

Unsung Heroes[★]

THE LIVING HISTORY PROJECT

Celebrating 25 Years



COMMEMORATION REPORT

A Testament to African Americans Who Have Served

WORDS FROM OUR FOUNDER



The Unsung Heroes Living History Project is proudly celebrating its 25th anniversary, a milestone that underscores its ongoing dedication to honoring the stories of those often left out of history books.

The project began in 2000 at Chabot College in Hayward, California, as a creative writing assignment that sparked a much larger mission. I was tasked with writing a biography about someone I knew well but had to learn something new about them. Naturally, I chose my grandmother, Rita Hernandez. A tireless community advocate who taught my classmates to read, she revealed something unexpected—she had been a tack welder and blueprint reader on the USS Franklin Roosevelt during World War II. It was a revelation

that changed everything I thought I knew about her and inspired me to dig deeper. If my grandmother had this incredible history – an actual “Rosie the Riveter” – there had to be many other untold stories of African Americans who served in the military or contributed to the war effort as civilians.

Unfortunately, these stories were hard to come by. This lack of representation motivated me to become an agent of change. I founded the Unsung Heroes Living History Project to collect, preserve, and share the stories of veterans of African descent and their families, while also engaging youth in the documentary and exhibit curation process. Over the past 25 years, we have gathered more than 500 personal narratives and over 1,500 photographs, and curated four major exhibits displayed in galleries and universities across the United States.

I am deeply grateful to the individuals and families who have entrusted me with their histories, the young people who have worked tirelessly to produce these documentaries and exhibits, and the sponsors who continue to support our vision. Looking ahead, we aim to digitize the interviews and exhibits, expanding our outreach both nationally and globally.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you to the men and women who served and continue to serve. Your stories will never be forgotten.

Lisa M. Daniels

Lisa Daniels, M.Ed. Ed.S.
Founder & Executive Director

HISTORY AND LEGACY

The Unsung Heroes Living History Project (UHLHP), originally founded in 2000 and established as a nonprofit in 2005, is proudly celebrating its 25th anniversary of honoring African American military history. UHLHP implements an intergenerational oral history initiative that preserves and pays tribute to the legacy of African Americans in the military.

The project began when Executive Director Lisa Daniels discovered that her grandmother had worked as a “Riveter” on the USS Franklin Roosevelt at the Brooklyn Naval Yard. Her research revealed the lack of resources documenting the African American military experience, which inspired her to launch the UHLHP visual arts exhibit. This exhibit, involving youth, mentors, and veterans, creates “living histories” of African American military personnel and their descendants.



“Understanding the past can help build pride and motivation to continue to face the current challenges in our homeland.”

To date, UHLHP has produced several key exhibits, including “We Also Served: African Americans in the Military,” which honors all veterans of African descent and will be converting to a virtual exhibit beginning in 2025, “Welcome Home, Vietnam Veterans,” dedicated to Vietnam-era veterans, and “herStory: The Impact of Women in the Armed Forces,” a notable exhibit highlighting the contributions of women in the military. These exhibits are part of the organization’s broader effort to bring veterans, families, and communities together through photographic displays, exhibits, book discussions, and luncheons.

From 2016 through 2025, UHLHP collaborated with a CalVet representative to host ceremonies honoring Vietnam - era veterans, presenting them with commendations signed by President Barack Obama and a special medal. UHLHP continues to expand its mission by capturing the stories of thousands of African American veterans, with plans to incorporate video documentaries to engage younger generations.

As UHLHP celebrates its 25 years of service, it remains committed to educating the public about the critical role African Americans have played in our nation’s military history. Veterans play a central role in shaping the project, with key partnerships including NABVETS, Vietnam-era veteran groups, and community organizations. UHLHP also offers opportunities for youth from the Boys and Girls Club and Sacramento City College, providing hands-on learning experiences, community service, and academic credit.

Through the dedication of volunteers, veterans, and community partners, UHLHP continues its mission of preserving and celebrating African American military heritage, ensuring these stories are remembered for generations to come.

