

The Walnut Way Story Project



Caring Neighbors  
Make Good Communities

Walnut Way Conservation Corporation

The Walnut Way Story Project

# Caring Neighbors Make Good Communities

We lovingly dedicate this book to the Walnut Way residents who honored the past by sharing their stories, to those who honor the present by making beautiful things happen in Walnut Way, and to our children, the future pillars of our community.

May our children know the strength and character of those who came before them, and be blessed with grace and abundance as they carry on the traditions of Walnut Way.

Published by Walnut Way Conservation Corporation  
2240 N. 17th Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53205  
[www.walnutway.org](http://www.walnutway.org)

First edition © 2010 All rights reserved

Printed in the United States of America

## Artist Acknowledgements

Our deepest appreciation to the artists whose work gives beauty to the Walnut Way Community Center:

Page 12: “Old Walnut Street” - charcoal drawing - Sylvester Sims.

Page 19: “Caring Neighbors Make Good Communities” - mural - ArtWorks for Milwaukee apprentices under the direction of lead artist Alisha Dall’Osto, 2006.

Cover: Detail from the “Caring Neighbors Make Good Communities” mural.

All other art by Raoul Deal for the Walnut Way Community Center - “The Power of Place: Elders in the Walnut Way community,” 2005-2007. Eriks Johnson served as Raoul Deal’s project assistant.

Pages 14-15: Color canvases 1, 2, 3 and 5 by Raoul Deal and his students at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Visual Arts Department, 2006. These canvases served as set pieces for “Walnut Way,” a multimedia dance performance choreographed by Simone Ferro, professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Department of Dance.

# Contents

	<b>Introduction</b>	18	Committing to community
2	The Story of Walnut Way		– <i>She didn't move because she wanted to see it come back</i>
	<b>I. The Way it Was</b>	19	Assuming stewardship
6	Faith – <i>I pray the Lord my soul to keep</i>		– <i>Pick up any paper that might be on your lawn</i>
7	Family – <i>Their father did a good job with them</i>	20	Larry and Sharon Adams
8	Community – <i>Neighbors weren't just neighbors</i>	21	Walnut Way Conservation Corporation
10	Honoring our elders – <i>My Sugar Pie</i>	22	Growth, abundance and sufficiency
11	Work – <i>Don't ever lose sight of your dream</i>	23	Beekeeping and building community
	<b>II. Problems Arise in the Community</b>		<b>IV. Telling the Walnut Way Story</b>
14	Segregation – <i>He ended up as a porter</i>	24	UWM's Oral Traditions Course
15	The beginning of the decline – <i>Freeway split us up!</i>	26	Walnut Way's Oral History Inspires the Arts
	<b>III. A New Walnut Way</b>	28	The Walnut Way House
16	Creating a vision from our hopes and dreams	30	The Found Album and the History of Walnut Way
	– <i>We like it here, and we're going to stay</i>	33	In Memoriam
		34	Credits

# Introduction

## The Story of Walnut Way

The Walnut Way story is about a Milwaukee community and what happened there over the past 70 years. It's the story of a neighborhood in Milwaukee's central city – what it used to be, what it became, and where it's going.

The history of Walnut Way tells a deeply personal story of African-Americans in Milwaukee – their culture, their values, their way of life – and of the global economic changes that impacted the central city neighborhoods of Milwaukee and cities across the United States.

It's a story we can all learn from, no matter where we live.

We're going to tell this story through the words of Walnut Way residents who lived the history themselves, and have been kind enough to share their memories with students from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Oral Traditions course.

Our story has also been enriched by the penetrating historical research of John Schmid in his three-part series, *A Dream Derailed*, published in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel in December, 2004.

## I. The Way it Was

### A Thriving Walnut Way

The story of Walnut Way – and Milwaukee's central city – begins in the post-WWII 1940s when a mass migration of eight million African-Americans left the agricultural South for higher-paying jobs in the industrialized North. While these jobs were exhausting and

often dangerous, they provided a new level of income and a realistic prospect of joining the American middle class.

With major American manufacturers and brewers like Allis Chalmers, A.O. Smith, Briggs & Stratton, Allen-Bradley, AC Electronics, Harnischfeger, American Motors, Schlitz, Pabst, Miller and Blatz, along with tanneries and other manufacturers, Milwaukee was a tremendous job-creating machine, a real boomtown.

A railroad company called the Milwaukee Road provided still more jobs, and served as the transportation lifeline for the city's manufacturers, brewers and tanners. The Milwaukee Road and Milwaukee's manufacturers kept each other humming in perfect synergy, with the Milwaukee Road eventually growing to be the fifth largest railway in the U.S.

During the 1940s, '50s and '60s, Milwaukee's black population grew and prospered. In the 1950s alone, it nearly tripled. In segregated Milwaukee, the black community lived almost entirely within the perimeter of what was called the Beer Line, the path traveled by the Milwaukee Road as it served Milwaukee's leading manufacturers.

At the heart of the Beer Line was Walnut Street, a thriving center of commerce and culture featuring hotels, restaurants, barbershops, beauty parlors, record stores, tailors, cleaners, jewelers, law firms, and the beautiful Regal Theater movie house. Most were black-owned businesses.

But the most popular and profitable businesses were the jazz clubs: the Moon Glow, the Savoy, the Flame, the Congo Room, the Pelican Room and the Bamboo Club. World-renowned jazz musicians – such as Cab Calloway, Miles Davis, Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie, Lionel Hampton and B.B. King – played them.

Local residents called the black-owned clubs “black and tan” nightclubs, referring to the black and white jazz aficionados from

all areas of the city who frequented them long before the rest of Milwaukee welcomed black patrons.

The jazz greats also played white-owned clubs outside Walnut Way, and they often came to town just to hear local musicians who developed a jazz-and-blues style unique to Milwaukee. No matter the reason for their visit, though, the music legends always stayed in Walnut Way at boarding houses or with friends because they were not welcome at certain Milwaukee hotels during those days of segregation.

The Lapham Park Social Center, with its socials, ballet classes, orchestral music and other activities, reflected the growing affluence of the black community in the '40s and '50s. It was a time when Milwaukee's African-Americans could afford houses and sometimes college tuition for their children, and fathers took tremendous pride in providing for their families.

The Walnut Way community – proudly known as Bronzeville – with its vibrant music and commerce, reflected the sense of hope and promise felt by the African-American community at the time.

## Walnut Way's Guiding Values

Throughout their interviews with students of UWM's Oral Traditions course, Walnut Way residents emphasized the values that built their strong community and guided their daily lives:

- Faith and the power of prayer
- Commitment and support for family and community
- Hard work and the importance of education

Walnut Way's guiding values provided inspiration for artist Raoul Deal – who created a compelling art collection for the Walnut Way Community Center – in creating his piece, *The Ladder*:

*In working with the theme of spirituality, I thought deeply about the role of faith in the Walnut Way community, and how integral it had been to the strength of the neighborhood. To represent that faith, I chose the image of a ladder, a symbol of one's higher purpose and the means to a better life.*

*In Walnut Way, I saw faith embedded in the community's daily life. The churches were special meeting places, and the neighborhood community house was a hub of activity. Both places were filled with wisdom, support and guidance. The churches were a backbone of the civil rights struggle and gave hope; they were a constant reminder of the importance of service. They shored-up the spirit of their congregations, strengthened their resolve, and inspired them to build community.*

*Those community values guided my creative process as I carved hands reaching up from the bottom, pulling through hardship, helping one another, struggling for justice, acquiring knowledge, and discovering the power of the spirit through collective action.*



Raoul Deal's *The Ladder*.

