

PROFILE

NAME: Getty Images Photo Archive Grants Program for HBCUs

FOUNDED: 2021

WEBSITE:

<https://www.gettyimages.com/corporate-responsibility/hbcu-partnership>

CHALLENGE

Provide the resources to support HBCUs in digitizing, monetizing, and protecting their photographic archives, as well as sharing untold/rarely told historical events and stories globally.

SOLUTION

Leverage the power of Epson photo scanning technology to capture the best possible digital images from prints, transparencies and negatives in a wide variety of sizes and formats.



A box of photos from the archive at North Carolina Central University

Important Truths

Epson Joins Getty Images in Digitizing and Preserving Tens of Thousands of Historical Images at America’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities

“Information is power,” says Phyllis Earles, archivist at Prairie View A&M University in Texas. “If you don’t have trustworthy information about your past, how can you plan for your future?”

Most people understand this but may ask, ‘How do I know what the truth is? How can I tell which historians, journalists, or storytellers I can trust?’

That question is at the heart of a \$500,000 grant program initiated by Getty Images, with crucial support from Epson, Denny’s and other organizations.

“Our nation has a rich history, and we are honored to help preserve the archives of Historically Black Colleges and Universities [HBCUs] like Prairie View,” says Tim Anderson, Group Product Manager at Epson.

The goal of the program is to capture thousands of historical images from HBCUs using Epson professional archival scanners, restore them, add descriptive metadata, preserve them in the Getty Images Media Manager, and share them with news media and publishers, on Getty Images’ global distribution platform, www.gettyimages.com.

Getting at the Truth

Knowing what to believe is not always easy, but trustworthy information is normally supported by well-reasoned arguments based on strong evidence. The best evidence may include primary sources such as diaries, letters, photographs, documents, or artifacts produced at the time of a given event, as opposed to secondary sources such as books or articles written later.

“The archives here are primary sources,” says Dr. Locord Wilson, Dean of Libraries at Jackson State University in Mississippi.

“Photographic images are very important. There is nothing else in the world that mimics life better. In shooting a photo, we are capturing a moment of time in a way that anyone can relate to.”

- CECIL WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION, CLAFLIN UNIVERSITY

“They are a collection of materials gathered for long term preservation as evidence of past activities and events, that we can use to plan for the future.”

Nearly all universities, government agencies, libraries, and many for-profit and not-for-profit organizations keep archives. This provides a wealth of material for historical and journalistic research. Yet, citing facts and figures alone can be less compelling.

“Photographic images are very important,” says Cecil Williams, Director of Historic Preservation for Claflin University in South Carolina. “There is nothing else in the world that mimics life better. In shooting a photo, we are capturing a moment of time in a way that anyone can relate to.”

The images preserved at America’s HBCUs are of unique value to anyone interested in understanding the past. The archives at Jackson State, for example, include about 55,000 images going as far back as 1865, according to archivist Darlita Ballard. These include images of the university as it grew, campus life, faculty and students, collegiate sports, and the local community, as well as special collections, such as sketches by artist/illustrator Tracy Sugarman of the 1964 Mississippi Freedom Summer Project. “We have photos of Walter Payton and Robert Brazile when they played football here, and others who became celebrities,” Ballard notes.

What all HBCUs have in common is a mission to provide a quality education to everyone. As such, their archives offer insights into American life that may be impossible to find anywhere else.

It may be natural to believe HBCUs exist solely for the benefit of African Americans, but that was never the case. “No matter your race, your gender, your class or religion, it didn't matter,” says Dr. Marcus Burgess, current interim president at Saint Augustine’s University and formerly Vice President of Institutional Advancement at Claflin University. “At Claflin, we were inclusive from the very beginning.”

The Photo Archive Grants

Funded with \$500,000 from the Getty Family and the philanthropic organization Stand Together, the Getty Images Photo Archive Grants for HBCUs began in 2021 with the goal of digitizing thousands of archival photos from the four initial recipients and expanding the program to assist other HBCUs.

Denny’s, with its long-standing commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, soon joined by providing stipends for the students working on the project at each institution. When asked to sell scanners to the program, Epson offered to donate the Expression 12000XL* – one of its most versatile, large-format scanners designed for professional photographers – to each of the program’s grant recipients instead.

The inaugural recipients are Claflin University of Orangeburg, South Carolina; North Carolina Central University of Durham, North Carolina; Jackson State University of Jackson, Mississippi; and Prairie View A&M University of Prairie View, Texas.

