



# United States Department of the Interior

## National Park Service



Midwest Region  
601 Riverfront Drive  
Omaha, Nebraska 68102-4226

**Midwest Regional Office, National Park Service  
And Cuyahoga Valley National Park**

### **Letter of Research Interest (LOI)**

#### **Title: Ethnographic Overview & Assessment of Camp Mueller, Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Ohio**

The Midwest Region Cultural Anthropology program is interested in an ethnographic overview and assessment study relating to Camp Mueller, a historically African American Summer Camp located at Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CUVA) in Ohio. One of only four African American-owned-and-operated residential camps in the United States, Camp Mueller was as an interracial camp established in 1939 by the Phillis Wheatley Association (PWA), a prominent African American social services organization. The camp is located on Akron-Peninsula Road in Cuyahoga Falls, OH, and its main purpose is to provide recreational activities for inner-city children in the Cleveland area. Today, the camp is located within CUVA on a tract acquired through a conservation easement intended to promote, perpetuate and preserve Camp Mueller's character and to preserve the historic, scenic, natural and recreational values integral to the Park's mission.

For the National Park Service, an Ethnographic Overview and Assessments is a comprehensive study of types, uses, and users of ethnographic resources, in this case being Camp Mueller and the associated area in CUVA. An EO&A reviews existing information and identifies new data needs. This type of study is conducted when park resources are known or thought to be traditionally associated with a contemporary group or groups<sup>1</sup>. The overview reviews and summarizes existing ethnographic data for people and resources associated with the park; the assessment evaluates them and identifies data gaps. Information is derived primarily from existing archival and published materials and is supplemented with ethnographic interviewing of knowledgeable community consultants.

The EOA will build on previous research to engage more fully in ethnographic research on the camp. Camp Mueller is thought to be associated with cultural practices or beliefs of a living community that are rooted in that community's history. Previous research concluded this significance would be fully revealed through a deep engagement with users of the area and additional ethnographic research. The EOA will also include

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<sup>1</sup> The NPS defines "traditionally associated peoples" as social/cultural entities such as tribes, communities, and kinship units, as well as park neighbors, traditional residents, and former residents who remain attached to a park area despite having relocated. Such groups are "traditionally associated" with a particular park when (1) the entity regards park resources as essential to its development and continued identity as a culturally distinct people; (2) the association has endured for at least two generations (40 years); and (3) the association began prior to establishment of the park. (Management Policies 2006: 159)

an expanded literature review of published and archival materials and a summary of previous ethnographic work involving the camp and the community that sustained it. The EOA will include development of a historic context with a focus on how Camp Mueller related to the struggle for Civil Rights within the African-American community. The EOA will also include a synthesis of descriptions and an evaluation of existing ethnographic sources and data and description of use for each type of resource identified by the study and develop a list of ethnographic resources for inclusion in NRHP data, and an annotated, current bibliography and record of consultation, as well as recommendations for further study.

This project will address the Park's ethnographic resources by developing baseline information, capturing and transferring knowledge, improving geographic information systems, and improving interpretation of the struggle for Civil Rights in the Park and related urban communities. This project also addresses resources integral to the culture system of an important segment of Cleveland's African-American community. The cultural history of Camp Mueller and its community is relatively unknown, including the stories of the campers and the uses that the community had for the camp during the tumultuous struggles for Civil Rights and social justice in Cleveland. Camp Mueller is similarly associated with a crucial period in Cleveland's African American history, particularly the settlement housing movement and the period from the turn of the century until the 1960s, during which African Americans pursued crucial markers of freedom such as education and economic independence. This project addresses a significant information gap regarding the relationship of the Cleveland African American community that established and used Camp Mueller to the Park and its predecessor parks, particularly with regard to access to public amenities and services.

Results of this project will shed light on the African American experience at CUVA, but will also provide context and information about related history and the struggle for Civil Rights in nearby Cleveland and Akron. The lack of meaningful interpretation about the African American experience at CUVA excludes a large proportion of area residents from cultural resource interpretation at the park. The results of the study and connections with the community will greatly assist the Park in its interpretation (education, museum exhibits, history events, etc.) of African American involvement with the valley and its role in the struggle for Civil Rights by expanding the interpretive story, update to interpretive media, and develop new museum exhibits. This will expand interpretation to include African American history and contributions, including upgrades to museum exhibits in a planned Central Visitor's Center.

Camp Mueller has significance as an essential social institution for African American Clevelanders. Furthermore, the camp is not just a place of significance for generations now old or gone by, but in good condition today, keeping the relationship between the place and the community intact by way of weekly day camp programs for Cleveland's African American youth. The information gained through oral history interviews will remedy knowledge gaps that directly affect the park's ability to interpret a major resource theme, Recreation and Conservation Resources of the Cuyahoga Valley. This information will provide insight into why nearby African American communities and children in particular, are under-represented among current visitors to the park, a critical issue.

### **Nature of Work Required**

The Midwest Regional Cultural Anthropology Program envisions the project will provide a meaningful exchange of knowledge between traditionally associated people and Camp Mueller about culturally important places located within the park.

Responses to this LOI should identify the specific capabilities within the university that will allow them to address the needs of the project, including identification of the relevant departments, faculty, students, and resources that will be involved in the project. Response to this LOI should also outline the approach to the

project envisioned by the Principal Investigator, along with a proposed budget outline that supports the research approach.

### **LOI Response Timeframe**

Deadline for responding to this letter of interest is Monday, March 25, 2019.

### **Project Principal Investigator Requirements**

The research will be directed and overseen by a Principal Investigator (PI). The PI should be an applied cultural anthropologist with a Ph.D. in cultural anthropology, or someone with demonstrable and comparable research experience, evidenced by a publication record demonstrating a professional level of research, analysis, and report preparation. It is expected that this record will reflect an understanding and ability to apply ethnographic and cultural anthropology research methods, and a level of education and experience beyond that of a B.A. and two years of graduate study in cultural anthropology. The researcher must demonstrate significant involvement in the research, writing, and the timely completion of ethnographic research. Experience and research with African-American communities in the United States is desirable.

### **Products**

The products from this project will include a report documenting the ethnographic study.

### **Funds Available**

Project funds available are approximately \$97,000. The funding includes an overhead rate of 17.5 percent. The project will be funded by the National Park Service. Universities within the CESU network are eligible to apply. ***This project is not a grant***, and will be administered as a Federal Financial Assistance research project through the CESU network.

### **Letters of Interest**

Letters of Interest (LOI) should be sent to the address located in the “contact” section. LOI’s will be reviewed by the NPS and the top candidate(s) will be asked to provide and submit a full proposal responsive to a Scope of Work. That proposal will detail the work to be conducted, providing and describing the methodology and research design, and outlining a schedule for the project.

The LOI should describe your research interest(s) in the projects, past projects that are similar in topic and/or form, and any relevant experience in completing ethnographic projects, along with a copy of a resume or vita for the Principal Investigator. Please include your name, affiliated organization(s), and contact information. Please try and limit LOI’s to 4 pages.

### **Contact**

Responses of interest should be directed before the closing date to Michael J. Evans, Ph.D. ([Michael\\_Evans@nps.gov](mailto:Michael_Evans@nps.gov)). Additional questions can be answered by contacting Michael J. Evans, Ph.D. ,

Chief, Cultural Anthropology Program, Midwest Region Ethnography Program, National Park Service (612-345-0019).