## II. Problems Arise in the Community

### The Decline of Walnut Way

By the 1970s, economic globalization had begun to change the way that products were manufactured throughout the world, which impacted the availability of manual-labor jobs in the industrialized U.S. Milwaukee's central city was especially hard hit, as a full 43% of black Milwaukeeans worked as industrial laborers in 1970.

Between 1967 and 2001, Milwaukee lost 69% of its manufacturing jobs, a total of 82,178 lost jobs. Most of the city's leading employers from the 1970s no longer exist, and the ones that still do employ fewer city residents than they used to. Even the Milwaukee Road is gone.

In addition, the 1970s construction of I-43 – built right down the middle of Walnut Way – tore apart the business district, uprooted people from their homes, and divided the community physically and spiritually, leaving a hundred vacant lots in its wake.

This combination of external factors – the rapid loss of manufacturing jobs, the destruction of black-owned businesses, the eviction of residents from their homes, the demoralizing vacant lots, the torn community – led to a tragic downward spiral for African-Americans in Milwaukee.

One household after another lost income and could not patronize neighborhood businesses, which then closed. Vacant lots and empty storefronts invited crime. Housing values fell, leaving owners without assets to keep up their homes, collateral for loans, or wealth to help the next generation. And most of those who lost their jobs lost their health insurance as well.

Financial insecurity brought anxiety to families, who began to live in survival mode. Schoolwork, reading, social activities and the arts lost their priority. Even medical and dental care were neglected. Children

feeling afraid from family discord and crime could not focus at school.

Ultimately, those in poverty and without hope lost motivation to invest in their own education and physical well-being. They became almost unemployable, deepening the cycle of decline.

Decades after coming to Milwaukee with optimism, after providing for their families and building a strong community, the elder African-American men now see their sons and grandsons unemployed, not looking for work, or involved with crime.

The spirit of Walnut Way was badly wounded.

## III. A New Walnut Way

### Creating a Vision from Our Hopes and Dreams

Can Walnut Way be restored? Can its spirit be healed?

The first step in a revitalization process is to re-envision the community by understanding what it once was – and what it can become again. Then members of the community who share the vision must begin to take action.

That's why the Walnut Way Conservation Corporation was formed. Founded in 1998 by Larry and Sharon Adams along with other Walnut Way residents, their mission is to restore the culture, natural beauty, spiritual health and economy of Walnut Way.

The transformation of Walnut Way began with small acts of kindness between neighbors, like greeting each other and talking over the fence about the neighborhood. Discussions about neighborhood events, both good and bad, began to build trust and galvanized neighbors to work together for change.

Neighbors became united to rid the community of troubled properties and crime. They mounted campaigns to report illicit acts to police, and requested that trash and abandoned cars be removed from vacant lots.

As Walnut Way residents worked to build relationships among themselves, they also built relations with those outside the community who could help in their efforts. They partnered with police to reduce crime, and worked with numerous departments at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. A collaboration with UWM's School of Architecture and Urban Planning led to the creation of an inventory of community assets and needs, which was presented to city officials.

Soon Walnut Way had leased five vacant lots for use as community gardens, and UWM students assisted with their development. Such work touched the lives of the students in return, teaching them they could make a difference in Milwaukee's central city by doing meaningful work.

Building relationships with those outside the community expanded the concept of caring neighbors. The annual Walnut Way block party is now viewed as a city-wide celebration and a beacon of hope for the surrounding communities.

The heart of the neighborhood is the Walnut Way Community Center at 2240 N. 17th Street. The center was built in a house with a rich history in the community. Once slated for demolition, the house has been beautifully restored and is now always busy, with people coming to learn and share – and feel connected. The door is always open. It's the place where neighborhood meetings regularly take place, and has also become a center for innovation and research, and for historical preservation.

In little over ten years, the Walnut Way Conservation Corporation and community members have successfully reclaimed the neighborhood, becoming leaders in urban revitalization and

environmental stewardship, forming collaborations with public agencies, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to create an abundant and sustainable community.

## IV. Telling the Walnut Way Story

### UWM's Oral Traditions Course

The Walnut Way Conservation Corporation took on yet another project: telling the story of Walnut Way in words and art.

From 2000 to 2004, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee anthropology professor Cheryl Ajirotutu collaborated with Walnut Way Conservation Corporation to design a course in which the students in her Culture and Communities program conducted oral histories of residents, documenting the life of the neighborhood.

The oral histories inspired beautiful artistic contributions from UWM artist-in-residence Raoul Deal, UWM professor Simone Ferro, and their students.

Perhaps the greatest goal of the project is that the children of Walnut Way understand the strength and character from which they are descended, and believe they can recapture those values and transform their community.

The Walnut Way community is on a journey. They have a destination and they're making progress. They also have a lot of work to do – neighborhood restoration requires stewardship that is thoughtful, courageous, determined and purposeful.

And, in the end, we must remember that success rests on the basic principle that caring neighbors make good communities.





# I. The Way it Was

## Our Guiding Values

Throughout their interviews with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Oral Traditions course, Walnut Way residents emphasized the values that built their strong community and guided their daily lives: faith and the power of prayer, commitment and support for family and community, hard work and the importance of education.

### Faith

“I pray the Lord my soul to keep.”

*And then, you know, I thank God for everything. When I go to bed at night I say my prayers. Like I told this girl who came from the university, I say my prayers every night and I repeat the prayers that my mother taught me: “Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take.” That’s what He’s going to do if I live right. He’ll take my soul, my whole body won’t be what He takes. That’s what I feel about it. I just don’t believe I’ll mind leaving when He comes for me – the way I live, the way I treat people. I think God will be pleased. And I’m still going to be doing that. I’ve never done anything in my life that I’m ashamed of. When I was young, I listened to my mother and father. I don’t care how old I get, I say my prayers every night, and when I get up every morning I thank God for waking me up. I wouldn’t wake up by myself. God wakes me up. I thank Him for that. I ask Him to bless that son of mine – he’s a good boy. And my grandchildren. I thank Him for everybody else, that means you and you and you. That’s my prayer. I know He hears it. He’s let me get this old. -Harriet Dorsey*

*The life was faster than we were accustomed to, but we were managing. We had a good upbringing – morals and principles. There were certain things that you just didn’t do, and that would carry us through. Actually, we were young and kind of green, but you knew when something was not right. You knew when a guy was up to no good. We had some experiences. But with the upbringing we had – and the help of God – it brought us through it all. -Eloise Johnson*

## Family

“Their father did a good job with them.”

