

Witnessing One's Legacy: Supercentenarian Edith Renfrow Smith to Dedicate Residence Hall @ Grinnell College in Her Name

Artist Isaac Campbell celebrates the return of the first Black female graduate (1937) by reuniting her with photos of her younger self as wheat paste murals.

GRINNELL, IA, UNITED STATES,
September 27, 2024 /

EINPresswire.com/ -- A historic celebration is set for this weekend as [Edith Renfrow Smith](#), a remarkable supercentenarian and the first Black female graduate of Grinnell College, returns to her alma mater and the town where she was born. At 110 years old, Renfrow Smith embodies a legacy of perseverance and achievement that inspires generations.



“

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Isaac Campbell, Artist

Renfrow's journey is particularly noteworthy; at age 99, she was designated a “superager” in a study by Northwestern University for her remarkable memory and longevity. In 2019, at 104, she received an honorary degree from Grinnell College, further solidifying her impact on the academic community. “This dedication is not just about a building that honors Edith Renfrow Smith. As a part of the college's new “civic engagement quad”, it also aims to recognize the injustices of the past and provide a home for planning a more just future. It is a starting place for correcting the decades of oversight, on the part of the campus and community, in recognizing the contributions of African American students, alumni and Grinnell

residents” said Monique Shore, a Grinnell College alumni and community member who authored an illustrated biography of the Renfrow story, “No One is Better Than You: Edith Renfrow Smith

and the Power of a Mother's Words”.

The dedication ceremony will take place at the newly constructed residence hall named in her honor, recognizing her groundbreaking contributions to education, her family's deep roots in the Grinnell community, and her trailblazing path as a woman of color in academia. Attendees will be treated to an extraordinary sight: a series of 10 larger than life wheat paste murals throughout town of historic photos from during her family's time in Grinnell, approximately 1890-1960. The murals are created in partnership with the [Grinnell Area Arts Council](#), local volunteers, and led by artist [Isaac Campbell](#), whose work has garnered international media coverage from esteemed outlets such as NPR (<https://www.npr.org/2022/07/29/1114225672/brittney-griner-americans-wrongfully-detained-bring-our-families-home-campaign>), CNN (<https://www.cnn.com/2022/07/20/politics/us-detainee-mural-unveiling/index.html>), The New York Times (<https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/09/us/politics/griner-blowback.html?action=click&module=RelatedLinks&pgtype=Article>), Reuters (<https://www.reuters.com/world/us/nearby-white-house-faces-americans-detained-overseas-now-visible-thousands-2022-07-20/>), and the Washington Post (<https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2022/07/20/brittney-griner-mural-washington/>).



“Each mural in the exhibition has been prepared and installed by a dedicated group of volunteers and area students - a fitting way to honor the legacy of a woman who has impacted communities across America for 110 years and counting” said Campbell. “It’s an honor to bring

awareness to her incredible story and unifying spirit. I can't wait to see her reaction to the massive murals in the way that so many people in this community see her—as a giant.”

Interested media who wish to attend the event, or schedule a tour and/or interview with artist Issac Campbell are invited to contact Workhouse, CEO, Adam Nelson via nelson@workhousepr.com

Key Highlights:

Date: Friday, September 27th, 2024 - Saturday, September 28th, 2024

Location: Grinnell College, Grinnell Iowa

Special Guests: Edith Renfrow Smith

Art Installation:

Friday, September 27th, 12:00 pm - A monumental mural of young Edith Renfrow Smith and her sisters to be constructed and unveiled during the ceremony. Renfrow's legacy is a testament to resilience and the pursuit of education. Her story is not just one of personal triumph but also a reflection of the broader narrative of racial and gender equality in America.

Saturday, September 28, 2024

Tour of Renfrow Hall and Mural Sites - 9:30 am - Edith will receive a personal tour of the newly constructed Renfrow and meet artist Isaac Campbell in front of the murals.

Renfrow Hall Dedication, 12:00 pm- The dedication ceremony, with 110 year old Edith in attendance, will take place in front of Renfrow Hall, 1033 Broad Street, Grinnell, Iowa.

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