



**Carla LynDale Bishop
Inaugural Recipient of the
MIT & Black Public Media Fellowship**

THE PROJECT

Twinsburg Heights, Ohio, is an unincorporated community located about 30 minutes southeast of Cleveland. Encompassing only 14 streets, it's the type of neighborhood you might miss if you blinked while driving by. The community's first Black residents arrived during the Great Migration. Nearly a century later, it remains home to roughly 1,000 proud African American Buckeyes. Documenting and archiving their stories and people like them in communities across the United States is the mission of the *Mapping Blackness* project.

Mapping Blackness: A Digital Archive of Black Communities is the brainchild of filmmaker and educator Carla LynDale Bishop, who in September 2020 was named the inaugural recipient of the **MIT & Black Public Media Fellowship**. The fellowship was created by a partnership between MIT Open Documentary Laboratory (ODL), Black Public Media, and MIT Center for Arts Science & Technology (CAST).

Bishop is an assistant professor in digital storytelling at the University of Oklahoma-Norman. To date she has produced work about two communities: Twinsburg Heights, Ohio, and Southeast Denton, Texas (formerly known as Freedman Township).

The MIT & Black Public Media fellowship came to Bishop's attention at just the right time. She says emerging media opportunities seldom target Black filmmakers like her. Had the fellowship required in-person participation, her personal and teaching obligations would have made relocating to Cambridge for four months impossible. So, the virtual nature of this fellowship made it perfect.

Recipients of this fellowship receive a \$7,500 unrestricted grant and full access to the resources of OpenDocLab. Bishop will use her grant to do R&D on tech platforms for *Mapping Blackness*, and to create promotional materials to help raise long-term funding for the project.

ABOUT THE FILMMAKER

Carla LynDale Bishop is an assistant professor in digital storytelling at the University of Oklahoma-Norman.

In 2013, she founded Focused.Arts.Media.Education., which trains youth to make media that matters in their communities through in-school residencies, summer workshops and community-wide documentary projects. Her work explores ways that media can be used to bring communities together and promote social change.

"I've focused my work on documenting historically Black communities," she says. Some of these communities are going through changes and experiencing dwindling populations, but Bishop says they are very much alive, thriving, fighting, and resisting in every way. After working on two separate projects, she realized she needed a way to archive the work and make it accessible to a larger public.

"A lot of these documentaries are living, breathing stories. I wanted to find a place where I could continue to add the stories that we weren't able to capture in these documentaries," she says. "I also wanted to find a place to house some of the images, stories and videos as a way to honor and celebrate some of the elders we were able to interview." She is focusing her fellowship on ways to further explore telling these stories via emerging media.

Bishop makes a habit of involving young people in the making of her documentaries, not just because she enjoys teaching, but because she appreciates what they add to the projects. "[Young people] are not going to the film festivals, watching documentaries," she says. "So, I wanted to make this information accessible in a way that they're more likely to engage with it."

What Bishop appreciates most about this fellowship is having access to other makers from around the world who, like her, are using emerging media to document and archive the stories of underrepresented people of color.

"I feel like I've found my tribe."

ABOUT BPM+

The goal of the BPM+ (or BPMplus) initiative is to increase Black participation in XR content production. Go here for more information about the MIT & Black Public Media Fellowship and our other emerging media programs. Follow #bpmplus on Twitter and Instagram for our latest updates.

ABOUT MIT OPEN DOCUMENTARY LAB

Drawing on MIT's legacy of media innovation and its deep commitment to open and accessible information, the MIT Open Documentary Lab brings storytellers, technologists, and scholars together to explore new documentary forms with a particular focus on collaborative, interactive, and immersive storytelling. OpenDocLab is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

ABOUT MIT'S CENTER FOR ART SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

A major cross-school initiative, the MIT Center for Art, Science & Technology (CAST) creates new opportunities for art, science and technology to thrive as interrelated, mutually informing modes of exploration, knowledge and discovery. CAST's multidisciplinary platform presents performing and visual arts programs, supports research projects for artists working with science and engineering labs, and sponsors symposia, classes, workshops, design studios, lectures and publications. The visiting artists program is a cornerstone of CAST's activities, which encourages cross-fertilization among disciplines and intensive interaction with MIT's faculty, students, and researchers. CAST is based in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Learn more: <https://blackpublicmedia.org/360projects/mapping-blackness/>