The Riley Sisters are, and always were, inseparable. Interviews with Maxine, Priscilla, Sally and Delores were truly special occasions. They interrupted each other often, with the youngest sister, Delores, being interrupted most. They corrected each other's versions of the story, finished each other's sentences, and shared with students their family's love and affection. Sadly, Delores passed away in 2008.

*Mr. Riley took a job as a porter at Hartman's, a Jewish grocery store. This was generally the type of job that black community members could obtain. Their mother cared for the family and never worked outside the home. She did, however, continue her education at Milwaukee Area Technical College and took a variety of classes. Mrs. Riley's mother and father lived with the family as well. The children were still very young when Mrs. Riley died. The grandparents moved out and, at age 17, son Wade began taking care of the house. During the late 1920s, the law required that a woman of age 21 always be present in the house. Through Milwaukee County, the family obtained a nanny to raise the children, cook, sew and teach. She stayed with them until daughter Maxine was 21 and able to take care of the household.*  
-Amanda DeGrave (UWM student)

*Mrs. Riley died when Maxine was 14 and their youngest brother was only six months old. The children had the benefit of “always having two men in their life,” they said. “Grandpa was Big Daddy and our father was Little Daddy.” Their youngest brother was taken into the care of their mother's friend who had no children. She said, “Their father did a good job with them; even though he sometimes worked at night, he still made sure they were safe.” When their dad worked at night after Wade joined the military, he would ask the local police department to check up on the children, and every night one of the policemen was at the door making sure everyone was safe and sound.*  
-Tessa Treuden (UWM student)



Maxine Harrell.



Priscilla Franklin.



Sally Jackson.



Delores Riley.

# Community

“Neighbors weren’t just neighbors.”

A strong community like Walnut Way is where residents care for and protect each other:

*Neighbors weren't just neighbors, they were guardians that watched out for each other's well-being. When someone else's child accepted candy from the community drunkard, whoever happened to be a witness would reprimand that child in place of the parents. The community strengthened itself with the protection of each other. ~Patrice Tate*

*But we, still within this community, we all were a little community – we always watched out for each other. I was on the side of two Greens – Mrs. Ruth Green over here, and there was Miss Coral Green over there. Our children all played and we watched out for each other. ~Lorraine Joyner*

*As Mrs. Abra Fortson grew up, she and all her neighbors were best of friends. They would play together all the time, making some great memories and, being the kids that they were, they would get into trouble together as well. ~Rachel Harmer (UWM student)*

Boarding houses were important community assets. When migrants and immigrants arrived in Milwaukee, too poor to rent an apartment of their own, they were welcomed in the Walnut Way community and directed to homeowners who ran boarding houses. Everyone found a place to stay. The house that is now the Walnut Way Community Center is remembered fondly as a boarding house owned by Mrs. Burnett. Mrs. Gloria Dean recalls her memories of her mother who also ran a boarding house in Walnut Way:

*My mother did this. I guess that's why I did it. Most of the time I had dinner, there were about twenty people. We had visitors at church – I'd say my name is so-and-so. I used to be the church hostess. And I'd have them for dinner – anybody new that came. I did it because my mother did it. When they first came to Milwaukee, they came to our house: “They told us you could find us a place.” And my mother would act like she was a realtor and call up places. She would call and ask if they had a house. And we took people. We had about twelve rooms, and we all stayed downstairs and the people that rented from us, they lived upstairs. ~Gloria Dean*



Gloria Dean.



Sharon Adams, still a baby, surrounded by her extended family.

*We are family-oriented. It's so many! I'll start with my grandparents. Whoever's the oldest in my family has the most authority. So if they're in the house, they're the head of the house. If there's a grandparent, I don't care if you're father or mother, the grandparent makes the final decision. We were more closely knitted in that form of respect, and made sure that Southern hospitality was given. If I ate, you ate. Even if I had a piece of bread, you had to have a piece of bread. When Sunday came everybody met over at grandma's house and had dinner. It was a sense of family. You always talked it out – there were certain rules. Things were permitted, things were not allowed; how you treated each other was important. So we were always close-knit. For my family to live near me, there's no problem, because you always voiced your opinion. You were always honest. If I want the day to myself, I don't want anybody to bother me. They may hear you or not hear you and knock on the door anyway. You get used to it. It's the old Southern hospitality. I have to watch myself, even now, because I don't think anything about it. Somebody said, "I'm coming to visit or stay." "Okay, I have an empty room. You can eat whatever you want in the refrigerator. Here's the key." You kind of open it up, and say welcome. Family cooking, eating, sharing food was never a problem. ~Fran Dawson*

“Family cooking, eating, sharing food was never a problem.” In Walnut Way there was always a sense of family and a feeling of abundance. Many Walnut Way residents remember North Avenue as a street lined with shops, busy sidewalks – and the presence of fruit trees. Apple and peach trees grew throughout the neighborhood. Residents’ memories of Walnut Way describe an abundance because those fruit trees assured them that no one would go hungry as long as there was fruit on the trees.

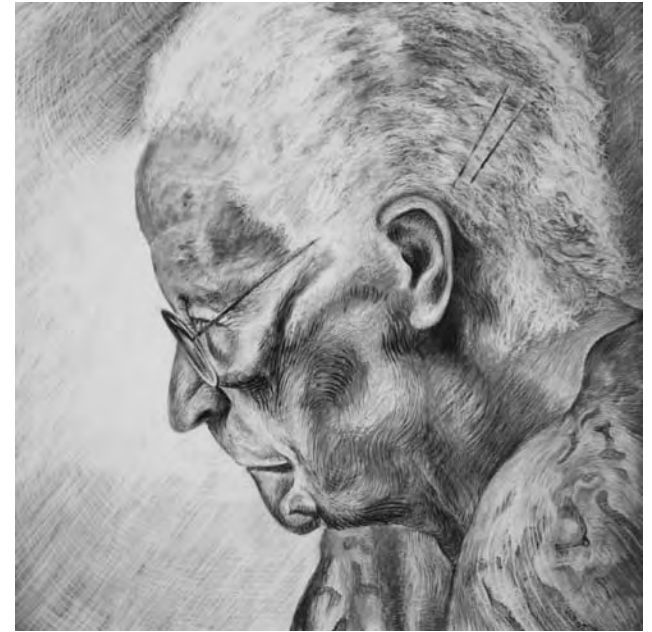


# Honoring Our Elders

## “My Sugar Pie.”

In Walnut Way, elders are viewed as the foundation of the community. Their stories of life and words of wisdom are ever-present, and they remind us of the importance of faith, family, community and hard work in our daily lives. Every day, neighbors make sure the elders are cared for, safe and protected.

Born in 1906, Mrs. Harriet Dorsey is the oldest resident in Walnut Way. Thanks to caring neighbors, she still lives in her own home and leads an active life. She enjoys entertaining and holds the longest memory of life in Walnut Way, having moved to the community in 1940. She recounts her earliest memories of the neighborhood:



Harriet Dorsey turns 100 surrounded by the entire community. Time for celebration!

