

The

"One of the really important things about preservation is it connects people to history in a very tangible way."
- MYRICK HOWARD

insurgent advocate

"A people without the knowledge of their past history, origin and culture is like a tree without roots"

Marcus Garvey

REFLECTIONS ABOUT PLANNING

Insurgent planning allows the community to speak and lead the way they want to see their neighborhoods and community planned. This time is for the insurgent advocate who helps to ensure the voices of neighbors are carried to places where the change can be implemented. Being Black and understanding how planning has impacted places I know, grew and call home in ways that have not been seen as positive is why I want to learn how to use the necessary tools to make it work for the community and neighborhoods I serve and live within. The focus for this zine is also to show the black history of planning and Oklahoma City from the history of Samuel J. Cullers to the timeline of change for the black community. The history of Black women serving in local government to Historic Preservation efforts to preserve culture are what you will see in this zine!

Enjoy, *Widain*

BLACK HISTORY AND PLANNING

Samuel J. Cullers is recognized as the first Black "professional trained" urban planner and an advocate for ending housing discrimination against Black families. He earned his graduate degree in city and regional planning from MIT in 1952 and then became the Deputy Director of Redevelopment for the city of Hartford, CT.

In 1955, his professional career and personal life collided when he applied for an apartment at McKinley Park Homes. Cullers was denied and told there were "no vacancies" available. He was denied housing because he was African American – twice. Cullers filed a discrimination lawsuit against the company, which he won. However, it was later dismissed by the Connecticut Supreme Court for lack of evidence.

Cullers continued his work as a Planner both in North America – in Hartford, Sacramento, Chicago, and Toronto – then internationally in Thailand. He served as Chief of Urban Planning for the State of California and Acting Director for the CA State Office of Planning before his starting own planning firm, Samuel J. Cullers & Associates in 1972.

During his career, he was an active and beloved member of the American Planning Association (APA), taking on leadership roles within local chapters and at the national level. Cullers was an extremely active member of the community beyond his professional life, serving on the boards of many nonprofits including the Red Cross, United Way, and NAACP.

Throughout his life, Cullers fought against racism as an activist for the rights of Black Americans and their representation in planning and development decisions. In 1998, he wrote an essay for the NAACP's *The Crisis* magazine, entitled, "Our Only Concerns Should Be Black Concerns."



"The main purpose of planning is to see where we are going in terms of where we have been, and then to assist in changing the direction toward where we want to go." – Samuel J. Cullers

Connecting OKC History
to Present

OKLAHOMA CITY

OKC

Facing
Injustice

1961

Urban Renewal begins
demolishing much of
downtown. + NE OKC

OKC



1958

Clara Luper
spearheads civil
rights sit-ins.

1963

The *Dowell v. Oklahoma City* federal
court decision launches court-
ordered busing and integration of
Oklahoma City schools.





WARD

7

HISTORY



1934
-
2022

Willa D. Johnson
First Black woman
Elected to OKC Council
Serving from
1993-2007

Partnership Values Results Market
POLICY
Profit
Tool Human Experience Strategy Corporate C



#2
elected
in 2018
to serve
Ward 7!



MS Johnson began
the work for a brand
new grocery store
in NE OKC when she
was elected in 1993.
In 2020 she was present
for the groundbreaking
of Homeland as well
as the grand opening
in 2021!
WOMEN GET THINGS DONE!

Historic

Neighborhood

Preservation

Brockway Center



Maude Jane Brockway



THIS PROPERTY
HAS BEEN PLACED ON THE
NATIONAL REGISTER
OF HISTORIC PLACES
BY THE UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Preserving History
- Lyons/Luster Mansion



Facing Demolition, the Brockway Center was saved by community to preserve the history of the Oklahoma Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. Later efforts helped to preserve the Lyons/Luster mansion located in Deep Deuce D.C. Both are on the National Register of Historic Places

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PLANNER

IMPACT

The

EASTSIDE,

OKLAHOMA CITY

References:
Blog Article (2024), February 9). "Samuel J. Callers,
the first black city planner" Courbanize