



Media Contact: Hilary Crowley
702-813-7827
Email: HilaryNV@yahoo.com

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**ELMHURST COMMUNITY PREP AND ALLIANCE ACADEMY MIDDLE SCHOOLS
Celebrate Black History Month with *The Griots of Oakland* Exhibition**

February 24, 2014 (Oakland, CA) – On February 26 and in conclusion of Black History Month, Elmhurst Community Prep (ECP) and Alliance Academy Middle Schools are hosting the traveling version of the popular exhibit, *The Griots of Oakland – Voices from the African American Oral History Project* for a one-night celebration.

The purpose of the event is to connect students to their heritage and empower them through pride in who they are while celebrating the neighborhood and community's diversity. The Black History Family Celebration is an annual event, coordinated through the schools' Family Center. More than 200 students, faculty, and community members are expected to attend.

“These schools are in a high-crisis environment that experiences different challenges. I work with trauma exposed students to provide or facilitate behavioral and mental health consultation services and have found *The Griots* exhibit to have restorative justice elements that reassure and support these brilliant young people. Black History Month and this exhibit provide a degree of social and emotional support and validation that directly links back to their education”, says Jasmine Gonzalez, Clinical Case Manager – Our Kids Our Families.

The exhibit and book are the first project of its kind where over the course of a year a group of African American male youth were trained in oral history methodologies and videography to conduct peer-to-peer interviews with about 100 African American boys and men aged 6-24 throughout Oakland. The goal of the project is to highlight aspects of these young men's realities that are often misunderstood and ignored by mainstream media, and to change the discourse on how they are perceived to uplift their beauty, brilliance, and humanity.

The main exhibit is currently on display at the African American Museum and Library at Oakland through March 1, 2014.

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The Center for Healthy Schools and Communities fosters the academic success, health, and well-being of Alameda County youth by building universal access to high quality supports and opportunities in schools and neighborhoods. The Center's overarching objective is that healthy youth graduate from high-school, college and career ready.