*First in the neighborhood – first Afro-Americans, as they call us. But the people accepted us because we came here with two small kids –my daughter’s first husband’s kids. They are still living. I was a mother three times. It’s funny. There was a lady who lived a couple of doors from me and she had a Polly parrot. The Polly parrot would cry for her every time she left the house: “I want my mama!” And I thought it was a child. I didn’t know better. One day I had a chance to meet her, and I told her, “You know every time you leave the house your baby cries?” She said, “Girl, come on in here! I want to show you something.” I took my baby and we went in there. That Polly parrot would holler, “Hi, sugar pie, sugar pie!” He was just reaching at my baby, that big bird. After that I began to call my daughter my Sugar Pie. ~Harriet Dorsey*

# Work

“Don’t ever lose sight of your dream.”

A strong work ethic helps a community grow and flourish. Members of the Walnut Way community worked throughout the city of Milwaukee. Their occupations varied, but their commitment to their families and to making a difference in their community was consistent.



James Balentine.

*Mr. James Balentine’s strong work ethic started at a factory called Crew Steel. As it is with most entry-level factory jobs, his task was simple: to clean the floor. Mr. Balentine had only been working this job for three or four months when his hard work showed through, and his supervisor decided he should be promoted. Mr. Balentine was surprised when he was offered an entirely new job as a crane operator. The company needed a hard worker,*

*someone able to keep up with the strict work schedule. Mr. Balentine took to his new crane job like a duck to water. Soon he was the best crane operator the company ever had. Unfortunately, Crew Steel went out of business and laid everyone off. But Mr. Balentine loved his job so much that he set out on a journey to find another crane operator job as good as his old one. His journey led him to Milwaukee, where he started work at A. O. Smith Steel, again as a crane operator. Mr. Balentine soon got into the swing of things, and once again became known as the best crane operator in the company. He never missed a day of work. ~Adam Deniston (UWM Student)*





Old Walnut Street – charcoal drawing by Sylvester Sims, based on a photograph taken in 1947.

*When I was going to school, my brother and I used to shine shoes on Friday. We used to make like 50-60 cents on a Friday shining shoes. We had a song we used to sing, “Your hair may be combed, your suit may be pressed, but if your shoes aren’t shined, you’re really not dressed.” -Len Brady*

*When I asked Mrs. Canada what her favorite job was, she quickly responded, “Teaching.” Even when I asked her if she could pick any job in the world, she told me she would remain a teacher. When I asked her why, she said, “Teaching is rewarding” and that she likes to be a role model for the children. She stressed how important it is that you enjoy your work and how valuable it is for you and others if you do. -Joe Marchetti (UWM Student)*



Wonza Canada with the interview team.



Johnsons Park, located at 1919 W Fond Du Lac Avenue.

*C. L. and Cleopatra Johnson were realtors and a big part of the community. They were outstanding people – the doers, the givers, making things happen in Walnut Way. That’s one of the reasons the park is named after them. There are other things around named after them in other communities, too. -Emma Nash*



The first building, established in 1924.

## Columbia Savings and Loan Association

The Columbia Savings and Loan Association was co-founded by Ardie and Wilbur Halyard in 1924. It was the first African-American-owned bank in the city of Milwaukee and the oldest African-American financial institution in Wisconsin. Located in Walnut Way, Columbia Savings and Loan has provided mortgages and equity loans to help refurbish homes within the community. The early days of the business were not easy, but the Halyards persevered. They started Columbia Savings and Loan with a meager \$500, and for years never spent a penny of the profits, putting them right back into

the business. Columbia Savings and Loan has grown into a multimillion dollar institution vital to Milwaukee's central city. Today, Mr. Anthony Rhodes, great-nephew of the Halyards, carries on the family tradition as the customer service supervisor. Says Rhodes, "Walnut Way is really the place to be; it is the heart of the black community."



Anthony Rhodes at the new building.

## Legacy Bank

In 1999, Margaret Henningsen, along with Deloris Sims and Shirley Lanier, founded Legacy Bank. It became the second bank owned by African-Americans in Milwaukee, and the first bank in the nation founded and owned by African-American women. Today, Margaret Henningsen serves as the bank's vice president in charge of community reinvestment. She also finds time to teach classes on entrepreneurship and banking. Her father, George Rogers, owned and operated a neighborhood grocery store. Growing up in Milwaukee and working with her father, Margaret gained valuable knowledge and insights into small business, which has fueled her passion for supporting their development. Legacy Bank stresses its commitment to the community. In Henningsen's words: "Where others say no, we find a way to say yes, creating growth and prosperity for ourselves, our customers, and our community."



Margaret Henningsen with the interview team.

*Mrs. Henningsen is truly building a legacy in Milwaukee. She refers to the Legacy Bank's location as the heart of the city. "If the heart isn't doing well, the rest of the body won't do well," says Mrs. Henningsen. "If we make this community thrive, then you will see the results all around." Legacy Bank's mission is to reach out to the underserved and foster economic development in the areas surrounding the bank. Mrs. Henningsen left me with many important messages, one being: "Be prepared to work hard, don't ever lose sight of your dream, don't ever lose sight of it – it will come true." –Amber Wabalickis (UWM Student)*



## II. Problems Arise in the Community

### Segregation

“He ended up as a porter!”

Walnut Way was a destination point for African-Americans searching for employment and business opportunities; there were about 180 black-owned businesses in the area. The mid-20th century was a time of prosperity and camaraderie in this neighborhood that had also welcomed European immigrants and Jews. But Milwaukee was segregated, which had a great impact on the African-American community.

*Why Milwaukee? Daddy answered an ad for a chemist at Schlitz Brewery. Daddy's name was Jackson Alexander Riley. They thought they had a white man until he walked in the door. And after he walked in, of course, the job was no longer available. He had a degree in botany from the University of Iowa!...yet he ended up as a porter for the old Hartman's grocery store which was down on Third and State. -Delores Riley*



# The Beginning of the Decline

“Freeway split us up!”

For a time, Walnut Way flourished as a vibrant neighborhood and the hub of African-American cultural and social life, much like Harlem in New York. But in the 1970s, a new freeway – constructed in the middle of Walnut Way – tore apart the business district, uprooted people from their homes, and divided the community.



*Knocked it down. It just tore us up, it really did. And I really think it was deliberate that, “We are just going to knock this community.” Because we were just so together. It was really a good community. I think they realized that once we really got together, we would be a powerful force with our voting. So they split us up. Freeway split us up! It really did. ~Delores Riley*



*Getting back to Walnut Street, when Louie Armstrong, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Frank Foster and all the great jazz musicians came to town – and Ella Fitzgerald and Bessie – first thing they did when they finished with their gigs downtown was to come up to Walnut Street. They’d have good food there and a spiritual and social life – the churches were around. On Walnut Street we had some of the greatest musicians in the world. ~Ruben Harpole*

# III. A New Walnut Way

## Creating a Vision from Our Hopes and Dreams

“We like it here, and we’re going to stay.”

Starting in the 1970s and reaching full impact in the 1980s, external forces began dramatically affecting the city of Milwaukee and the Walnut Way community. This period marked the shift from U.S. manufacturing leadership and the industrial era to the information age, and resulted in dozens of factory closures and the loss of tens of thousands of jobs in the central city. Industries disappeared, the Milwaukee Road railway closed, and life’s opportunities dwindled. The impact of these losses changed the Walnut Way community.

