

For immediate release by:

The Mary & Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community
The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation

**Bridgeport's Mary and Eliza Freeman Houses
Awarded \$50,000 Grant
by the National Trust for Historic Preservation
As Part of \$25M Effort to Preserve Historically Significant Places
Across the US That Fully Reflect the American Story**

***Bridgeport CT's Freeman Center is one of 16 recipients of the first grant cycle with the
African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund***

July 6, 2018, Bridgeport and Hamden CT – [The Mary & Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community](#) today announced that it is among the inaugural class of grantees of the [National Trust for Historic Preservation's](#) newly established [African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund](#). It was awarded \$50,000 to help restore Little Liberia's Mary and Eliza Freeman Houses. These funds will be used to begin permanent stabilization of the Freeman homes.

The Action Fund is a \$25 million, multi-year, national initiative aimed at uplifting the largely overlooked contributions of African Americans by protecting and restoring African American historic sites and uncovering hidden stories of African Americans connected to historic sites across the nation. The Freeman Center was one of 16 grantees awarded more than **\$1 million in grants** to support grassroots preservation efforts to preserve sites across the country.

The grant application from the Mary & Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community in partnership with the [CT Trust for Historic Preservation](#) was chosen from a pool of over 800 requests for funding totaling over \$90 million in requests for support - further illustrating the growing need for additional protection, preservation and restoration of spaces of social and cultural significance to the African American community.

"This grant enables the Freeman Center to retain award-winning NCA: [Northeast Collaborative Architects](#), of Newport RI, Middletown CT, and Washington, DC to begin work immediately. We will set a standard for architecture in Bridgeport's historic South End. The houses are in good hands," said *Maisa Tisdale, President and CEO, Mary & Eliza Freeman Center*

"Free Little Liberians like Mary and Eliza Freeman born in Derby, CT were deeply connected to a wider Black Atlantic community that was boldly and bravely seeking to create new opportunities for Black and Native American citizenship, outside of the denigrating contexts of slavery and servitude," said *California State University historian [Dr. Jamila Moore-Pewu](#)*.

"Saving the 1848 Freeman houses saves the last surviving free African American settlement of its kind from extinction. The Freeman Houses are irreplaceable physical evidence of an early, international 'Underground Railroad destination settlement' established in 1822, before slavery ended in CT and the US," said Maisa Tisdale.

"The Freeman Houses hold a story untold by any other place in Connecticut," said Jane Montanaro, Executive Director of the CT Trust, the non-profit organization that submitted the grant application on behalf of the Freeman Center. "This grant validates their national importance and the urgent need to act now to preserve one of the most endangered historic places in America."

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The grant comes one week after recognition of the Freeman Houses by the National Trust as one of the [11 Most Endangered Historic Places](#) in the country and the award of another grant from [CT Humanities](#) to help the Freeman Center strengthen its organizational capacity.

The African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund was launched in November 2017 and is the largest preservation campaign undertaken on behalf of African American history. With a fundraising goal of \$25 million over five years, the National Trust will support projects and organizations across the country that are working to tell the nation's full history.

For full list of grant award recipients visit savingplaces.org/2018-action-fund-grant-recipients

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ABOUT THE MARY & ELIZA FREEMAN CENTER FOR HISTORY AND COMMUNITY

The Mary & Eliza Freeman Center for History and Community owns the 1848 Mary and Eliza Freeman Houses (360 and 354 Main St; Bridgeport, CT), listed on the National Register of Historic Places for significance to African Americans and Women. Its mission is to restore, preserve and ensure the viability of the Freeman Houses; teach the history of Black people in CT; revitalize the surrounding South End community; and facilitate preservation of other African American and Bridgeport communities. www.freemancenterbpt.com.

ABOUT THE AFRICAN AMERICAN CULTURAL HERITAGE ACTION FUND

The African American Cultural Heritage Action Fund is a multi-year initiative led by the National Trust for Historic Preservation in partnership with the Ford Foundation, The JPB Foundation, the Open Society Foundations and other partners, working to make an important and lasting contribution to our cultural landscape by elevating the stories and places of African American achievement and activism. To learn more visit: www.savingplaces.org/ActionFund.

ABOUT THE CONNECTICUT TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, a private nonprofit organization, works to protect, preserve and re-use historic places that contribute to the economic and cultural vitality of Connecticut communities. www.cttrust.org

ABOUT THE NATIONAL TRUST FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION

The National Trust for Historic Preservation, a privately funded nonprofit organization, works to save America's historic places. Visit <http://www.savingplaces.org>.

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