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The National Public Housing Museum receives \$40k from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Chicago, IL – March 17, 2009 - The National Public Housing Museum (NPHM) has been awarded a \$40,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The grant comes from the NEH "We the People: Family and Youth Programs in American History" initiative and will support the planning of "Our Stories: Resident Voices of Public Housing." This national oral history-based initiative will enrich the humanities by reflecting on the misunderstood history of public housing residents and communities across the country, and will encourage a more thoughtful and informed national conversation about housing, poverty, immigration and race.

The National Public Housing Museum, founded in 2007 and slated to open in 2012, is the first cultural institution in the United States dedicated to interpreting the American experience in public housing. The Museum draws on the power of place and memory to illuminate the resilience of poor and working class families of every race and ethnicity to realize the promise of America. It emerged from the shared vision of public housing residents in Chicago.

The highly competitive process to obtain NEH funds included three intensive review phases: a blind panel composed of three 20th century historians and three museum practitioners, a second review by a 26-person Congressionally appointed committee of museum practitioners, university researchers, public school teachers, and librarians; and a final decision based on the scholarship merits by Carole M. Watson, acting Chairman of the NEH.

"The National Endowment for the Humanities grant is a remarkable milestone in the life of the Museum," says Keith L. Magee, Executive Director. "It speaks to scholarship that the Museum embodies as we move towards designing a replicable national model to document these vast and defining American experiences, which will be archived and shared for years to come."

"Our Stories" will be guided by four key humanities themes related to public housing scholarship - identity, community, social justice and leadership - which reach the heart of debates about interpreting public housing in American society. "The year-long planning

process will bring together national and local advisors to develop a framework for the Museum's oral history programs," said Fred L. Bonner, Board of Directors President. "It is designed especially for youth and families, and will teach how housing policies really affect peoples' lives."

"By starting with an oral history project, the Museum is beginning where every good historic site should – with the stories and the people who lived them," said, Ruth Abram, advisory board member of the Museum and founder of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, now the most visited historic site in Manhattan.

The designers and project Co-Directors of "Our Stories" include D. Bradford Hunt, Associate Dean and Associate Professor of Social Science, Roosevelt University, and the Museum's Programming Committee Chair and Susanne Schnell, Consulting Director of the Museum's Planning and Start-up phase.

"The total cost for the success of 'Our Stories' is \$92k," said Magee. "We are confident that other funders will partner with us, and join the NEH, to create this invaluable oral history initiative"

The National Public Housing Museum is slated to open in 2012, in the Jane Addams Homes, 1322 West Taylor Street, Chicago, IL. For more information on the Museum, please visit us at www.publichousingmuseum.org.

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The National Public Housing Museum is a 501(c)(3) organization that will operate and sustain itself as a new cultural institution. It will be much more than a traditional "museum"; it will be a place to understand policy from the perspective of families affected by those issues – poverty, race, housing, and civil liberties. The Museum will be located in the last remaining building of the Jane Addams Homes, a 1937 WPA building that was home to hundreds of public housing families until 2002. The site will provide over 37,000 square feet to house permanent and temporary exhibits as well as a museum store and other leased retail and office space. Using material objects and artifacts, original documents and oral histories, the Museum will recreate living spaces of public housing apartments during eight consecutive decades (1938-2000). It will incorporate art and music of the periods, the politics and economics, all told through the lives of the residents.

The Museum, which will also house the International Center for the Study of Housing and Society, will be both forward looking and reflective. Its public programs, workshops, symposia and public forums, some of which have already taken place, will continue to discuss the many lessons of public housing and related issues such as housing, poverty, race and immigration, which continue to form the urban experience and affect the communities in which we live. A phased opening of the Museum is slated to commence in 2012.

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