OUR VALUES

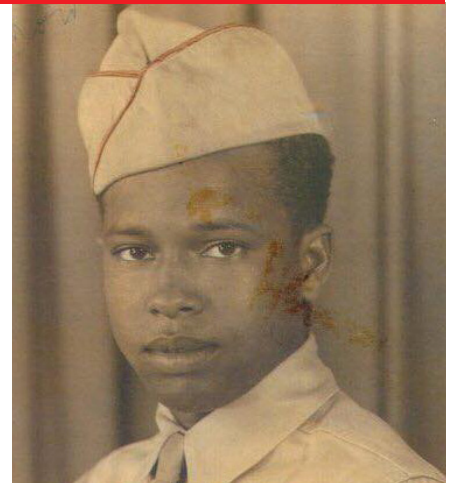
Who We Are, What We Do: Celebrating 25 Years of Unsung Heroes

The **Unsung Heroes Living History Project** (Unsung Heroes) is a commemorative initiative that honors the powerful stories of veterans and their families, shedding light on their wartime experiences. This year, we celebrate 25 years of preserving these vital histories and fostering connections across generations.

Unsung Heroes is an inspiring intergenerational program that not only documents veterans' experiences but also equips young people with essential 21st-century job skills. By participating in the program, youth learn the values of community service, volunteerism, and civic engagement.

Guided by experienced mentors, our youth producers interview veterans, capturing their words and blending them with images and music to create impactful "digital stories." These narratives are then shared with schools, libraries, and museums, ensuring that these voices continue to educate and inspire.

"Unsung Heroes is the only living history project in the country paying tribute to the African American Veteran."



Why We Document: 25 Years of Honoring Unsung Heroes

Throughout American history, countless men and women have answered the call to serve during wartime, driven by a shared sense of duty and sacrifice. Regardless of race or background, they stepped up to defend freedom. However, for African Americans, this service came with added challenges, as many faced racism even within the ranks. Despite these obstacles, they persevered, carving out their own place in history.

Unsung Heroes celebrates its 25th anniversary as a tribute to these extraordinary individuals. By capturing the voices and experiences of African American veterans and their families, this project ensures their stories are not overlooked. Through this collection of powerful oral histories, we preserve the remarkable legacy of those who served in both wartime and peacetime, offering a lasting testament to their courage, resilience, and contributions.

OUTREACH AND EVENTS

We Also Served: African Americans in the Military

Created to honor and celebrate the often-overlooked contributions of African American veterans throughout U.S. history. Originally designed as a physical exhibit, *We Also Served* offers a rich narrative of perseverance, courage, and sacrifice. Through compelling personal stories, photographs, documents and artifacts, visitors have had the opportunity to explore the experience of African Americans who served in various military capacities. *We Also Served* will evolve to a virtual exhibit, expanding its reach to audiences nationwide.

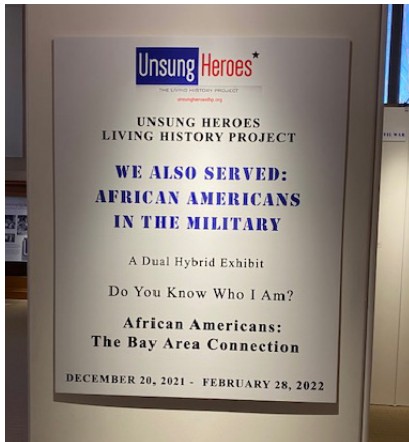


Exhibit Locations

African American Museum - Oakland, CA	Department of Justice - San Francisco, CA
Black History Month Community Luncheon - Fresno, CA	Fresno Graduate Art Studios - Fresno, CA
Black History Month Luncheon at Sierra Health Foundation - Sacramento, CA	MLK Diversity Expo - Sacramento, CA
Brickhouse Gallery & Art Complex - Sacramento, CA	Northwest African American Museum - Seattle, WA
Bullard High School - Fresno, CA	Old Sugar Mill - Clarksburg, CA
California State University, Sacramento University Library Gallery Annex - Sacramento, CA	Rancho Cordova Library - Rancho Cordova, CA
Capital City Seventh-Day Adventist Church - Sacramento, CA	San Francisco Veterans Administration - San Francisco, CA
Cosumnes River College - Sacramento, CA	Sierra College - Rocklin, CA
Del Paso Works Gallery - Sacramento, CA	Veterans Anniversary Gathering Luncheon - Fresno, CA

Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans

A heartfelt tribute to the African American men and women who served during the Vietnam War era from 1955-1975. This exhibit aims to recognize and honor the courage, dedication, and sacrifice of African American Vietnam Veterans, many of whom returned home to a nation divided over the war, and in some cases, experienced indifference or hostility rather than the hero's welcome they deserved. This exhibit stands as a powerful reminder that no matter the conflict, all who serve deserve our gratitude.

Exhibit Locations

Sierra Health Foundation - Sacramento, CA

Veterans Anniversary Gathering Luncheon - Fresno, CA



herStory: The Impact of Women in the Armed Forces

A powerful tribute to the remarkable contributions of African American women who have served in the military. From the earliest days of American history to modern-day conflicts, women have played crucial and often under-recognized roles in defending the nation. This exhibit shines a spotlight on their courage, resilience, and commitment, while also chronicling the evolution of their roles within the military over time.

Exhibit Locations

American Legion Post 509 - Fresno, CA

Betty Reid Soskin "Sign My Name to Freedom"

A celebration of the life and legacy of Betty Reid Soskin, the nation's oldest living park ranger, whose story is a testament to resilience, activism, and the pursuit of justice. This event, centered on a special book signing, invites visitors to connect with Soskin's remarkable journey as chronicled in her memoir, *Sign My Name to Freedom*, where those in attendance could engage with this living legend, learn from her experiences, and walk away with a deeper appreciation for the unsung heroes who have worked, fought, and sacrificed to make the country a better place for all.

Exhibit Locations

Brickhouse Gallery & Art Complex - Sacramento, CA

“Do You Know Who I am?” A Pictorial Exhibit of Central Valley African American Veterans

This exhibit honors the veterans of California’s Central Valley, whose stories of service, sacrifice, and strength have often gone unrecognized. By showcasing their experiences through powerful images and personal accounts, this exhibit aims to give voice to the veterans whose contributions are a vital part of both the region’s and the nation’s history.

Exhibit Locations

African American Museum - Oakland, CA	Bullard High School - Fresno, CA
African American Super Soul Saturday - Fresno, CA	University of California, Merced - Merced, CA
Brickhouse Gallery & Art Complex - Sacramento, CA	West Fresno Family Resource Center - Fresno, CA

Heritage: The Legacy of Tuskegee Airman

A powerful tribute to the extraordinary men who formed the first African American military aviators in U.S. history. This exhibit celebrates the legacy of the Tuskegee Airmen, a group of World War II pilots who not only excelled in combat but also shattered racial barriers, paving the way for greater integration within the military. Known for their impeccable record of never losing a bomber they escorted during the war, these aviators earned a place in history as symbols of courage, skill, and perseverance.

Exhibit Locations

Center of Freedom and Flight - Vacaville, CA



Veteran Interview and Filming Session

An impactful, unique, hands-on opportunity for high school students to explore the world of documentary film making. This immersive experience was designed to teach students the fundamental skills of documentary production including interviewing, filming and storytelling. Over the course of the session, students gained practical knowledge about how to capture compelling narratives through the lens of a camera while also learning about the power of stories to inform, inspire, and evoke change.

Exhibit Locations

Sunnyside High School - Fresno, CA

Oral History Training Session

An engaging and hands-on experience where elementary school students learned the art of oral history, focusing on the skills of interviewing, storyboarding, and recording. This workshop introduced students to tools used to uncover and preserve rich narratives within their communities, emphasizing the importance of capturing personal stories for future generations.

Exhibit Locations

Washington Elementary School - Fresno, CA	West Fresno Boys & Girls Club - Fresno, CA
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Here's to the Heroes

Dedicated to honoring the local veterans of Fresno, West Sacramento, and Elk Grove, this exhibit celebrates the lives and legacies of African American men and women from these communities who served their country with unwavering courage and commitment. Through a blend of personal artifacts, photographs, and poignant stories, the exhibit shines a light on the unique journeys of these veterans, whose service spans generations and conflicts. By capturing their voices, the exhibit preserves an essential piece of community history, ensuring that the contributions of local veterans are recognized and remembered.

