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Buffalo Niagara Freedom Station Coalition Announces over \$204,000 for Michigan Street Baptist Church

Local Historic Landmark receives African-American Civil Rights Grant

The Buffalo Niagara Freedom Station Coalition announced \$204,845 in federal funding for the rehabilitation of the Michigan Street Baptist Church. This project is supported through a grant from African American Civil Rights of the 20th Century as administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior.

Congress appropriated funding for the African American Civil Rights Grants Program in 2019 through the Historic Preservation Fund (HPF). The HPF uses revenue from federal oil leases on the Outer Continental Shelf, providing assistance for a broad range of preservation projects without expending tax dollars.

“This award recognizes the Michigan Street Baptist Church as a site of national significance and provides federal resources to preserve the building and expand opportunities for people to learn more about the critical role the Church played in America’s history,” said Congressman Brian Higgins (D-NY).

Lillie V. Wiley-Upshaw, Chair of the Buffalo Niagara Freedom Station Coalition said, "Our board is so pleased to receive this grant. The Michigan Street Baptist Church is a national treasure and her story is integral to the African-American story that is told in cities across this country. First, as a home for freedom seekers before, during and after the Civil War and then as incubator for progressive movements in the city of Buffalo, New York, the Michigan Street Baptist Church has stood as a beacon in the storm for 175 years. The African-American Civil Rights Grant will help us restore elements of the Church's original construction and design to continue to tell the story of the Church and her members to future generations."

Built in 1845, Buffalo’s Michigan Street Baptist Church, has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 1974. The site served as a stop on the Underground Railroad and a central meeting place for civil rights leaders. In 2018, the Michigan Street Baptist Church was added to the National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom, a coordinated effort to preserve America’s historic treasures and educate the public.

The Michigan Street Baptist Church was one of just 51 recipients sharing just over \$14 million nationwide, and the only grant recipient in New York State.

“These grants will fund important projects that document, interpret, and preserve sites that tell the stories of the African-American experience in the pursuit of civil rights,” said National Park Service Deputy Director David Vela, exercising the authority of the Director. “Thanks to the coordination of public and private partners, these projects will help connect Americans to historic places that preserve American history.”

The Buffalo Niagara Freedom Station Coalition (BNFSC) is a not for profit organization, incorporated in 2001, and owner of the historic Michigan Street Baptist Church, located at 511 Michigan Ave, in Buffalo, New York.

Their mission is to promote and protect the Michigan Street Baptist Church building as a beacon of freedom, and tell its stories from its founding in 1845 through today to inspire and educate future generations. For more information please visit: www.michiganstreetbaptistchurch.org.

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