

ARCHIVING DIVERSITY: DIVERSIFYING KNOWLEDGE

Hidden Figures Revealed

This project represents the first comprehensive historical study of Black mathematicians at a single U.S. institution, The Ohio State University. Nearly 200 mathematicians that identify as Black have earned degrees from the Department of Mathematics at Ohio State. They have gone on to become researchers, authors, high school teachers, economists, department chairs, lawyers, Ohio State personnel and university presidents — yet their stories and legacies have remained “hidden.”

This project seeks to bring their stories to light through dynamic storytelling, using an interdisciplinary team of faculty, staff and students in the arts and sciences. It will use these stories to create educational resources for K-12 teachers, develop external programming through a community partnership with the National Afro American Museum and Cultural Center of the Ohio History Connection, and disseminate project findings through a partnership with the National Alliance for Doctoral Studies in the Mathematical Sciences.

This project addresses racial justice in mathematics by shifting the narrative about who can be a mathematician, by highlighting Black scholars and by shifting focus from individual resilience to institutional and historical barriers for success in math.

“We believe that access to quality mathematics education is a critical social justice issue. All students deserve access to healthy learning environments and knowledge about mathematical opportunities. Taking action to address the lack of representation in STEM requires understanding the experiences of minoritized students during their mathematical training from historical, institutional and individual lenses.”

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CAPTION Department of Mathematics class photo, 1965.