Lottery support for two Birmingham projects in Black History Month

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The story of the Rev'd Peter T Stanford, believed to be the city's first black clergyman, will be told to a wider audience at Highgate Baptist Church in Conybere Street. Meanwhile a second project, run by local young people, will highlight the city's connection to West Africa by creating an exhibition of traditional and contemporary textiles at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.

Anne Jenkins, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands, said: "Here we have two projects that in their different ways celebrate Birmingham's diversity and the contribution that cultural traditions and individual dynamism have made to the city."

Rev'd Stanford was born a slave in Virginia in 1860 and, after a turbulent childhood, turned to Christianity and was ordained as a priest before travelling to Canada and finally arriving in Britain in 1883. He travelled the country before settling in Birmingham, marrying and becoming minister of Hope Street Baptist Church, Highgate in 1889. A foremost campaigner for racial justice he published his life story, *From Bondage to Liberty* before returning to the United States six years later where he continued to campaign against the lynching of African Americans. He died in Massachusetts in 1909.

A £5,300 HLF grant is helping to fund a learning guide about the life of Rev'd Stanford, a short film and an oral history project to record interviews with members of Highgate Baptist Church's black community. Once completed, the recordings will be lodged with Birmingham Central Library Archives.

The project is supported by Birmingham Civic Society whose chairman David Clarke said: "The Rev'd Stanford was an effective advocate in the racial justice movement. In the late 19th century our city was home to the leaders of the UK's racial justice movement and, as one of the country's most diverse cities, we should be proud to celebrate his heritage."

The second project, Style Africa, has received a £21,200 grant under HLF's Young Roots programme. Organised by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (BMAG), it will involve young people from Birmingham City University (BCU), the Centre of West African Studies at Birmingham University, and The Drum Arts Centre in Aston. They will explore the changing traditions of woven, embroidered, printed and dyed clothing and textiles from West Africa and curate an exhibition using materials from the Museum's collection.

The young people will participate in workshops to discover changing African style and explore African identity in both West Africa and the West Midlands. Their involvement will also make the exhibition relevant to the younger generation. Style Africa will open in Gallery 20 at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery on 31 March 2012.

Councillor Martin Mullaney, Birmingham City Council's Cabinet Member for Leisure, Sport and Culture, said: "We're delighted we can now make progress with this fascinating project and I must acknowledge the tremendous ongoing support from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

"Style Africa is a project that brings together a number of organisations from across the city and I'm sure the exhibition will be a big success."

Further information

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