

REMEMBERING AND VALUING AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY

Carl Maxey Center



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Project & Goals

This project was a collaboration with The Carl Maxey Center, a 501(c)(3) based in Spokane Washington. The primary goal for this academic year was to help conceptualize and begin the construction of an educational platform that members of the Spokane community can access to learn about African American history. To help accomplish this goal, the Maxey Center's original website was re-vamped.

Background

Since November, we have had the opportunity to work with The Carl Maxey Center as African American History Specialists. We had the unique opportunity to have this collaboration be funded by the Washington Campus Contact. Accordingly, we are in Student Civic Leadership Fellowship program, where we attend leadership symposiums and cohort workshops. Through the Dornsife Center, we were partnered with this center with the primary goal of constructing a K-12 educational platform for them. This platform will have content about African-American history that is targeted towards the K-12 age groups.

Partner Organization

The Carl Maxey Center is a Black community center and non-profit established in 2017, based in Spokane. The organization's goal is to improve the well-being of African-Americans in Spokane. The Center aims to do this by sustaining educational, economic, and cultural services for the Spokane African American population. Our partnership with the organization thus far has focused on the *education* aspect, as we have been working on building content for an educational platform for the Center. This platform is targeted at children and adolescents in grades K-12, with the focus of the content revolving around the history of Black Spokane.

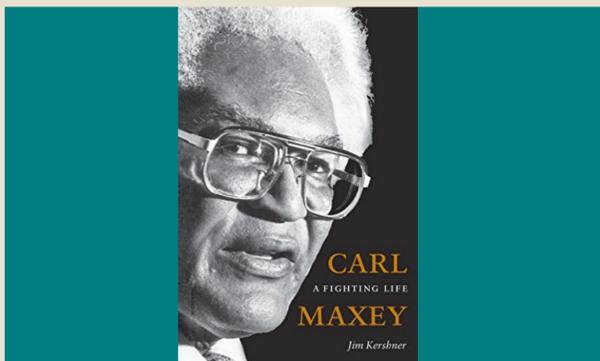


Figure 1. Cover photo of *Carl Maxey: A Fighting Life*.

What I Did

These past few months, we have been able to update the website of The Carl Maxey Center. The previous website was located on a simpler database, and it was lacking some information that was important for the board members of the Center. We – along with a computer science team during January term – were able to switch the website to a different platform that was more visually appealing, while still maintaining the facile accessibility for the Maxey Board. After this task was accomplished, we have been working on the design of the educational platform for the Center. Throughout the winter, we had spent the majority of our time reading about the African American history of Spokane and learning about how to write historical narratives for young audiences. Using this knowledge, we have been working on creating stories that will be featured on the educational platform. On this platform, K-12 users can choose what age group they are in, and from there, the website will provide them with a historical timeline that will take them along the history of African Americans, with an emphasis on the histories in the Pacific Northwest and Spokane. Users will be rewarded when they read educational content, watch videos, and take assessments that are provided on the platform.

What I Learned

We learned a plethora of intriguing history about Black history in the Pacific Northwest, and particularly in Spokane. To effectively conceptualize an educational platform for a wide range of age groups, not only did we have to become knowledgeable about Black history in Spokane, but we also had to learn about website design concepts. This resulted in large amounts of time being devoted to reading picture books, oral histories, and other sources of non-fiction.

Reflecting on the significance of this learning, we believe that the history of Black Americans in the Pacific Northwest is information that everyone should know. African Americans are still affected by historical events that their ancestors lived through decades, and even centuries ago. The Maxey Center in one of their goals wants to promote the education of the Spokane community about the nuanced lives of African Americans, and one of the best ways we can accomplish that task is by educating the children within this community. There is a rich history of Black Americans in Spokane that has unfortunately been minimally recognized in the public sphere, therefore in a way, by creating this platform with the goal of educational outreach, we are trying to work towards an end of informational justice.



Figure 2. Screenshot of the home page of the new Maxey Center website.

What is Next?

Our work with the Carl Maxey Center will continue in the form of creating educational content (to be uploaded to the educational platform). These educational content materials will likely change and improve over time. Within the educational platform, we will be continually editing and updating the software in order to create the most accessible, most inclusive, and most informational educational platform possible. By doing this, we are hoping to draw more individuals to our platform and encourage education regarding the importance of the history of the African American community in Spokane.

We will also help with the maintenance of the Carl Maxey Center website, and we will likely create volunteer opportunities for interested individuals within Spokane. Our goal is to reach and teach as many people in Spokane as possible, and we hope to do so while promoting the values and mission of the Carl Maxey Center.



Figure 3. Maxey Center Renovation plan.



Figure 4. Carl Maxey Center board members.

Civic Perspective

This experience (in conjunction with the goals of the Carl Maxey Center) has helped us to learn the importance of social justice and equity, business and workforce developments, education and advocacy, and cultural enrichment. The awareness of the social justice issues that have arisen out of our experience with this organization is invaluable, and we will carry the lessons we have learned into our future vocations, ideologies, and interactions.

Academic Perspective

Our skills in psychology, education, and history/social studies have enabled us to consider how best to present our educational information about the African American community in Spokane to reach the largest amount of people. Working with the Carl Maxey Center on this project has enabled us to develop our understanding of the importance of how history is portrayed and who creates those portrayals. Our involvement in this project has helped us to challenge the assumptions of the world around us and it has also helped to reinforce the necessity of education.

Personal Perspective

Our experience on this project has revealed our strengths in storytelling and collaboration, as well as revealing our weaknesses in design thinking and IT skills. While working on this project, we developed skills in self-direction and prioritization that we can carry into our future endeavors. During this experience, our attitudes were challenged by forcing us to consider problems in the African American community in Spokane and develop questions for research purposes.