In the late 1990s, residents’ efforts to rebuild the community required them to recall its strengths and assets – and their own. They needed to re-envision their neighborhood and all its potential.

Walnut Way residents visited Boston’s Dudley Street Association, one of our nation’s model community-development programs, and in 2001 and 2002 met with Mel King, MIT professor and community activist. While in Boston, Walnut Way residents learned about housing initiatives, the effective use of community gardens, placing local history at the center of planning activities, and the importance of strong collaborative partners and neighborhood relationships. These research efforts inspired new possibilities, confirmed the efforts already begun, and fueled a shared visioning of a new Walnut Way community.

What all the residents recall as the highlight of the Boston trip was the Sunday morning brunch at Mel King’s home. Each Sunday, community members, leaders and visitors fortunate enough to be invited came to listen, learn, and partake in the community discussion of the week, as well as eat a communal meal cooked on the King’s wood-burning stove.



Walnut Way residents at Milwaukee airport: departure for Boston.



Meeting with Mel King in Boston.



Walnut Way residents in the Dudley Street neighborhood.



Dudley Street community garden.



Sunday brunch at Mel King's home.

Walnut Way residents returned to Milwaukee inspired by what they had seen and heard. As their first step, a model for the neighborhood was constructed based on the residents' vision of a transformed Walnut Way community. The model was first exhibited at Milwaukee's Mitchell International Airport in April, 2003. Other exhibits took place at Legacy Bank in May-December, 2003, and at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Golda Meir Library in January-March, 2004. Today, the model is permanently displayed at the Walnut Way Community Center.

*My job was on 6th and Walnut. I loved the job and I loved the area. I was trying to find a place close to my job. I went through all the classes at WHEDA and Housing Resources. There, a nice young lady named Tracy had heard about this new program in Walnut Way and gave me Connie Pukait's number. She told me everything about the program, what they had planned. She showed me the first model home. It was so exciting! Connie helped me start the process for my new home. It took me three weeks to decide which lot I wanted.*

*When I started to have my house built, two of my neighbors across the street were very, very helpful to me. They extended their hospitality before my house was even built. They became my very good friends right away, Mr. Adams and Mrs. May.*

*We like it here, and we're going to stay here. We all love our neighborhood and want to do everything we can to keep it safe.*

*There have been people here for fifty years. They decided to stay here through all the crime, the blight, everything. To me, they inspire me now that I'm here – if they stayed here all this time through all of that, hey, I guess I can stay here, too! ~Louise Wilhite*



New building proposal for Walnut Way neighborhood development  
– Campus Design Solutions Initiative - UWM School of Architecture and Urban Planning



Streetscape visioning of the Walnut Way community.



Dennis Manley and Brian Pittman installing the model exhibit at Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport.

## Committing to Community

“She didn’t move because she wanted to see it come back.”

Mrs. Emma Nash was invited to join the Walnut Way community by Mrs. Cleopatra Johnson, the former owner of her home. Mrs. Nash met Mrs. Johnson while caring for her as a nurse’s aide. Mrs. Johnson recognized in Emma Nash a person of good character who would carry on the tradition of community stewardship. She asked Mrs. Nash to consider purchasing her Walnut Way home on 17th Street. After Mrs. Nash moved in, she realized that Mrs. Johnson had left her far more than a house; she found treasures throughout. One of these was a picture of Booker T. Washington which still hangs on the wall. Another discovery was a diploma from Tuskegee Institute signed by Booker T. Washington, Mrs. Johnson’s teacher. Mrs. Johnson’s request that Emma Nash move to Walnut Way was her way of ensuring that the legacy of caring neighbors and commitment to community would continue.

Emma Nash speaks of Mrs. Johnson’s thoughts about Walnut Way:

*She said Walnut Way was a beautiful neighborhood. It was older people, friends of her age. It was such a lovely community where people could walk out and talk to each other, sit on their porch, and get to know each other. They didn’t have all this other riled-up stuff that’s going on right now. At that time, the homes were beautiful – big, old, German homes. You would love to walk down North Avenue. It was just beautiful on Walnut Street. It was a lovely place to be. She didn’t move during the bad years because she wanted to see it come back that way.*



Emma Nash with the student interview team. In the back, the picture of Booker T. Washington.



Emma Nash and Tom Brown, UWM teacher-in-residence for the Oral Traditions course.



Emma Nash tells her story and the Johnsons’...



The Johnson house in 2010.

# Assuming Stewardship

“Pick up any paper that might be on your lawn!”

One of the first steps in neighborhood revitalization is assuming stewardship, and that’s what Walnut Way residents did.

*So on the day of the first annual Harvest Day block party in 2000, Mrs. Emma Nash knocked on the doors of neighbors on her block and reminded them to move their cars, to pick up any paper or whatever might be on the lawn, and to be on their best behavior. She told them, “Today is the block party, we’re having company in our community, and I don’t want any foolishness!” And when Mrs. Emma Nash spoke, folks listened and obeyed. ~Cheryl Ajirotutu (field notes)*



In 2006, ArtWorks for Milwaukee apprentices created Walnut Way’s Caring Neighbors mural. Accompanying them is lead artist Alisha Dall’Osto (third from left.)



At the first Walnut Way block party in 2000, children were assigned the task to draw the vision they had for their neighborhood.





## Larry And Sharon Adams

Sharon grew up in Walnut Way, a neighborly and prosperous community. She moved away in 1968 and returned in 1997, only to find her neighborhood in the worst of times. Sharon decided to take matters into her own hands: In 1998, Sharon, husband Larry, and other residents founded the Walnut Way Conservation Corporation.

In 2003, Walnut Way Conservation Corporation acquired a house at 2240 N. 17th Street that was slated for demolition, and decided to bring it back to life. A few years back, during their visit to Boston's Dudley Street, they learned the importance of a community center for neighborhood revitalization. Even though it would be a major project, building that center felt like the right thing to do. The seed for a neighborhood center was planted.

After years of clean-up and restoration, the house – now the Walnut Way Community Center – is the heart of the neighborhood. It's always busy, with people coming to learn and share – and feel connected. The door is always open. It's the place where neighborhood meetings regularly take place, and has also become a center for innovation and research, and for historical preservation.



Larry and Sharon Adams (center) comment: "The house is always being cared for..."

*An important step in community transformation is reconnecting folks. We've got a whole bunch of folks and we do it in a positive way – not in a deficit mode, but with a spirit of abundance. That's strength. You've got a cup of something, I've got a cup of something – let's come together and pretty soon we'll have a pot of something. So, two plus two equals one. The other big step is knitting that trust and compassion together with the vision. And a third major step is creating partnerships and collaborations where we go with a cup – and not an empty cup. Now, we might have an empty cup in the other hand to take something back, and we do take something back. But we won't go with an empty cup. That, to me, has been so exciting. As a social strategy, I keep holding that one cup. You create relationships with something in the cup. ~Sharon Adams*



# Walnut Way Conservation Corporation

## Our Mission

To sustain neighborhood well-being through community organizing, property restoration, and economic development.

