



The Snyder Academy *of Elizabethtown*
& The Old First Historic Trust

a catalyst for community and economic development in Midtown Elizabeth

The Old First Historic Trust Receives \$20,000 Grant for Cuban Voices Project

The New Jersey Council for the Humanities has awarded a \$20,000 grant to The Old First Historic Trust to pursue a new humanities initiative, Cuban Voices. Cuban Voices is an oral history project that will record, preserve and disseminate the remarkable stories of the '59ers, the Cuban immigrants who came to Elizabeth in the aftermath of the Cuban Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. Twenty-five oral histories will be recorded altogether, reflecting the mix of people from different circumstances who settled in Elizabeth. These oral histories will be preserved through a permanent audio archive at The Snyder Academy and the Elizabeth Public Library. A selection of the oral histories will be edited and curated into an educational workshop offered in a variety of forums, including community centers, schools, libraries and other public venues in 2018.

“This project highlights Elizabeth’s remarkable history as a city of immigrants,” noted Marybeth Lapham, Executive Director of The Old First Historic Trust, which manages all Snyder Academy programming. “As a cultural center, the Academy seeks to educate the public about our common humanity and our shared heritage as Americans. We believe that this project will touch the heart, the mind and the soul in ways that will create greater understanding of ourselves and other people. We are very grateful to the New Jersey Council for the Humanities for their generous support of this initiative.”

An Advisory Committee of Cuban-American leaders, including Clara Fernandez, Aimee Fernandez-Puente and Maria Elena Bordas, will help guide the project. The Old First Historic Trust has retained oral historian Melinda Allen-Grote to interview and record the stories of the '59ers and documentary filmmaker Adriana Bosch to produce the educational workshop. A Cuban immigrant, Ms. Bosch lived with her family in Elizabeth from 1970-1977. During her 20-year career at WGBH, focusing on educational films about Cuba and Latin America, she received numerous awards for her work including an Emmy Award, Peabody Award and Hugo Award. Elliot Dee, Program Director at The Snyder Academy, will serve as the Project Director for Cuban Voices.

The New Jersey Council for the Humanities (NJCH) awarded \$184,000 in Action Grant funding in total to thirteen organizations. Action Grants support the implementation of a wide variety of humanities based projects, including public programs, exhibitions, installations, tours and discussion groups. “The projects that were selected to receive funding present exciting opportunities for New Jerseyans to explore history and values,” said NJCH Executive Director Dr. Briann G. Greenfield. “Each initiative includes elements of dialogue and connection. NJCH is proud to support efforts that spark conversations between community members about topics and ideas that affect us all.”

For further information about Cuban Voices, please contact Elliot Dee at Elliot@acadenj.org. Additional information about NJCH’s Action Grants can be obtained from Angela Speakman at aspeakman@njch.org.