

Oral historian receives Jarrett fellowship

by Demetrius Patterson
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When Vernon Jarrett, a former journalist of the Chicago Defender and founding member of the National Association of Black Journalists, died in May 2004, he left a rich legacy of literature, political activism and education.

In keeping with the spirit of the noted journalist, Julieanna Richardson, founder and executive director of The HistoryMakers, an African-American oral history archive, has been awarded the Vernon Jarrett Fellowship from The University of Illinois at Chicago's Great Cities Institute.

As a fellow of Great Cities Institute, Richardson will serve as an "engaged" instructor, sharing her knowledge of Black history with students, faculty and staff at UIC, said Great Cities Institute director David Perry.

"Vernon believed in leadership

by African-American people of letters and science," Perry told the Defender. "He focused on reading, writing and oratory. He urged students to read their leaders, speak their words aloud to each other, and learn their way of writing, speaking, and finding motivation. The power of education and knowledge permeated his written columns, making him not only a giant in journalism in the twentieth century, but also a true advocate for informed leadership and social change. In every sense of the word Vernon Jarrett was a public intellectual - teaching us all, leading us all and serving as an example to us all.

"Julieanna Richardson talks about the power of history and legacy of African-Americans in HistoryMakers. When you think about the scope and ambition of Ms. Richardson's project and her goal to advance our knowledge and understanding of the legacy of leadership pro-



Vernon Jarrett

duced by African-Americans in every area of society, then her life work becomes a mirror image and advances the life work of Vernon Jarrett, who also argued for subsequent generations of youth to build their own careers and lives on the legacy of leadership of past generations."

Richardson told the Defender that she is ecstatic over her

December selection as the first Vernon Jarrett Fellow.

"I want to stay true to Vernon's legacy," she said Thursday. "He believed in our city, he believed in our youth and he believed in education. Vernon would always tell me 'you don't realize the impact of what you are doing, and how important and how significant it is.'"

As the selected fellow, Richardson will receive a stipend, and she will work with UIC in bringing in some of the Black history makers she has archived at her Institute. These people of vast backgrounds will share their knowledge with scholars and students at the university, she said.

In addition, Richardson said UIC will help HistoryMakers test a digital archive system that her organization has developed. The plan is to eventually distribute the digital archive system to universities and libraries throughout the country.

Tommy Jarrett said he can't think of anyone else more deserving of the first fellowship award honoring his father's legacy than Richardson.

"What (Richardson) is about is so inspirational," Jarrett said. "She covers the history of ordinary African-Americans, and not necessarily celebrities, or what you want to call them. She has the largest archive of oral history of African-Americans, videos and tapes, than anyone I know of in America. My father was a historian, so I am just

The Chicago Defender and The History Makers have partnered to sponsor a panel on Monday called, "Is the Civil Rights Era Dead?"

The event will take place from 10 a.m. to noon at Second Presbyterian Church, 1936 S. Michigan Ave.

The event is free and open to the public.