One goal of the program is preservation. Archivists are carefully trained to keep images safe, but not all HBCUs have archivists. Photographic media also deteriorates over time, and accidents can happen. For example, the academic building at Prairie View A&M burned to the ground in 1947, destroying everything in its



Texas Morgan School children do health week exercises, with agent supervising at Prairie View A&M University, 1918



Students studying inside Lee Library at Claflin College, 1900



Demonstrations, Greenville, Mississippi (Photo by Tracy Sugarman/Jackson State University)

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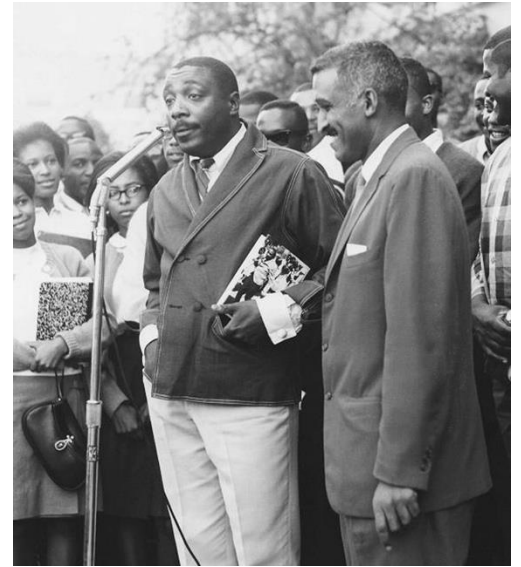
- DR. LOCORD WILSON, DEAN OF LIBRARIES AT JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY



4-H Club girls who received the State Fair of Texas 1947 Honor Awards at Prairie View A&M University



Dr. Jane Ellen McAllister, first African American woman to earn a PhD in Education, Jackson State University, 1940



Comedian and activist Dick Gregory at North Carolina Central University, 1964

archives prior to that year. Digitizing records and storing them in the cloud can prevent this kind of loss.

Another goal is access. “Historically, archival staff or personnel have been very limited. There are usually one or two individuals with extensive knowledge about the collections,” explains Dr. Theodosia T. Shields, Director of Library Services for North Carolina Central University. “Now, thanks to Getty Images, Epson and their partners, we have a digital presence. We are able to share our rich history with anyone and everyone around the world. This is very exciting.”

A third goal is self-sufficiency. Cassandra Illidge, Vice President of Global Partnerships at Getty Images, explains that all the revenue from licensing these images is distributed to impact the HBCU community: 50% goes to the HBCUs represented, 30% is donated toward scholarships for HBCU students and 20% funds future grants. Furthermore, grant recipients retain access to and copyright ownership of all images, whether or not they are offered for licensing through Getty Images.

Illidge’s hope is to eventually scan all the analog photographs at all 107 HBCUs, a collection of at least three million images.

“HBCUs are deeply rooted in America’s history,” explains April Kelly Drummond, Head of Diversity, Equality, Inclusion and Multicultural Engagement at Denny’s. “They’ve educated doctors, lawyers, scientists, entrepreneurs, and educators, and have served as havens for many artists and musicians who were not welcome in other institutions. Understanding HBCUs helps our country, particularly African American people, to know their history and where they came from.”

Digitizing the Images

In approaching the project, Illidge says they realized there were two processes crucial to its success: the scanning of the original images, and the retouching and handling of the scanned files.

“The scanner is critical in that the team only wants to visit an image once and forever,” explains Epson’s Tim Anderson. “They needed a great scanner to get the best possible image on the first try and not have to go back and rescan images in the future.

That’s especially true because many of these images are delicate and so valuable.” This led to the decision to partner with Epson. “For archival quality scanning, Epson was really the only choice,” Illidge notes. “Epson truly embraced the importance of this program and offered to donate much needed equipment and software to begin the digitization process at each HBCU.”

“We’re dedicated to being a supportive partner in our community,” Anderson adds.

For the post-production work, which includes retouching or restoration and the application of metadata, the team hired Adnet Global, a long-term Getty Images partner. Matt Flor, a photographer and digital photography expert at Adnet, describes the challenge of the project:

“Every time someone at one of the universities opens a new box of photos, they have to determine the best way to handle them. At Jackson State, for example, we found everything from turn-of-the-century contact prints to negatives in formats from 35mm to 11 x 14”, plus color slides, and even a giant panorama, which we had to unroll and scan in pieces.”

“Historically...one or two individuals [have had] extensive knowledge [of] the collections. Now, thanks to Getty Images, Epson and their partners, we...are able to share our rich history with anyone and everyone around the world.”

