

Community Members Honored In New Museum Exhibit

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PH Museum

Community, what exactly does that mean? Well According to Merriam Webster dictionary community is defined as follows. The people with common interests living in a particular area. The second definition states that community is a group of people with a common characteristic or interest living in a larger society.

The Port Huron Museum Carnegie Center has added a new permanent exhibit to house within its walls, an exhibit that highlights community; more specifically the African American community of Port Huron, MI. Veronica Campbell, Museum Director says the museum had been planning on adding an exhibit to honor the black and indigeneous community for about a year and a half prior.

“These stories are not told at all, or haven't been told in the museum very well, and we also knew that we werent the people to tell the story.” says Campbell.

Coincidentally a young African American woman by the name of Haran Stanley,36 of Port Huron, approached the museum with an idea that would eventually transform into what it is today. Stanley initially approached the museum with the idea of creating an exhibit to honor her

grandmother for her efforts in the community over the years. The museum staff then asked Stanley if she would mind helping them share and put together the exhibit that is now known as *From Whence We Came: Black History In the Blue Water Area*. The exhibit which had its soft opening Feb 13, is currently open to the public, seeks to highlight the stories of resilience and success experienced by the black community in Port Huron, through a variety of views and perspectives.

One particular portion of the exhibit is called the James Sr. and Marguerite Stanley Legacy Wall which honors the legacies of those living in the Port Huron community. The wall itself bears the name of Haran Stanley's grandmother, and some of the names on the wall may be familiar, others may not, but in no way does that diminish each individual's accomplishments and contributions to their community.

Let us briefly highlight the main individual who is indirectly responsible for the whole exhibit coming into being; Marguerite Stanley. Stanley, Author/Historian is a resident of Port Huron, MI. Born in Fort Dodge, Iowa in 1923. Stanley moved to Port Huron with her grandparents at the age of three years old and has been a resident ever since. An avid writer, Stanley wrote for the Times Herald as well as writing her book, *From Whence We Came*; after which the exhibit is named. Stanley published calendars, spearheaded the Collections in Black program which still runs annually during black history month, was the first black resident to regularly host a television show titled *Across the Tracks* and also had her own radio show titled *Come Ride With Me*, all of which highlighted black history in the local area.

Marguerite attributes her passion and inspiration to her mother (Christine Long) and her grandfather (Ben Trice) who taught her many things in life. Coming from a small family where most were slaves made documenting their history important to her.

“I saw so many other groups recording their history I didn’t want ours left behind.” says Stanley.

A separate portion of the exhibit still untitled; is currently known as the Community Recognition Wall. The Community Recognition Wall was included to honor the names of many African Americans throughout the past from the community involved in different sectors such as business, art, politics, religious organizations, and more.

Let's take a brief look into a few of those names honored on the Community Recognition Wall, starting with Dion Thelmas. Thelmas, Creative, and former resident of Port Huron, is the owner of [Ghanivison](#), a videography/photography company that has been in operation since 2003. “Ghanivision means self sufficient, independent, and rich...Ghanivision could be anybody. It doesn't matter who you are, what your name is, what your age is, what your gender is. It's about the creative, to keep it going and constantly elevate.” says Thelmas. With a smooth and calculated delivery to his speech one could assume he was more poet than a visual creative. In fact, Thelmas used to be a rapper in his early years growing up in Port Huron. With no real inspiration in his line of work locally, Thelmas sites other community figures as his inspiration in life. “There were people i respected like Mr. (Jim) Jones, Pastor Carl Miller, Spurgeon Harvey, Ms. McGee, people like that.” says Thelmas. With a passion for the youth of his community and being an example of growth and change Dion Thelmas is a solid name to be added to the wall.

Lets meet another of our honorees on the Community Recognition Wall. Roni Lloyd-Portis, 56, Lead Teacher at St. Clair County Intervention Academy. Llyod has worked with at risk students for most of her 15 years of teaching. “The work that I'm doing is the work God wanted me to do. I've always had a passion to fight for the underdog.” says Portis.

Portis has worked at Jefferson Adult Learning Center, and was once the coordinator for the I Have a Dream Foundation, (a non profit formed for the specific purpose of assisting economically disadvantaged students with the completion of their education including college). Many of her students who were counted out early in life have gone on to be great people with great careers and families.

“When I first got the news I was, I was just in awe because I just felt like for me personally this is probably the highlight of my life. It’s a high honor for me and I'm just, I’m so appreciative and um I'm just so honored. I'm just so honored.” Portis says.

When citing those who inspired her growing up, this is what Portis had to say. “Ida Shoulders, Yvonne Malachi, and Rev. Crittenden. Those people, they just poured into my life and I'm just forever grateful for all those people that I've mentioned.”

Portis herself has become one who pours into the lives of others and definitely deserves her place on the wall as well.

Last, but certainly not least we have Shawn Anderson better known as his stage name Substance810. Anderson, 36, Hip Hop Artist, has been making music for decades, but he only considers his professional entry into the hip hop world to have started in 2006. Born in Port

Huron, MI Anderson has since moved away from the city, but keeps close ties through friends and family who still reside in the area.

Known by many in the local area for his raw and gritty lyrics that are filled with what his name implies, “substance.” Anderson’s music career has been taking off more now than ever before since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. “This year I’ve been able to release 3 albums during this pandemic and within a month's time my latest work has almost surpassed anything I’ve done up until this point.” says Anderson.

“It was surprising I guess in a sense of I didn't uh expect it, it was a huge honor.” says Anderson when asked how he feels about having his name on the Community Recognition Wall. Being an influential music artist is what many aspire to be growing up, and Substance810 has done just that, but even influencers have their inspirations as well. “Growing up if it wasn't for Ghanivision, The Lyricist, and Street Dreamers, that's three big influences for me musically.” states Anderson. Make sure you look for his new project out now titled [Makin Waves](#) on Spotify.

So, those are just a few of the many African Americans honored by the From Whence We Came Black History exhibit at the Port Huron Museum Carnegie Center. Make sure you stop by and check out the exhibit and learn more about the heroes from our local community!