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**Alameda County**  
**Supervisor Keith Carson, Fifth District**

**For Immediate Release**  
**Press Release**

**May 20, 2011**

## **Supervisor Keith Carson Presents Family Journeys Youth Testimonials**

"My grandmother will never let me in her attic," McClymonds High School student Michael Lewis declared as he listened to a presentation about where to find documents to start researching his family history. "She keeps the key on a chain around her neck!"

So began a journey into the past that has brought forth unexpected challenges and deep personal rewards for East Bay youth taking part in the Family Journeys ancestry project.

On Saturday June 4, 2011, parents, family members and the general public will have a special opportunity to hear from the youth in their own words as they share their discoveries from four months of research into their family history. The event, called ***Who am I? Family Journeys: Alameda County Youth Testimonials***, will take place from 10:00 AM– 1:00 PM at the Malcolm X Elementary School at 1731 Prince Street in Berkeley, CA.

Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson initiated the project with the help of volunteers from the African American Genealogical Society of Northern California.

"I kept on hearing elders in the community say that the younger generations seem disconnected from a sense of family history, that knowledge of your roots and your heritage," Supervisor Carson explained. "A few years ago I had the chance to look into my family history and it gave me a deeper appreciation for what my parents and grandparents went through in their journey out of the South. I wanted youth in Alameda County to have that same chance to connect with a deeper sense of who we are."

Every week since February, staff and volunteers have met with McClymonds High School Culture Keepers in West Oakland, Alameda County's Beyond Emancipation program for former foster youth, and a class for African American young men at Berkeley Technology Academy in South Berkeley to teach them how to use genealogical search tools. Each group has visited the Family History Center at the Mormon Temple in Oakland, and many have already traced ancestors back into the 1800s through census, birth and death records.

Carolann Perales, a participant in the Beyond Emancipation program, has found relatives on the 1860 census and has become so hooked on the research that she is tracing her family roots all the way back to 17<sup>th</sup> century England. Her fellow Beyond Emancipation classmate Alexis Henry now spends many nights on the computer tracing her relatives' path through Virginia and North Carolina out to California.

At the event, a youth-led panel discussion and multi-media project will allow the youth to showcase these and other discoveries they have made after spending the last few months interviewing relatives and researching their family trees. The event will also feature Dr. Wade Nobles, an expert in the study of Black Families. In addition to the youth panel, there will be a number of displays showcasing the family trees, personal stories and family pictures of the young people who participated in this project.

The project has already had a profound impact for the youth participants. Many of them have developed a larger understanding of who they are and how they fit into the history of their family and their community. Finding out about one's family can lead to better self esteem: perhaps someone in the family owned a business, was a school teacher, fought in a foreign war, or was a leader in the community.

Michael's grandmother ended up handing over the keys to the attic. Together, she and Michael found a treasure trove of obituaries and birth certificates. And now his grandmother can't stop telling him family stories that he can now pass on to the next generation.

To view a flyer for the event, please click here: <http://www.keithcarson.org/WhoamI.pdf>

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*Alameda County Supervisor Keith Carson represents the Fifth District, which includes Albany, Berkeley, Emeryville, Piedmont, and parts of Oakland (North Oakland, Rockridge, Grand Lake, Fruitvale, and Dimond District neighborhoods). For more information about District 5 and Supervisor Keith Carson, please call (510) 272-6695 or visit <http://www.keithcarson.org/>*