## Our Vision

In the Greater Walnut Way community, rebirth will reveal itself in successful businesses run by residents, parks filled with neighbors, bountiful gardens, neighborhood festivals and artistic expression. Residents will have access to quality education, healthcare, technical support and investment. Elders will be taken care of, consulted and remembered. Children will be cherished and guided. Innovations to support the earth will be fostered. Common folks will live and serve abundantly.



## We've Come a Long Way

In little over ten years, the Walnut Way Conservation Corporation and community members have successfully reclaimed the neighborhood, driven out crime, restored century-old homes, helped to construct new owner-occupied homes, transformed vacant lots into productive vegetable gardens, installed more than 40 rain gardens, planted a fruit orchard, offered programming to local youth, provided social and educational resources for adults, and created a close-knit neighborhood of caring residents. Walnut Way has become a leader in urban revitalization and environmental stewardship, collaborating with public agencies, businesses, and nonprofit organizations to create an abundant and sustainable community.







## Growth, Abundance and Sufficiency

Walnut Way community gardens brought beauty, growth, abundance, sufficiency, and a sense of pride.

Walnut Way is a central city neighborhood, but many of its earlier residents were not city folk. They came from the South, from working the land. Ties to the land ran deep in the South:

*We never bought anything. We butchered our own hogs and canned the fruits and vegetables we grew and harvested ourselves.* ~Emma Nash

Like the gardens that started from tiny seeds and grew to yield an abundance of fruits and vegetables, transformation efforts initially began with simple acts of neighbors talking across the fence about issues affecting their neighborhood. Step by step, Walnut Way is becoming a strong, healthy, sustainable community.

*That's what I feel is a good neighbor. We talk with each other – have coffee or tea together. We like flowers, we like beautiful lawns. That's what I'd want them to see just driving through – see some beautiful flowers and the lawns kept up.* ~Ruth Green

*In Walnut Way, it's starting to seem more like a family. I can go over to Sharon's house and say, "Oh, we made honey. Here's a jar of honey." Or, "I made this, here, here's this."* ~Fran Dawson

# Beekeeping and Building Community

Larry Adams draws upon his experience as a beekeeper to reflect on community, abundance and prosperity. In his own words:

*In 2002, I started beekeeping to change the perception of our neighborhood from a place of poverty and danger to a place of destination and abundance. We now have eight beehives, harvest 500 pounds of honey annually and teach beekeeping. Lessons from the hives are insightful. Here are just a few:*

- *Bees are purposeful – queen, drone, and worker have specific duties. All contribute to the sustainability of the community.*
- *Bees forage up to three miles in search of nectar. In urban settings, the diversity of flowers, vegetables and trees produce flavorful honey.*
- *Pests are an indicator of a vulnerable hive. In our community, an infiltration of crime or an over-concentration of low-nutrition foods are indicators of a weak and unorganized community.*
- *Hive management requires the beekeeper to move from fear to courage.*
- *Tending to bees requires complete focus and time on the task.*
- *Advancement requires becoming familiar with yourself and your environment.*
- *Bees swarm when the living conditions jeopardize the future of the community.*
- *Bees sting when they feel threatened. This usually occurs when the beekeeper does not pay attention to the warning signs: a fly-by or buzzing.*
- *Bees do not hibernate. When the temperature falls, they cluster to keep each other warm.*

*In a healthy hive, honey flows abundantly. A healthy hive has plenty of food. During the last season, I split my first hive. An existing beehive became congested and the bees were going to swarm. I provided a new structure and placed young bees in it. Instead of swarming, the bees went to work.*

*As a beekeeper, I look forward to a new season and more lessons.*



# IV. Telling the Walnut Way Story

## University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Oral Traditions Course

From 2000 to 2004, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee anthropology professor Cheryl Ajirotutu collaborated with Walnut Way residents and the Walnut Way Conservation Corporation to design a course in which the students in her Culture and Communities program conducted oral histories of residents, documenting the life of the neighborhood. Accompanied by instructional assistants, students traveled to the homes of residents, who often greeted them with food and conversation. Over the course of the semester, the students wrote and revised the oral histories.

At each semester's end, the course held two public forums, one at the UWM campus and one in the community, where students read the narratives to an audience – including most of the residents interviewed, to whom they presented copies of their work.

*Creating a vision and memory, and Cheryl Ajirotutu, that was crucial because...it wasn't because we want to have a box with a lot of history in it. We want to be able to have a vision that is real – that has some basis to it. For me, elders telling their stories and new people coming into the community telling their stories, and people talking about work and transformation and social traditions was important to reweave this fabric. That was an extremely important step, more important than I thought. It's just been incredible. -Sharon Adams*



Cheryl Ajirotutu.



Sharon Adams and Cheryl Ajirotutu.



2002 team: residents, students and professors at a UWM presentation.



The Riley sisters and student interviewers.



Louise Wilhite.



Emma Balentine.



Eloise Johnson.



Lorraine Joyner.

The residents of Walnut Way were co-teachers in the Oral Traditions courses. In sharing their stories of life in Walnut Way, they taught students lessons they would never find in a book. Following are some of the students' experiences and life-lessons gained from their time in the Walnut Way community:



*I walked into Ms. Booker's house, and she gently shook my hand. It took a couple minutes for me to get ready, but her easygoing nature made me feel at ease and unrushed. When I was ready, I looked at Ms. Booker and she had a huge smile on her face. When asked about her role in the community she played it down, she's a humble woman, but if everyone was as easygoing and caring as Ms. Booker, then communities would have no problems. As a resident of Walnut Way for thirty years, she has seen the best and worst of the area.*

*With an instinctual sense of family connection, Ms. Booker extends her love to those in the community and to those she meets, in the process rubbing off an ever-so-good vibe on all she comes in contact with. So, despite her setbacks, Ms. Booker consistently keeps a positive outlook, and spends much of her time helping people in need. -Andrew Jansen (UWM Student)*

*While learning about Mr. Rhodes, I gained important advice in every topic that came up. The message that stuck in my mind throughout the interview was, "Whenever you move forward, there will be stumbles along the way, but you don't ever give up, keep moving forward." Mr. Rhodes exudes confidence, stability, and explains the reality of life in a way I never recognized from another individual. He continues to educate himself and others in everything he does. Mr. Rhodes truly fits the definitions of inspiration and strength. -Amber Anthony (UWM Student)*



Anthony Rhodes.



Harriet Dorsey.

*My favorite part of the whole experience was, after we had left the last interview and were halfway down the block, Mrs. Dorsey opened her door and shouted, "I love you!" Every time I think of that I smile, just knowing that she really meant it, and I will never forget the experience. -Kristin Glad UWM student)*



## Walnut Way's Oral History Inspires the Arts

In 2006, faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee's Dance, Anthropology, and Art & Design departments collaborated in "Walnut Way," a unique, multimedia dance performance based on the oral history narratives collected in the Walnut Way community. This artistic effort was supported by the UWM Cultures and Communities program and the Peck School of the Arts.

UWM Department of Dance professor Simone Ferro choreographed the dance. Voice recordings of Walnut Way residents telling their stories and pictures from old photo albums were blended into the heartfelt performance.



Simone Ferro.