- DR. THEODOSIA T. SHIELDS, DIRECTOR OF LIBRARY SERVICES, NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY

While the universities would do all of the scanning, Getty Images and Adnet provided on-site training for a core of students and archivists at each HBCU, who in turn have trained their successors.

The digitization process starts with students opening each archival box, examining the contents, and then scanning can begin. Larger prints may be placed on the Epson scanner one at a time, but smaller prints, negatives and transparencies may be scanned in batches to fill the 12.2" x 17.2" scanner bed. The SilverFast software included with the Epson scanner automatically divides batched images into individual files.

"We trained the students to scan everything in color to give us a consistent baseline, look at the histogram to make sure they get a good white, black, and middle point, and make adjustments when they don't," Flor explains.

"Typically, the students will do two scans for each image," he adds. "The second is of historical information, which may be written on the back of a print or included in a separate note."

The students upload the scanned images to a File Transfer Protocol (FTP) website, then technicians at Adnet download, color correct, retouch, and crop them as needed in Photoshop. Then other Adnet specialists use the scanned historical information to type out metadata, update the file names, and add keywords to Getty Images standards.

"If the image is pristine, the whole process at Adnet might take seven minutes," Flor explains. The average is closer to 20 minutes, however, with some images taking far longer. Still, it's a massive task.

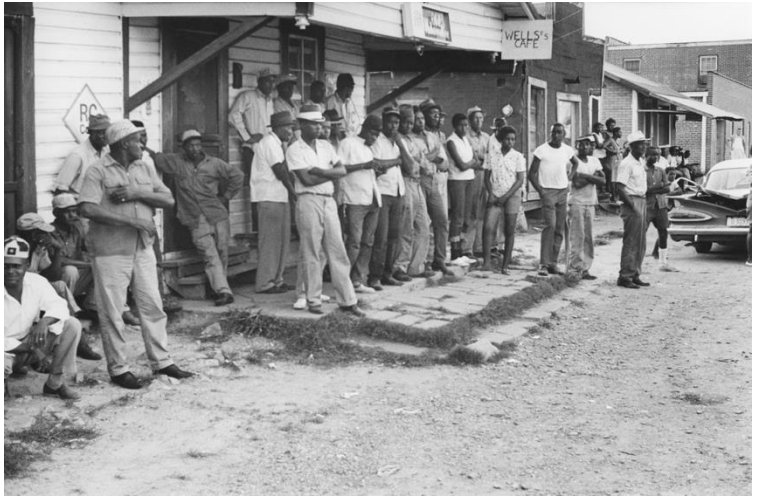
Phyllis Earles, the archivist at Prairie View A&M, says she's had four students each working 20 hours per week during the school year on the project, plus her own time supervising the task. Flor says Adnet keeps six to 12 people working on it full time, depending on the cycle of the school year and the incoming flow of images. This was made possible by Denny's generous funding contribution.

"Given the state of the original image, we can only do so much," Flor explains. "If a photo has deteriorated to the point where a face is gone, it's gone. But still, sometimes we've been able to combine multiple frames shot in the same session to make one good image, in this way restoring missing details, including faces.

"Epson has done a great job in making scanners that capture fine detail and are very easy to use," he adds.

"HBCUs... have educated... many... who were not welcome in other institutions. Understanding HBCUs helps our country... to know their history and where they came from."

- APRIL KELLY DRUMMOND, HEAD OF DIVERSITY, EQUALITY, INCLUSION AND MULTICULTURAL ENGAGEMENT AT DENNY'S



*Freedom Summer demonstration, Drew, Mississippi, 1964
(Photo by Tracy Sugaman/Jackson State University)*



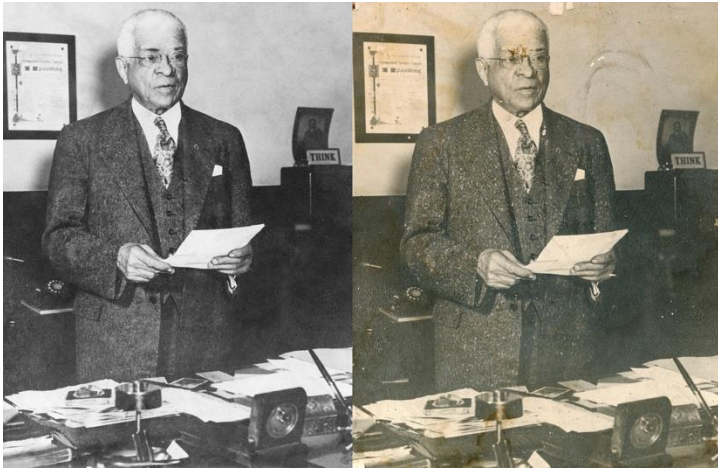
Phi Beta Lambda A members, Prairie View A&M University, 1968



