

DOCUMENTARY ON DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION IN THE ADIRONDACKS

A Proposal from Mountain Lake PBS to the Upstate Institute Summer Field School

About Mountain Lake PBS

Located in Plattsburgh, NY, Mountain Lake PBS is a public media organization serving a vast audience in New York, Vermont, Quebec and Ontario with acclaimed PBS series such as *Antiques Roadshow*, *Nova* and *Masterpiece*, local productions including *Mountain Lake Journal*, and highly respected local documentaries like the Emmy Award-winning *ARTS IN EXILE: Tibetan Treasures in Small Town America* and *ON HOME GROUND: Life after Service*.

Mountain Lake PBS provides unique services and events to families and educators throughout the region, focused on early childhood literacy and STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math) education, and partners with local organizations to strengthen educational opportunities and access in our region.

Mission

To inspire and enrich people and communities through meaningful storytelling, entertainment, education and public engagement.

Vision

Inspire, Enrich, Engage



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Project Description

How can racially homogeneous communities promote a culture of inclusivity?

The North Country of northern New York has a rich history tied to the Underground Railroad as escaped slaves travelled through these counties to reach Quebec and Ontario. In the 1840s, abolitionists John Brown and Gerrit Smith gifted parcels of land in the Adirondacks to free black men to fulfill New York State's property requirement to vote. Do these progressive attitudes of the 19th century remain today? Today, much of the diversity we see in communities throughout the Adirondacks and North Country is transient; students attending colleges and universities, a disproportionate percentage of prisoners in the region's many prisons, seasonal workers at farms and orchards, and migrants passing through Plattsburgh to our northern border with Canada. What can rural communities that are racially homogeneous do to promote a culture of inclusivity?

Producer Michael Hansen has conducted about a dozen interviews as a documentary focused on this central question of inclusivity begins to take shape. The documentary will feature the thoughts and viewpoints from community leaders, historians, authors, artists, educators, and journalists. In addition, the film will share the stories of persons of color and the racism they have experienced and will examine efforts of organizations working towards inclusivity in this region.

A student placed with Mountain Lake PBS will research this history and current the impact of race and diversity in the North Country and other rural communities and document his/her process and findings in written and multimedia formats.

Deliverables for this research project will include:

1. Video(s) that document community and or scholarly interviews.
2. Written paper that places video interviews within the context of research questions.

Statement

MLPBS has a small, nimble production team working diligently to tell the stories of our region and preserve them for future generations. The speed of our production cycle does not allow us the time to develop and research longer-form projects like this one. This research gives this project more depth and weight, and will assist us as we continue to seek funding for this project that brings important parts of our history into context today. This documentary builds on work done by Mountain Lake PBS, including a series of stories on the development of the opera "Promised Land" about the Timbuctoo settlement, and a special interview with Fulton Fryar about the discrimination he experienced at the Segal Music Colony in the 1950s.



Logistical Considerations

We envision this as a full-time position. The student will primarily work here, at the Mountain Lake PBS studio in Plattsburgh, NY, and in the field for interviews with community members. The work will include interviewing scholars and community members, B-roll videography, background research, video editing, and data analysis. Editor/Producer Michael Hansen will serve as a site supervisor as the lead on this project.

Training and Skills

Preferred qualifications

1. Strong research skills/knowledge in the areas of American History, Social Science, and/or Media Arts.
2. Media production skills, including videography and non-linear editing experience, to capture community interviews and activities on video/audio and edit them into a multimedia report.
3. Strong writing and verbal communication skills with a variety of demographic groups.
4. Strong collaboration skills.

Benefits to student

1. Experience working collaboratively in a wide range of disciplines, including the arts, history, and media.
2. Opportunity to work closely with an experienced television producer to improve skills in interviewing, videography, editing, and storytelling.
3. Experience of working in a professional setting with coworkers and supervisors.