*Originally performed by thirteen UWM graduate and undergraduate students, this piece honored the traditions and the people of the Walnut Way community. It enabled students and residents to share the stage and to experience together the elaborate community tapestry of migration, economic development, and social life. The experience still resonates in the hearts of the students because it was much more than a dance – it was a community event shared by the residents of Walnut Way, the dancers and UWM.*

**~Simone Ferro**



UWM's Raoul Deal, senior lecturer and artist-in-residence, worked with his undergraduate students to produce six canvases, entitled "Public Art Pieces," depicting the Walnut Way community. The large canvases were used as set pieces during the Walnut Way dance performance at UWM's Fine Arts Mainstage Theatre and again at the Walnut Way Community Center, where they are now used to enliven community events.

For the creation of these canvases, students consulted and drew inspiration from the Walnut Way residents' interviews and other historical documents. Students were asked to think about what makes a community strong, and they also depicted historical events that shaped the Walnut Way neighborhood. The themes selected by the students included: faith, the great migration of Southern blacks to Milwaukee, the construction of I-43 through Walnut Way, and the segregation of blacks and whites.

Raoul Deal often works collaboratively in community settings to foster student involvement in community art projects throughout Milwaukee neighborhoods.



From left to right: Raoul Deal, Nicole Lightwine, Sharon and Larry Adams, and neighborhood children at the formal presentation of the artwork during Harvest Day in October, 2007.

*In my work as an artist and educator, I frequently think about two questions: "What happens to art when community matters?" and "What happens to communities when art matters?" -Raoul Deal*



# The Walnut Way House

Built in 1910, the house at 2240 N. 17th Street has been home to many, and its walls hold countless memories.

Throughout the home's history, it has been a transitional house for people who migrated from the South for better jobs and opportunities. Folks settled temporarily in this house while they found their own place. The house was always open, always welcoming.

The last owner before its decline was Mrs. Merle Burnett. Mrs. Burnett is remembered by her neighbors as a kind lady, a charitable woman active in the community. She was a member of her church choir, the usher board, and the Women's Auxiliary. She lent a helping hand to so many people.

Mrs. Burnett ran a boarding house for years. She lived on the second floor, boarders lived in the front, and another family lived in the unit in the back. She lived there with her adopted daughter, Debbie. When she first agreed to take care of Debbie, she was a newborn. Mrs. Burnett was told this baby was not expected to live more than six months. "But they didn't know Mrs. Burnett!" said one of her neighbors. With her mother's love and guiding hands, Debbie thrived. She later attended Milwaukee Area Technical College and became a journalist.



Debbie was wheelchair-bound but led an active life in the community. She and Mrs. Burnett were often seen taking the Care Cab to get around town. A ramp was built from the street, but Mrs. Helen Monroe recalled how Debbie was carried up the stairs by either the cab driver, or by Mrs. Monroe's own husband or son, who would assist Debbie with getting in and out of the house.



Merle Burnett (front.)



Debbie at the house.



Merle Burnett in her youth



Mrs. Burnett and Debbie.

– PHOTOS FROM THE FOUND ALBUM

In the 1980s, the neighborhood was no longer a good place to live, but the Burnetts didn't move. They stayed because they loved their neighbors. Then one day, tragedy knocked at their door. Criminals entered the house and murdered both Mrs. Burnett and Debbie. This incident is hard to forget in the neighborhood.

Sadly, the house at 2240 N. 17th Street was a reflection of what happened to the city as a whole: it was afflicted with crime, lost its bearings, and fell into disrepair and abandonment.

The house was always a place where people came for another chance, a new start, and when it fell on hard times and faced demolition, neighbors just couldn't allow the City to tear it down.



The house was slated for demolition (as depicted in the Walnut Way mural.)

In 2003, Walnut Way Conservation Corporation set out to acquire Mrs. Burnett's house and transform it into a community center. But the house was in foreclosure and slated to be demolished, like so many homes in Walnut Way. Working through relationships at City Hall and their local alderperson, a diligent group of residents succeeded in having the house entrusted to the Walnut Way Conservation Corporation.

The restoration was a labor of love, led by Larry Adams and fueled by the generous donations of Robert and Katherine Hudson. Larry and his crew of workers had the arduous task of clearing out, stripping down and restoring the house. Dumpsters were rented, filled, emptied and refilled. As layers of debris were removed, the house began to reveal itself. Stripped to the bare walls, the foundation was sound. Areas in need of repair were fixed, closets were opened, shelves were washed, stripped and placed back in order.

The areas surrounding the home were important, too. Walnut Way Conservation Corporation started growing flowers and vegetable gardens. Neighbors and their children began to learn the importance of taking care of their own space, and started feeling strong ties to their own land.

The restoration of 2240 N. 17th Street demonstrates the unlimited possibilities when neighbors assume stewardship of their community.



This vibrant house is now the heart of the neighborhood.



## The Found Album and the History of Walnut Way

Among the few valuables found in the house was an old photo album. Discovered in it were photos of the late Mrs. Burnett and her beloved Debbie. The tragedy of their death had marked the house, but now this miraculous find was in the hands of the Walnut Way Conservation Corporation who treasured the memory of Mrs. Burnett as a caring neighbor and active member of the community.

Throughout the years, residents often remarked that when a home disappeared, the memory left by those who had lived there soon followed. The restoration of Mrs. Burnett's house, where she cared for so many, also restored the memory of this exemplary woman and her legacy of community stewardship. May Walnut Way residents live on her memory as well.

Beyond the photos of Mrs. Burnett and Debbie, very little is known of the other photos in the album. But even though the people in the photos haven't been identified, they tell the story of the African-American community that migrated North, and the story of the Walnut Way community.

These photos span the period from the early 20th century to the 1970s.

The first migrants arrive in Milwaukee looking for jobs and opportunity...



Hard work pays off and they enjoy a growing affluence...



Life is prosperous and families thrive...



Children of migrants have access to good education...



A higher education is attainable and highly valued...



Opportunity for women expands. They now have different choices for rich and fulfilling lives...



*We tell the stories of our elders and our residents so that our children understand what their community used to be...and can be again. May they find inspiration and strength from those who came before them, and may they join with us in restoring the beauty and joy of Walnut Way. ~Sharon Adams*

# In Memoriam

The writing of this book marks a ten-year period of hard work, caring neighbors, and community transformation. All was made possible by our neighbors who gave generously of their time and effort.

At this time in the history of Walnut Way, we must thank and acknowledge those whose shoulders we stand on. Their contributions sustain us as we continue to grow into a community of caring neighbors.

**Mr. Willie Adams**, who generously provided food for students during the first year of the oral traditions course, and who helped us break ground in our first community garden. When told that the students came to work, he would reply that they worked better with his refreshments.

**Mrs. Gloria Dean**, who shared how her mother met her father at a local pool hall. Her mother, a very religious woman, was distributing Seventh Day Adventist literature at a pool house, where she met her husband-to-be. Mrs. Dean loved to tell that story... and loved to roller-skate!

**Mrs. Helen Monroe**, whose watchful eyes on 17th Street knew the comings and goings of community members. Her insights into the life of Mrs. Burnett, her neighbor and friend, were most perceptive.