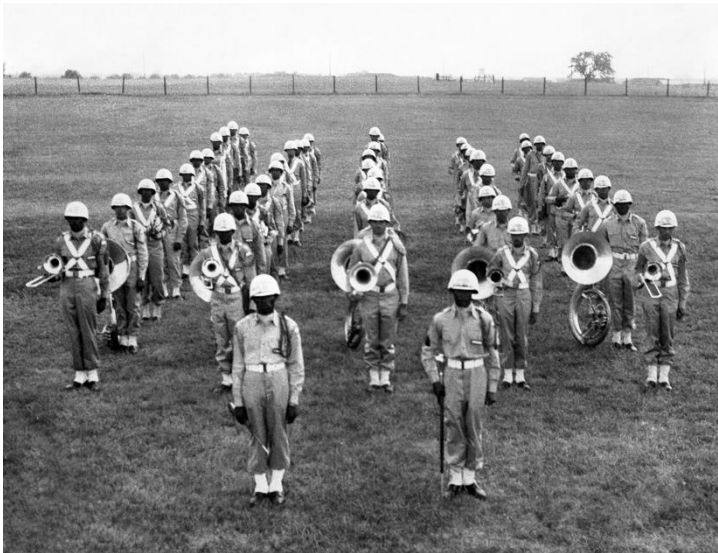
Lindsey Hunter and Magic Johnson at Jackson State University, 1993



Students capturing archival images using the Epson Expression Photo Scanner (Photo by Matt Flor/Adnet Global)



Before and after restoration examples from Adnet Global



Finished images processed by Adnet

"The Expression 12000XL is large-format, so we can scan really large prints, or large batches of prints and negatives in one shot. Its biggest advantage is its speed and high resolution, which helps everyone work better and faster."

He adds that the team has been able to make about 85% of the older images they've scanned look pristine.

In Our DNA

The images themselves can be remarkable.

"The teams have made some amazing discoveries when they've opened drawers that haven't been opened for 50 to 75 years," Flor recalls.



Students perform with Jazz artist Antonio Hart at the 32nd Annual Jazz Festival held at North Carolina Central University, 2023

For example, students at Jackson State found forgotten images of Dr. Jane Ellen McAllister, the first American woman of color in the United States to earn a PhD from Columbia University. Dr. McAllister is the first African American female in the world to be a Doctoral candidate in Education. Dr. McAllister was also an observer at the White House Conference on Education in 1955. “Why isn’t this public knowledge?” Flor asks. “This is a movie.”

“Every time I’m on campus, one of the students finds a photo of a relative,” Illidge adds. “One student commented, ‘I’ve never seen a photo of my grandmother so young.’ Seeing these photos drives such emotion, allowing students to feel more confident in the decision to attend their beloved HBCU, and strengthening their pride in choosing to follow in the footsteps of family members.”

There’s pride in discoveries like these, for the students and the school, but they can have a profound effect on anyone. “It seems to be something in our DNA,” says Claffin’s Cecil Williams. “It’s the icing on the cake of a person’s life, to be able to go back and relive those moments in time from a photograph.”

So far, the first four HBCUs have scanned over 30,000 images, with over 8,000 available for licensing on the Getty Images website in the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Collection.

“The digitization process would not have been possible without Epson’s generous contribution,” Illidge says.

Williams, a professional photographer since 1952, and a pioneer in the use of digital cameras, says he appreciates the donation of such fine equipment. “I’ve worked with large-format Epson scanners since they were introduced, and I have a 44-inch Epson professional photo printer in my studio as well.”

“This wonderful scanner has been a godsend,” adds Darlita Ballard of Jackson State. “Without it, we wouldn’t have had an idea of how to get this imagery out to the public.”

Illidge adds that there’s still plenty of work to do. “We value partnerships grounded in changing the visual narrative of history and sharing an expanded view of stories. We respect this history and it has been an honor to work with the four Grant Recipients and our Partners – The Getty Family, Stand Together, Epson, Denny’s and Adnet Global. We are just getting started. We are reaching out to other organizations which have invested in the HBCU community and are truly interested in supporting the future for students and the institutions.

Illidge concludes, “Let’s help vital institutions in a meaningful way. Information and our visual history are incredibly powerful.”

For access to the full collection, visit [here](#).

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- TIM ANDERSON, GROUP PRODUCT MANAGER,
EPSON AMERICA

*The Expression 13000XL archival scanner has since replaced the Expression 12000XL in Epson’s portfolio of scanner offerings.

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