

12/10/10

Dear Black Alumni and Alumnae:

As you are likely aware, I have been working with several MIT associates for some years to gather data on the role and experience of blacks at MIT. Our current goal is to develop innovative ways to publish our findings through electronic and other media.

Blacks have almost always played a role at MIT, starting in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when only a few students of color were able to take advantage of educational opportunities; to the period between World War II and the mid-1960s, when growing civil-rights activism created an environment in which blacks could participate more fully not only as students but as faculty and researchers as well; to the period from the late 1960s to the present, with the formalization of minority recruitment programs and other incentives that helped increase the black presence at MIT and other institutions of higher learning. It is a rich and complex history that ties together personal struggles, racial issues, institutional policies, and pressures for social change.

Our results to date include exploring archival material at the Institute Archives and the MIT Museum, carrying out a survey of black alumni, and conducting numerous interviews with black students, alumni, faculty, and staff, along with select non-black faculty and administrators who have played important roles in the recruitment and retention of blacks at MIT.

These activities have resulted in the publication of my book, *Technology and the Dream: Reflections on the Black Experience at MIT, 1941-1999* (MIT Press, 2003), as well as several articles, including "Professor Joseph Applegate: MIT's First Black Faculty Member," *Tech Talk*, 5 Feb. 1997; and "From 'Tech' to Tuskegee: The Life of Robert Robinson Taylor, 1868-1942," posted at <http://libraries.mit.edu/archives/mithistory/blacks-at-mit/taylor.html>.

The next phase of the Black History Project centers on creating a Web-based history. We intend to design a framework for multimedia access to selected materials; to prepare these materials for Website posting, with appropriate protocols, templates, and standards for digital reproduction; to present images and narratives using an accessible, easily navigable interface; and to encourage broad public access and input via a network of interests focused around personalities, topics, and themes. The overall goal is to capture the MIT black experience and to expose a larger community—both inside and outside MIT—to this rich, significant legacy. We also plan to publish a pictorial and narrative history in book form.

To complete the work, we need your financial support. BAMIT has graciously chosen the Black History Project as one of its priorities for the next several years and has arranged to open an account—Black History Project (acct #3839050)—to which individuals,

companies, and others may donate funds that will go directly toward web-design and research costs. {<https://giving.mit.edu/givenow/AddGift.dyn?desig=3839050>}. Please help us make this website a reality.

Many thanks. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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