Exhibit Locations

2019 Juneteenth Festival at Frank H. Ball Center - Fresno, CA	VFW Federal Post 8762 - West Sacramento, CA
Elk Grove Historical Society - Elk Grove, CA	

Meet the Artist: Korean War Veteran Curtis Morrow

A rare and intimate opportunity to connect with a man whose life and work span multiple creative disciplines, all shared by his experiences as a soldier and storyteller. Morrow was sent to Korea and assigned to the Army's last all-black unit, the 24th Regiment Combat Team, known as the Buffalo Soldiers. This event was more than a chance to view Morrow's work, but rather an opportunity for visitors to walk away with a deeper understanding of how Morrow's service in the Korean War influenced his artistic vision and how his art serves as a bridge between history, memory, and cultural expression.

Exhibit Locations

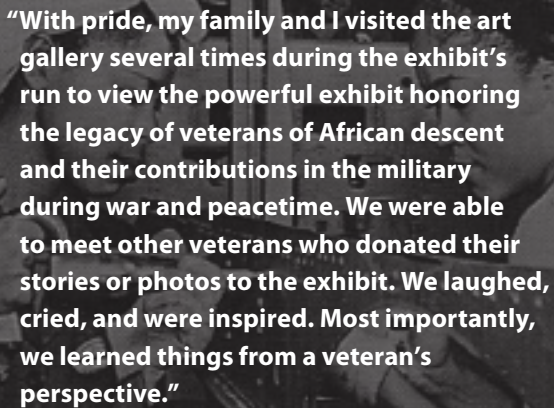
African American Museum - Oakland, CA



TESTIMONIALS

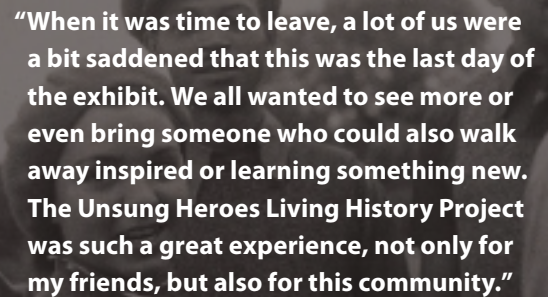
"The objectives of the project are to bring the stories of veterans to life," Daniels says, "and affirm black veterans' patriotic pride in serving their nation with loyalty and heroism in times of conflict; to provide a forum to reclaim 'voice' for veteran military men and women and their families; and to preserve, through mixed media, the African American legacy of military service."

- Comstock's Magazine



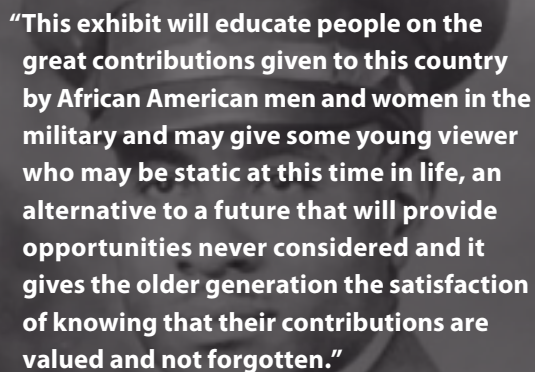
"With pride, my family and I visited the art gallery several times during the exhibit's run to view the powerful exhibit honoring the legacy of veterans of African descent and their contributions in the military during war and peacetime. We were able to meet other veterans who donated their stories or photos to the exhibit. We laughed, cried, and were inspired. Most importantly, we learned things from a veteran's perspective."

- T. Martin



"When it was time to leave, a lot of us were a bit saddened that this was the last day of the exhibit. We all wanted to see more or even bring someone who could also walk away inspired or learning something new. The Unsung Heroes Living History Project was such a great experience, not only for my friends, but also for this community."