**Mrs. Delores Riley**, the youngest of the Riley girls. When interviewed, she shared her stories of growing up in the Walnut Way community. As her grandchildren moved in and out of the room, they smiled. They, too, must have heard their grandmother's stories many times, especially the ones about how her sisters, Maxine,



Debbie Burnett.



Merle Burnett.



Willie Adams.



Helen Monroe.



Gloria Dean.



Delores Riley.

Priscilla, and Sally continued to treat her as the baby even when they were senior citizens.

**Mrs. Merle Burnett**, whose life in Walnut Way stands as a testimony of how caring neighbors can influence and impact the community. The memory of her kindness, abundance of love, and community stewardship lives on in the Walnut Way Community Center. May Walnut Way residents, and all who enter the house, honor her memory.

**Ms. Debbie Burnett**, whose life ended far too soon. She lived her life with the courage to be the best and a spirit that carried her beyond any of her limitations.

# Credits

Transformation is a process and it's the interconnectedness of people that makes it happen. ~*Sharon Adams*

## Residents - Oral Interviews

### 2001

Willie Adams  
Jerome Barnes  
Ruth Green  
Lorraine Joyner  
Emma Nash  
Mildred Young

### 2002

Emma Balentine  
Fran Dawson  
Harriett Dorsey  
Doris Howard  
Tonya Jenkins  
Eloise Johnson  
Michelle Lee  
Emma Nash  
Paul & Youlanda Ramseur  
Louise Wilhite

### 2003

Larry Adams  
James Balentine  
Mattie Booker  
Wonza Canada  
Priscilla Franklin  
Maxine Harrell  
Margaret Henningsen  
Phillip Hortman, Sr.  
Sally Jackson  
Delores Riley  
Anthony Rhodes  
George Rogers

Marvin Schefrin  
Jose Varela

### 2004

Gertrude Cherry  
Gloria Dean  
Harriett Dorsey  
April Fortson  
Priscilla Franklin  
Maxine Harrell  
Sally Jackson  
Marilyn Murff  
Delores Riley  
Patrice Tate  
Denise Wooten

### Interviewed by Cheryl Ajirotutu

Sharon Adams  
Leonard Brady  
Ruben Harpole  
Helen Monroe  
Sylvester Sims  
Toni Soward-Gatford  
Malcolm Soward-Gatford

## Students - Oral Interviews

### 2001

Elizabeth Clay  
Jessica Delancy  
Derick Hublet  
Daphaney Jones  
Everett Kubala  
Jason Gierl  
Dustin Williamson

### 2002

Sarah Czajkwoski  
Marr Dick  
Holly Dickerson  
Jenny Hardin  
John Mesch  
Corrine Palmer  
Kelly Poindexter  
Lois Randall  
Jon Thompson

### 2003

Bethany Coplan  
Adam Deniston  
Aaron Hess  
Andrew Jensen  
Joe Marchetti  
Tess Treuden  
Amanda DeGraves  
Coloetta Dukes  
Melissa Hill  
Sally Kluever  
Stehanie Robillard  
Amber Wabalickis

## 2004

Robyn Cherry  
Heather Cleland  
Phoebe Devitt  
Kristen Glad  
Latoya Gladney  
Robin Hansen  
Rachael Harmer  
Geneva Hobson  
Crystal Hodorowski  
Matthew Schnrue  
Molly Sutherland  
Brian VanSpankeren  
Zachary Wallander

### **Teaching Assistants for Oral Traditions Course**

Tom Brown - MPS teacher-in-residence  
Darrell Terrell - MPS teacher-in-residence  
Gregory Carmen - graduate student  
John Blaszczyk - graduate student

### **Simone Ferro and her Dance Students**

Kathleen Fictum  
Roni Hickerson  
Ashley Hinshaw  
Kimberley Lesik  
Amanda Mogtanong  
Steve Moses  
Moria Timmons  
Megan Zintek

### **Raoul Deal and his 2D Concepts Class**

#### **Students**

Shyla Ballman  
Sarah Boomgaarden  
Brittany Ciconas  
Brian Cieslak  
Kurt Hanson  
Zachary Johnson  
Sam Kelly  
Kellen Kroening  
Darcie Krueger  
Elise Muehlenberg  
Christopher Purdy  
Adam Roob  
Christopher Stoecker  
Tyler Truax  
Aimee Unteutsch

#### **ArtWorks for Milwaukee Team**

Lead artist: Alisha Dall'Osto  
Apprentices:  
Tina Bounds  
Kayla Rojas  
Joseph Routs  
La Quita Walker  
Lee Wilson

#### **Exhibition Development Team**

John Grozik  
Katie Loss  
Larry Adams  
Sharon Adams  
Raoul Deal  
Dennis Manley  
Brian Pittman  
Cheryl Ajiro tutu

### **Sponsors**

University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee  
- Anthropology Department  
- Center for Urban Initiatives and Research  
- Cultures and Communities Program  
- Office of the Dean of Student Life  
- Office of the Vice Chancellor for Partnerships and Innovations  
- School of Architecture and Urban Planning - Campus Design Solutions  
UW-System Institute on Race and Ethnicity

Lloyd Street School  
Wisconsin Black Historical Society  
American Black Holocaust Museum  
Forest County Potawatomi Community Foundation

Greater Milwaukee Foundation – Mary L. Nohl Fund  
Kohl's Charitable Trust  
Helen Bader Foundation  
Brady Corporation  
WHEDA – Wisconsin Housing and Economic Development Authority  
DCD – Department of City Development  
MMSD – Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District  
Fondy Market

Robert and Katherine Hudson  
Lynn Lucius  
Gwen Moore  
Willie Hines

Elizabeth Coggs  
Leon Young  
Mel and Joyce King  
Will Allen  
Evelyn Terry  
Young Kim

#### **Walnut Way Board of Directors**

Francesca Dawson, President  
Larry Adams, Vice President  
Josie Veal, Secretary  
Margaret Henningsen, Treasurer  
Louise Wilhite  
Rigii Njoroge  
Annie Robinson  
Kimberly Njoroge  
Emma Nash

#### **Walnut Way Board Advisors**

Toni Soward-Gatford  
Malcolm Soward-Gatford  
Connie Pukaite  
Robert and Katherine Hudson  
Marcia Facey

#### **Walnut Way Staff**

Sharon Adams  
Larry Adams  
Nicole Lightwine  
Mario Hall  
Maanaan Sabir  
Angeline Wilke  
Nathan Hauser  
Thomas Walker  
Erica Heisdorf-Bisquerra  
Jeremy Davis  
Dawanna Gibson

## **The Making of this Book**

### **Writing**

Cheryl Ajirootutu  
Daniel Musickant  
Lucia Lozano

### **Photography**

Scott Pollard  
Lucia Lozano  
Cheryl Ajirootutu  
Meredith Watts  
Gregory Jay  
Kimberly Poindexter

### **Graphic Design & Layout**

Lucia Lozano



Walnut Way Conservation Corporation  
2240 North 17th Street. Milwaukee, WI, 53205  
[www.walnutway.org](http://www.walnutway.org)