to be an informed citizenry."

Amanda Sieradzki is the feature writer for the Council on Culture & Arts. COCA is the capital area's umbrella agency for arts and culture (www.tallahasseearts.org).

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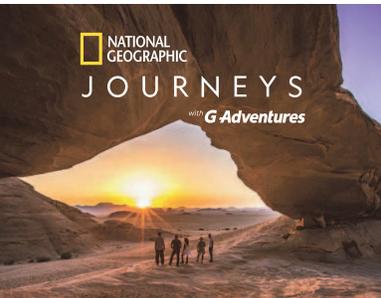
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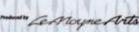
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