- S. Jeffries



"This exhibit will educate people on the great contributions given to this country by African American men and women in the military and may give some young viewer who may be static at this time in life, an alternative to a future that will provide opportunities never considered and it gives the older generation the satisfaction of knowing that their contributions are valued and not forgotten."

- C. Gatlin



"Lisa Daniels exhibit will show the rich legacy of the African American men and women who have served faithfully to protect this country. This exhibit provides examples of their history from a view that all people can understand and most importantly, feel good about the contributions made to this country."

- C. Gatlin

MEET THE FOUNDER

Lisa Daniels, M.Ed. Ed.S.

Founder & Executive Director

Lisa Daniels, an educator, photojournalist, and news producer, was inspired to explore military history after discovering that her grandmother had worked as a “riveter” on the USS Franklin Roosevelt at the Brooklyn Naval Yard. As she delved deeper, she realized that resources on the African American military experience were scarce. Determined to fill this gap, she envisioned Unsung Heroes Living History Project—a valuable resource for military enthusiasts, educators, and the public alike.

Over the past 25 years, Ms. Daniels has garnered support from notable figures like Andrew Carroll (War Letters), Yvonne Latty (We Were There and In Conflict), the late Gen. Ezell Ware (By Freedom Bound), and Allene Carter (Honoring Sgt. Carter), as well as from veterans across the nation. Together, they have helped bring to life this enduring tribute to the service and sacrifice of African American veterans.



“Now men and women of African descent will have a tribute to those heroes and their accomplishments ignored by others.”

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS

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Dr. David Innis	Marinda Johnson-Sessoms	Wendy Nelson
Dr. Patsy Waderker-Perry	Melissa Washington	West Fresno Boys & Girls Club
Erica Jones	Meme Styles	West Fresno Public Library

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Boston Floyd	Joseph Marshall	Richard Overton
Curtis Morrow	Marie Hopkins	Richard Overton
Dedan Ji Jimaga	Milton Daniels	Rigaude Prout
Frank Topping	Mrs. Edith Roberts	Walter Jones

EXHIBIT SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Our sponsors are essential to the success of Unsung Heroes and the broader community. We offer a range of sponsorship options, from individual to comprehensive corporate packages, tailored to suit your level of involvement.

If you or your organization is interested in supporting Unsung Heroes or would like more information, please reach out to us at unsnghros@gmail.com or call (916) 629-4691.

Thank you for considering a partnership with us!

Individual - \$50

- Name listed in program acknowledgments

Family - \$100

- Name listed in program acknowledgments
- Certificate of appreciation

Small Business - \$200

- Name listed in program acknowledgments
- Certificate of appreciation
- Business card ad in event program

Mid-Size Business - \$500

- Name listed in program acknowledgments
- Certificate of appreciation
- Business card ad in event program
- List of attendees' contact information

Bronze Sponsorship - \$2,500

- Name listed in program acknowledgments
- Certificate of appreciation
- Business card ad in event program
- List of attendees' contact information
- Company name and logo on all event-related materials and prominent placement on the Unsung Heroes Living History Project website and media releases

Silver Sponsorship - \$5,000

- All benefits of Bronze Sponsorship
- Listing in monthly Community Leader newsletter, distributed to over 1,600 recipients, including companies, families and community leaders
- Recognition in Unsung Heroes Living History Project Annual Report
- Recognition in local media advertising

Gold Sponsorship - \$10,000

- All benefits of Silver Sponsorship
- Company logo on approximately 1,000 We Also Served t-shirts
- Opportunity to present an award at the Black History Month Veterans Appreciation Event
- Invitation to the Exceptional People Doing Exceptional Work for Veterans Reception for select community leaders
- Prominent space on Unsung Heroes Living History Project banners

WORK WITH US

Unsung Heroes Living History Project is an ongoing effort to chronicle the experiences of African American soldiers. For 25 years, we have traveled across the country, capturing the voices of veterans and their families to preserve their stories.

If you or a family member has served in the military, or if you know someone who would like to share their story, we invite you to be a part of this legacy. To participate or to learn more about our mission, please reach out to us. Together, let's honor the contributions of African American veterans and keep their stories alive for future generations.



Unsung Heroes The Living History Project is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization



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