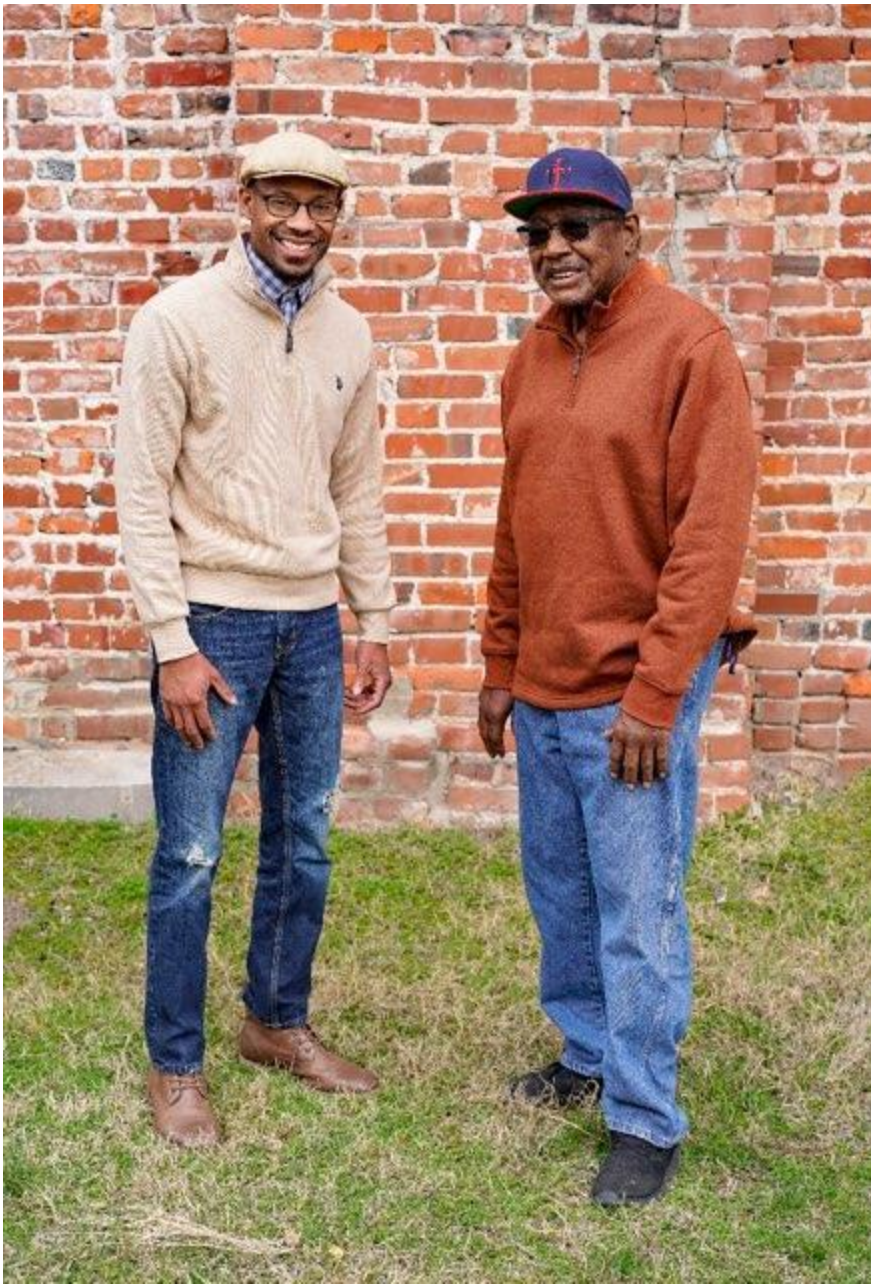


Parker/Kamusinga's Creative 'Untold Black Stories Of Alton' For StoryCorps Are Treasure Along Broadway

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Exceptionally creative photographers Cedric Parker and Bishop Kamusinga captured enormous attention with a series of photographs for the Untold Black Stories of Alton for StoryCorps and the Jacoby Arts Center and showcased at businesses along Broadway in Downtown Alton.

The photographs are a draw to get people to stop, look and then check out QR codes at each stop that link to short excerpts edited from recent StoryCorps recorded conversations. The conversations and photographs are a treasure of the Untold Black Stories in the Alton area.

Parker said the photographs are of people of Alton who are courageous, committed and truly care for each other.

“‘Untold Black Stories of Alton’ is a unique multi-media experience created by a collection of local creative partners - Jacoby Arts Center, Alton Main Street, Great Rivers & Routes, All Town, USA, Hayner Public Library District with StoryCorps in Chicago and generous support from Illinois Humanities and ‘The Mythic Mississippi Project.’ What a thrill to see spectacular portraits along Broadway.”

Parker said he loved both his and Kamusinga's photographs, which exuded emotion and expression of those involved in the collection. The skilled photographer also pointed out the images helped paint a picture of the people and their life stories.

“It meant a lot to be a part of it,” Parker said. “I was honored when I was contacted to do it. I tried to catch the expressions of people.”

Design for the project was done by Tyrone Stevenson. The Jacoby exhibition runs to July 11, 2021.

Parker said he also loved the interactive part of the project with the bar code under the photo.

The team designed the exhibit to catalyze diversity, inclusivity and equity within the downtown Alton historic district. This will be accomplished through the commission of portrait photographs of residents who contributed their oral histories to the “Untold Black Stories” archive. Photos will be printed in large poster format (up to 8 x 5 ft) and displayed in storefront windows along Broadway. QR codes at each stop will link to short excerpts edited from StoryCorps recorded conversations.

StoryCorps recently recorded conversations of first-person stories from Alton residents, documenting their lives and the town’s past, present, and future. These are personal stories of family devotion, faith, dedication to hard work, friendship, honor and reciprocity. They are filled with laughter, humility, and respect that demonstrate the essence of community. StoryCorps’ mission is to preserve and share humanity’s stories in order to build connections between people and create a more just and compassionate world. Their goal is to create an invaluable archive for future generations.

Jacoby Arts Center led a collaboration to amplify the StoryCorps conversations through the creation of a walkable photography exhibit and virtual listening tour throughout downtown Alton. The exhibit will be launched in early summer and will be guided by an app on your mobile device. Printing of the large-scale portraits is sponsored by the Mythic Mississippi Project, a public engagement venture of the University of Illinois that promotes community development through Cultural Heritage programs.

“These portraits will animate the Downtown Arts District with striking imagery to further engage our community in these Untold Black Stories of Alton and celebrate participants who shared their stories,” said Rachel Lappin, Executive Director of Jacoby Arts Center, “The mixed-media experience will be accessible 24/7 for locals and tourists alike. In other words, this will be a museum-like outdoor art exhibition throughout downtown.”

For more information, please visit www.JacobyArtsCenter.org/UntoldBlackStories or www.StoryCorps.org.

These are some of the original photos found in the display:







