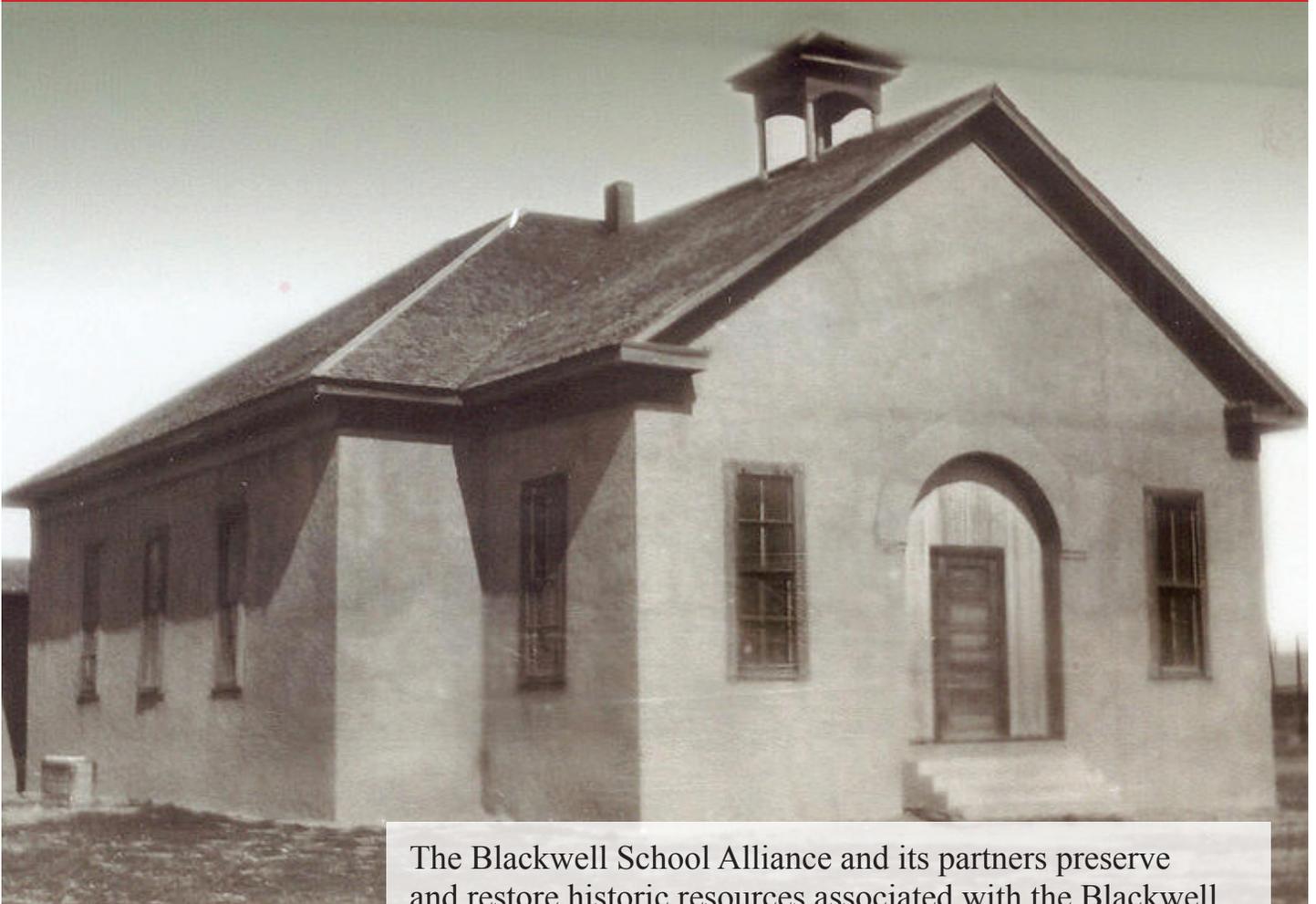


# The Blackwell School Alliance

## Strategic Plan

*April 2017*



The Blackwell School Alliance and its partners preserve and restore historic resources associated with the Blackwell School; interpret and commemorate the era of segregated Hispanic education; and serve the Marfa, Texas, community culturally, historically, and educationally for the benefit of all Marfa residents, now and into the future.

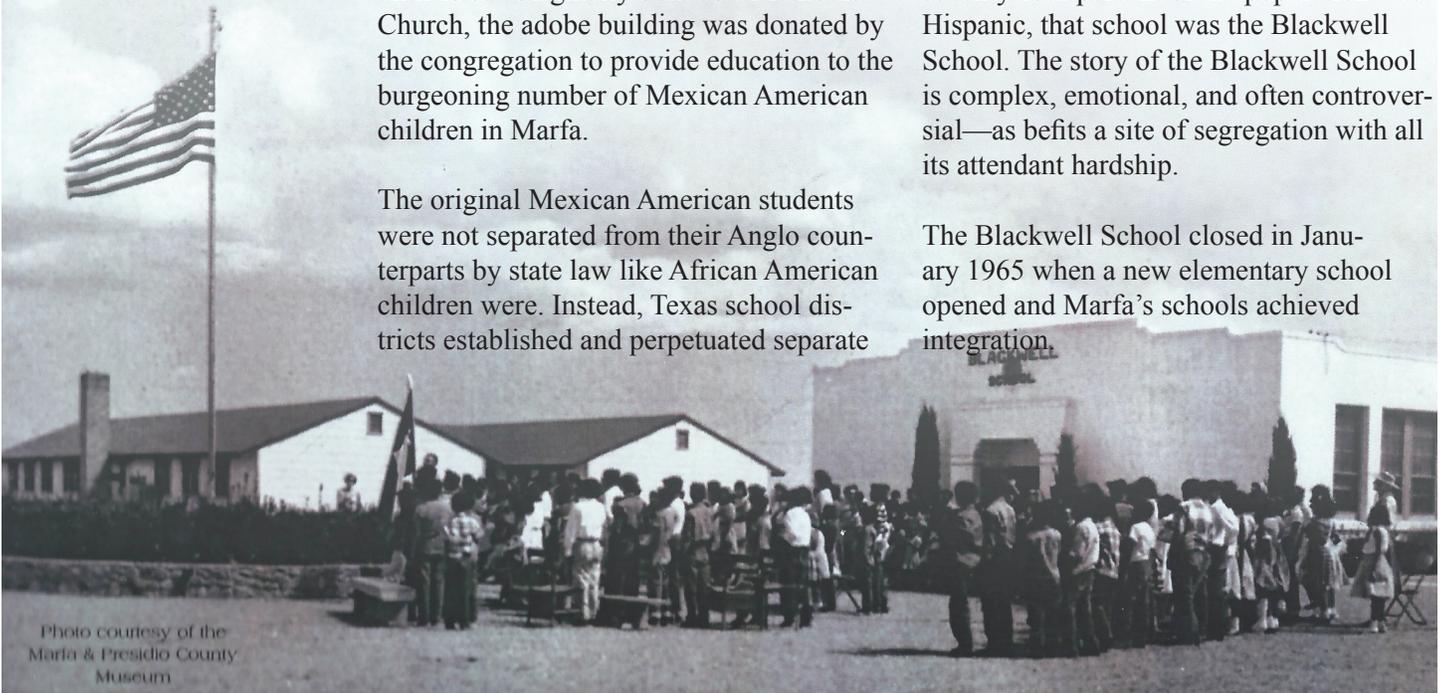
## History of the Blackwell School

The Blackwell School served as the segregated elementary school for the Hispanic population of Marfa, Texas, from 1889 until 1965. Originally built as a Methodist Church, the adobe building was donated by the congregation to provide education to the burgeoning number of Mexican American children in Marfa.

The original Mexican American students were not separated from their Anglo counterparts by state law like African American children were. Instead, Texas school districts established and perpetuated separate

elementary schools for Mexican American children through the practice of *de facto* segregation. In Marfa, where in 1920 seventy-four percent of the population was Hispanic, that school was the Blackwell School. The story of the Blackwell School is complex, emotional, and often controversial—as befits a site of segregation with all its attendant hardship.

The Blackwell School closed in January 1965 when a new elementary school opened and Marfa’s schools achieved integration.



## Significance of the Blackwell School

Significance statements express why Blackwell School’s resources and values are important enough to merit local, state, and national recognition. Statements of significance are linked to the purpose of the site and are supported by data, research, and consensus. Significance statements describe the distinctive nature of the site and inform management decisions, focusing efforts on preserving and protecting the most important resources and values of the site.

1. The Blackwell School is a tangible reminder of a time when the practice of “separate but equal” dominated education and social systems. Despite being categorized as “white” by Texas law, Mexican Americans were regularly excluded from commingling with Anglos at barbershops, restaurants, funeral homes, theaters, churches, and schools.
2. The spectrum of experiences of students and teachers at the Hispanic Blackwell School constitute an important record of life in a segregated school in the context of the history of Texas and America.
3. Mexican and Mexican American culture and history in Marfa is tied to the Blackwell School through the more than seventy years that the Blackwell School served as a school and a leading feature of the Hispanic community of Marfa, illustrating the challenge of maintaining cultural identity in a dominant Anglo society.
4. The historic Blackwell School building is a physical record of the longevity and beauty of the distinctive design and craftsmanship using traditional techniques and in relying upon local, readily available materials and skilled labor. The design and workmanship represent the transition from purely the vernacular to the period of materials, design, and workmanship made available after the arrival of the railroad (Fulton 2008).
5. The Blackwell School is closely associated with the broad patterns of our local, state, and national history in the area of school segregation. Mexicans and other members of the Latin American diaspora have placed a high value upon education as a means of economic, political, social maintenance, and upward mobility. Equitable opportunities and access to quality educational facilities have posed a formidable challenge to Latinos throughout U.S. history (MacDonald 2013, 321-2).

# History of the Blackwell School Alliance

All of the buildings of the Blackwell School campus that had been built over the decades were torn down soon after the Blackwell School closed, except for the original adobe church. In 2006 Joe Cabezuela and several of his Blackwell School classmates learned that this last remaining school building, the Harper Building as it had come to be known, was slated to meet the same fate.

They visited with the Marfa Independent School District (MISD) and asked for a reprieve. They explained that this building belonged to the students, to the neighborhood, and the town of Marfa. They offered to dedicate themselves to preserving the historic building and its legacy.

MISD officials agreed and the Blackwell School Alliance (BSA) was formed. The BSA signed a 99-year lease, at a dollar a year, with the school district. Debris was hauled out of the building, and former students cleaned and aired out the school.

Historian and archivist Richard Williams began setting up the Blackwell School Museum. The BSA hosted many reunions, open houses, fundraisers, and events to pay for building renovations and the preservation of Blackwell School stories. With little in the way of modern social media, this determined group of alumni raised almost \$50,000 in ten years to restore the school to its current condition.

Today the BSA has a Board of Directors made up of many former students as well as a few newcomers dedicated to preserving the historic building and the experiences it represents. The school building contains a museum-in-progress with exhibits and a meeting room and is open to the public every Saturday.



## Fundamental Resources and Values

**1. Blackwell School Building and Grounds:** The original historic school building and grounds on which it stands provide an authentic setting to commemorate and educate about the history of the Blackwell School. Additionally, the physical structure provides opportunity for on-site community engagement.

**2. Archives and Collections:** The documents, photographs, archives, and other records and items associated with the Blackwell School provide important insight, information, and documentation of the history of the Blackwell School and its students and community.

**3. Mosaic of Stories:** Stories associated with the Blackwell School illustrate its complex experiences and history, as well as its far-reaching impacts and involvements in shaping the Marfa community today.

**4. Community Collaboration:** The Blackwell School engages the Marfa community as a cultural center and museum to preserve the remaining archives of, and educate future generations regarding, a significant period of Texas history.

**5. Hispanic Culture and History in Marfa:** Since its founding in 1883, the city of Marfa has had a majority population of people of Hispanic origin—namely Mexican—whose influences are seen today in our social and religious organizations, business and government institutions, and shared experiences of language, food, and music.

Fundamental resources and values (FRVs) are those features, systems, processes, experiences, stories, scenes, sounds, smells, or other attributes determined to merit primary consideration during planning and management processes because they are essential to achieving the purpose of the site and maintaining its significance.

**THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN ANALYSES OF THE FRVs: DESCRIPTION, STATUS, GOALS, AND STRATEGIES TO MEET THOSE GOALS.**

Fundamental Resource or Value	Blackwell School Building and Grounds
	<p><b>The original historic school building and grounds on which it stands provide an authentic setting to commemorate and educate about the history of the Blackwell School. Additionally, the physical structure provides opportunity for on-site community engagement.</b></p>
Description	<p>The 1896 United States Supreme Court case, Plessy v. Ferguson, sanctioned ethnic segregation, declaring that institutions and amenities could be “equal” though kept “separate” between those of Anglo-Saxon descent and those persons of color. The reality of substandard or non-existent restroom facilities, “Whites Only” restaurants, and separate school systems most often meant, though, that minorities were left to cope with unacceptable circumstances. State and municipal funding seemed to find its way to the predominantly white educational institutions, whereas the others were left to fend for themselves.</p> <p>In Marfa, and across Texas, Mexican Americans were classified as “white” for most of the state’s history and therefore were not subjected to segregation by law. But the practice of separation was common and amounted to <i>de facto</i> segregation all across the state.</p> <p>A thriving and separate campus from Marfa Elementary School, the Blackwell School served hundreds of predominantly Hispanic children (and children from the nearby neighborhood) from kindergarten until the 8th grade.</p> <p>The historic schoolhouse is a simple, story-and-a-half, gable-roofed building that is symmetrically fenestrated. It features a tall stone foundation set in lime mortar, several original wood-framed sash windows, wood doors, and thick (24”) adobe walls. Although most of the original doors and windows have been removed, a wide wood soffit and overhang, rake boards, and wood door and window trim lend an air of 19th-century charm. The wood shingle roof has been replaced with metal (Fulton 2008).</p>
Status	<p>In 2008 Cornerstones Community Partnerships, a historic preservation organization in New Mexico, conducted a Conditions Assessment—including visual inspections, physical probing, records research, interviews, and photo-documentation—to determine the condition of the Blackwell School building.</p> <p>The building is structurally sound. The wood framing members are in excellent condition. Even so, the assessment identified serious threats to the building, including inadequate foundation perimeter drainage, prolonged moisture entrapment, wood rot, and deteriorated protective coatings, including peeling exterior paint, spalling plaster, and failed glazing and caulk. Although no problems due to settlement were encountered, heavy rain gullyng at the sections of exposed adobe walls has occurred. The use of incompatible materials (i.e. cement stucco and earthen architecture) has created a series of problems that are also identified.</p> <p>Today the Blackwell School building contains displays of photographs, artifacts, and memorabilia. Volunteers host open hours and film screenings every Saturday for community members and visitors to Marfa.</p>
Goals	<p>The original BSA Charter states that, “The primary purposes are to acquire or lease, restore, renovate, preserve, and maintain the remaining historic Blackwell School buildings in Marfa, Texas.” This remains the primary goal of the BSA: to preserve the building as much as possible and to restore it in a manner consistent with historic preservation that allows for its use as a museum and site for community engagement.</p>

**Strategy:  
Building Preservation**

The green background signifies a Tier 1 Activity: the first priorities that will be addressed by the BSA in this strategic planning cycle.

- Complete a Historic Structures Report (HSR) in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior’s Guidelines for Historic Preservation.
  - Conduct Preservation and Restoration Construction Projects prescribed by the HSR.
- Partnerships*
- The Texas Historical Commission will play a large roll in advising the Blackwell School Alliance on standards for historic preservation as well as assisting in finding additional grant opportunities.
  - Local Historic Preservation Architect Mike Green will advise on the HSR and preservation projects.
  - The BSA will consult with the Presidio County Historical Commission for local knowledge and continuity of preservation.
- Grant Funding*
- Texas Historical Commission Preservation Grants—matching grant fund for planning and construction projects.
  - Foundation Grants to match THC funding.
- Staffing*
- Work that is performed by professionals as part of the HSR and all construction will be contracted and paid for from out of the grant funds received.
- Volunteer Opportunities*
- Grant writing and application writing.
  - Project oversight on the part of the BSA.
  - Communication among the BSA and the THC, grant-making Foundations, and contractors.
  - Our THC representative has suggested that students in a public university graduate program in historic architecture or related field could undertake the creation of an HSR for the Blackwell School. In addition to pursuing the route of grants and a professional contractor, we will pursue this method as well.
  - Wherever possible we will seek volunteers and in-kind donations of time to supplement grants and the use of professional labor.

**Strategy:  
Elevated Designation**

The green background signifies a Tier 1 Activity.

- Apply for listing on the National Register.
  - Engage our elected Texas and U.S. Representatives in the work of the BSA.
  - Pursue National Landmark Status which demonstrates national significance.
  - Consult with partners to determine the viability of pursuing designation as a National Historic Site, follow up as appropriate.
- Partnerships*
- The Texas Historical Commission is the entity that will assist us in this process of seeking federal listing and designation.
  - U.S. Congressional representative can help with federal designation.
- Volunteer Opportunities*
- Application writing and partner engagement will be performed by volunteers.

Fundamental Resource or Value	Archives and Collections
	<p><b>The documents, photographs, archives, and other records and items associated with the Blackwell School provide important insight, information, and documentation of the history of the Blackwell School and its students and community.</b></p>
Description	<p>Dozens of young faces peer out from black-and-white photographs lovingly tacked to bulletin boards inside the old schoolhouse. Letterman jackets, mementos, trophies, newspaper clippings, articles of clothing, pages torn from schoolbooks, and memories are all cared for by the BSA members. A tiny drum majorette’s uniform sewn by the girl’s grandmother is displayed on the wall, and a basketball uniform is framed behind glass. Dozens of pencil nubs sharpened all the way to their erasers were collected from underneath the floor boards. The bucking bronco logo and the school’s black and red colors stir memories as returning students, now in their sixties and seventies (and eighties), make their way back to the old school house to visit with one another and reminisce (Fulton 2008).</p>
Status	<p>The BSA has collected, in the past ten years, hundreds of photographs and dozens of physical items from former Blackwell School students. In addition, old school desks were saved from the junk heap and are now on display in the school. These items create a tangible connection to the past and bring to life the stories that accompany such artifacts. Photographs are currently being stored on a computer in digital format as well as having print-outs displayed on the walls of the school.</p> <p>Despite the growing collection of objects, photographs, and stores, the Blackwell School suffers from a lack of original, primary source documentation because in 1958 Marfa ISD officials destroyed years and presumably decades of school records pertaining to the Blackwell School (Harper et al. 1987). If this is true, this is a loss of a large amount of factual information related to enrollment, employment, and building records. Searches in recent years by Joe Cabezuela and Richard Williams have been unsuccessful in disproving Miss Harper’s recollection: the records have not been found.</p>
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional curation is needed for all of the objects in the collection. This includes not only the physical care of the objects—cleaning, protection from light and humidity, and avoidance of insect and rodent pests—but also the cataloging of the items.</li> <li>• Ongoing scholarly research and the synthesis of research is needed to understand both the local history of the Blackwell School and the greater statewide and national context in which the Blackwell School fits.</li> <li>• A Scope of Collections is needed to define the type of objects the Blackwell School Alliance should be seeking for the collection, why it does so, and ideas for finding the right items that best tell the stories of the Blackwell School.</li> <li>• A Collections Management Handbook is needed to outline how care will be provided for the collection—including pest management, climate control, cataloging, storage, and priority for display.</li> </ul>

Fundamental Resource or Value	Archives and Collections
<p>Strategy: <b>Ongoing Research and Scholarship</b></p> <p>The yellow background signifies a Tier 2 Activity: the second priorities that will be addressed by the BSA in this strategic planning cycle.</p>	<p>Develop through research a more thorough understanding of the Blackwell School’s place in history both locally and a greater contextual understanding.</p> <p><i>Partnerships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with the University of Texas at El Paso and Sul Ross State University to provide support for academic research into the history of the Blackwell School.</li> </ul> <p><i>Grant Funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humanities Texas Grants—matching grant fund for historical research.</li> <li>• National Endowment for the Humanities, National Trust for Historic Preservation—matching grant fund for historical research.</li> <li>• Foundation Grants to match state and federal funding.</li> </ul> <p><i>Staffing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The BSA will employ a staffer to coordinate historical research.</li> <li>• Grant writing will be performed by museum staff.</li> </ul> <p><i>Volunteer Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct research.</li> <li>• Catalog research and documents; populate databases.</li> </ul>
<p>Strategy: <b>Collection Planning</b></p> <p>The yellow background signifies a Tier 2 Activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete a Scope of Collections and Collections Management Handbook.</li> </ul> <p><i>Partnerships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A working group of museum and collections experts and former students and interested Marfa parties will be engaged to determine the scope of the Blackwell School Collection.</li> <li>• The same working group or a sub-set will develop the Collections Management Handbook.</li> </ul> <p><i>Grant Funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humanities Texas Grants—matching grant fund for collections planning.</li> <li>• National Endowment for the Humanities, National Trust for Historic Preservation—matching grant fund for collections planning.</li> <li>• Foundation Grants to match state and federal funding.</li> </ul> <p><i>Staffing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The BSA will employ a staffer to coordinate Collection Planning.</li> <li>• Grant writing will be performed by museum staff.</li> </ul> <p><i>Volunteer Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input and review of planning documents.</li> <li>• Catalog images, documents, and artifacts; populate databases.</li> </ul>
<p>Strategy: <b>Collections Solicitation</b></p> <p>The orange background signifies a Tier 3 Activity: the final priorities that will be addressed by the BSA in this strategic planning cycle.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on the Scope of Collections, conduct an campaign to solicit items deemed necessary to complete the Collection.</li> </ul> <p><i>Grant Funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grants will be necessary only if the BSA discovers items suitable for the collection that are only available for purchase or require significant freight charges.</li> </ul> <p><i>Staffing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The BSA will employ a staffer to coordinate collection solicitation.</li> <li>• Grant writing will be performed by museum staff.</li> </ul>

Fundamental Resource or Value		Mosaic of Stories
	<p><b>Stories associated with the Blackwell School illustrate its complex experiences and history, as well as its far-reaching impacts and involvements in shaping the Marfa community today.</b></p>	
Description	<p><i>Without necessarily understanding their underlying social situation, Blackwell school alumni vividly remember helping their mothers and other members of the Blackwell Parent Teacher Association sell tamales at fundraisers to help buy textbooks. *** In a well-intentioned but ill-conceived attempt to culturally assimilate her students, a 7th grade teacher carried out the State's mandate to allow only English on campus. Students still remember the teacher asking them to write words in Spanish on slips of paper. The slips were put into a box made to resemble a coffin, and the box was buried during a mock funeral ceremony. *** Rather than embracing both Hispanic and Anglo cultures, Mexican children were asked to forego their familiar customs, including their Spanish language. Children who continued to speak in their native tongue were punished and often paddled.</i></p> <p>These are a few examples of the memories of Blackwell students. Today an Oral History program is taking shape with the goal of interviewing former students of Blackwell and others associated with the school.</p>	
Status	<p>About 30 interviews have been conducted and are part of the Blackwell School Oral History Archive as of July 2016. Blackwell School Alliance is now entering into a partnership with Dr. Yolanda Leyva and colleagues at the University of Texas at El Paso to expand our oral history program and include the interviews in UTEP's Borderland Public History Archive and digital database.</p>	
Goals	<p>The goals of the Oral History Archive are to preserve history through stories, validate experiences of those involved, and build community. The archive hopes to engage the various Blackwell communities to build an archive of hundreds of interviews, reflecting multiple perspectives. Our partnership with UTEP seeks to record 50 new interviews in the next year, index and catalog the interviews, include the 30 interviews already existing, and make them all available on an existing UTEP oral history website. A final goal of 500 recorded interviews, over the next decade, will provide a rich, diverse, and as-complete-as-possible recorded narrative of the Blackwell School history.</p>	
<p>Strategy: <b>Oral History Interviewing and Partnership</b></p> <p><i>The green background signifies a Tier 1 Activity.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct 50 new interviews with former students, teachers, family members, and neighbors in 2017 and a total of 500 interviews by 2026.</li> <li>• Index, archive, and make all interviews available on a public website.</li> <li>• Use oral histories in development of all outreach material—exhibits, curriculum, articles.</li> </ul> <p><i>Partnerships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2016 the Blackwell School Alliance entered into a partnership with the University of Texas at El Paso, under the guidance of Dr. Yolanda Leyva. This partnership serves both to expand our capacity for interviewing and provides an on-line repository to make those interviews available to the public.</li> </ul> <p><i>Grant Funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humanities Texas has awarded the Blackwell School Alliance a grant of \$1500 for 2017, for supplies and expenses associated with the oral history program. The Blackwell School Alliance will contribute a portion of this grant to UTEP to pay for the expenses associated with student interviews (equipment and travel) and web-hosting of the collection.</li> <li>• The Dougherty Foundation has awarded the Blackwell School Alliance a grant for 2017, part of which will be used for expenses associated with the oral history program.</li> <li>• Foundation Grants will be needed for supplies and ongoing expenses.</li> </ul> <p><i>Volunteer Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Former students are asked to volunteer to be interviewed.</li> <li>• Interviewing of former students in Marfa and indexing of interviews.</li> <li>• Ongoing engagement of former students, friends, and family.</li> </ul>	

Fundamental Resource or Value	Community Collaboration
	<p><b>The Blackwell School engages the Marfa community as a cultural center and museum to preserve the remaining archives of, and educate future generations about, a significant period of Texas history.</b></p>
Description	<p>In addition to preserving the historic Blackwell School building, the founding documents of the Blackwell School Alliance called on its members to operate the building “as a cultural center and museum to preserve the remaining archives of, and educate future generations regarding, a significant period of Texas history; and to serve the Marfa, Texas, community culturally and educationally.”</p> <p>Community collaboration can take different forms. There is a great interest in the community of Marfa to see the Blackwell School become a fully functional museum that draws tourists and educates about Marfa’s Hispanic history in a way that that is unique from any of Marfa’s other cultural institutions.</p> <p>It is also in the general interest of the Board of Directors to have the building used by the community in ways that honors its traditional function as a center of Hispanic life in Marfa. Ideas that meet this ideal include using the band room to host classes in language, art, GED prep, computer use, and more; sharing our space for traveling exhibits, film screenings, menudo cook-offs and wine tastings, and storytelling and musical events; and partnering with other community organization for seasonal and religious celebrations and commemorations.</p>
Status	<p>Currently the building is open to the public for visitation on Saturdays. Hosting and partnering for events is rare and will require volunteer time and effort as well as consideration for the items on display in the museum.</p> <p>The Blackwell School currently has hundreds of photographs on display, as well as letterman sweaters, trophies, news clippings, and written memories from teachers and students. Visitors greatly appreciate reading and viewing these items. The museum, however, would greatly benefit from the development of interpretive exhibits that put pieces together and tell complete stories for the visiting public.</p> <p>In addition, we have encouraged the Marfa Middle School to devote time to community history lessons about the Blackwell School. We believe, though, that until we can provide curriculum-based lesson plans that fit in with state teaching requirements, we cannot expect local teachers to include the Blackwell School in their curriculum.</p>
Goals	<p>It is through Community Collaboration that the Blackwell School transforms from a historic building and impressive collection of stories and objects into a working museum that accurately reflects the history and current needs of the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The first goal is a fully functioning and relevant museum: open seven days a week, accurately and compassionately expressing the Interpretive Themes contained in this document, and done in a way consistent with modern museum methods for interpretation and addressing multiple learning styles.</li> <li>• The second goal is to become a center of activity that reflects the history of the Blackwell School while at the same time honoring the educational and social needs of our community.</li> <li>• The third goal is to reach out to educators and provide them with materials necessary to teach about the Blackwell School. The Blackwell School Alliance must coordinate with teaching professionals and historians to develop curriculum based lesson plans that gets the Blackwell School into the lessons, and the students into the Blackwell School.</li> </ul>

Fundamental Resource or Value	Community Collaboration
<p>Strategy: <b>Fully Functioning Museum</b></p> <p>The yellow background signifies a Tier 2 Activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct comprehensive exhibit planning that includes exhibits in and around the building as well as related ongoing outreach products.</li> <li>• Fabricate and install exhibits, to coincide with restoration of the building interior.</li> <li>• Fund staffing to have the museum open to the public seven days a week.</li> </ul> <p><i>Partnerships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A professional exhibit company will be hired to plan and design the exhibit and outreach materials.</li> <li>• A working group of former students and interested Marfa parties will be convened to advise on the planning of the exhibits.</li> </ul> <p><i>Grant Funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humanities Texas Grants—matching grant fund for exhibits projects.</li> <li>• Foundation Grants to match HT funding.</li> <li>• Foundation Grants to ensure long-term staffing capability.</li> </ul> <p><i>Staffing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work that is performed by professionals as part of the exhibit planning, design, fabrication, and installation will be contracted and paid for from out of the grant funds received.</li> <li>• Museum staffing will be paid by ongoing foundation grants.</li> </ul> <p><i>Volunteer Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input and review of exhibit text and design.</li> <li>• Grant writing.</li> <li>• Additional staffing.</li> </ul>
<p>Strategy: <b>Center of Community Activity</b></p> <p>The yellow background signifies a Tier 2 Activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop written guidance for partnering and hosting community activities at the Blackwell School.</li> <li>• Actively engage various facets of the community through activities and partnerships.</li> </ul> <p><i>Partnerships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marfa ISD, city and county governments, non-profits, and community organizations will be approached to work with the BSA to learn from the community what kinds of events and activities would best meet the needs of the community while honoring the themes of the Blackwell School.</li> </ul> <p><i>Grant Funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foundation Grants to ensure long-term staffing capability.</li> </ul> <p><i>Staffing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The BSA will employ a staffer to coordinate community outreach and partnerships.</li> <li>• Grant writing will be performed by museum staff.</li> </ul>
<p>Strategy: <b>Curriculum-Based Lesson Plans</b></p> <p>The orange background signifies a Tier 3 Activity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a package of curriculum-based lesson plans that teach about the Blackwell School and its historic context as well as providing a framework for field trips</li> </ul> <p><i>Partnerships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The BSA will fund a partnership with a university teaching program as well as local teachers to develop lesson plans.</li> </ul> <p><i>Grant Funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Humanities Texas Grants—matching grant fund for educational programs.</li> <li>• National Endowment for the Humanities and National Trust for Historic Preservation—matching grant fund for educational programs.</li> <li>• Foundation Grants to match state and federal funding and to ensure long-term staffing capability.</li> </ul> <p><i>Staffing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants in the partnership will be paid using grant funds.</li> <li>• The BSA will employ a staffer to oversee curriculum development.</li> <li>• Grant writing will be performed by museum staff.</li> </ul>

Fundamental Resource or Value		Hispanic Culture and History of Marfa
	<p><b>Since its founding in 1883, the city of Marfa has had a majority population of people of Hispanic origin—namely Mexican—whose influences are seen today in our social and religious organizations, business and government institutions, and shared experiences of language, food, and music.</b></p>	
Description	<p>Marfa is sixty miles north of the Mexican border and the active border crossing between Presidio, Texas and Ojinaga, Chihuahua. A regional office of the Border Patrol exists in Marfa. For these reasons, residents of Marfa and the local area deeply feel the proximity to the neighboring country to the south.</p> <p>An astute visitor to Marfa can experience the local Hispanic culture by eating at one of the Mexican food restaurants or by enjoying a local band playing <i>conjuntos</i> and <i>norteños</i>. Because of the growing art scene in Marfa, though, it can be all too easy to overlook the unique and thriving Hispanic community in the city. Marfa receives much media coverage: in 2016 <i>The New York Times</i> identified Marfa as one of the top places to visit that year; <i>60 Minutes</i> aired a feature story on the city; and numerous magazines have given visitors tips on what not to miss in ‘quirky’ Marfa. However, this media coverage focuses on the art and the landscape without imparting an understanding of the cultural wealth that resides in the varied history, as well as the modern expressions, of the irreplaceable border culture of Marfa’s Mexican America population.</p> <p>A local historian noted a number of topics that might scratch the surface of the significant history of the ethnic Mexican community in Marfa—pioneer ranching families that populated the area in the late 1800s; refugees fleeing Mexico during the Mexican Revolution who settled in Marfa; entrepreneurs and business ventures in the 1920s and 1930s; social groups and religious fraternities; and the vast contributions of local Hispanic men and women to the military services (Taylor, 2016b). These stories are tied to the Blackwell School because of the school’s role as a central feature of the Mexican American community in Marfa for over 70 years.</p>	
Status	<p>The published history of Marfa by Cecilia Thompson and Louise O’Connor touches on many of the aspects listed above and was the source that Mr. Taylor used for his sampling of topics. The Marfa and Presidio County Museum offers glimpses of the history of Mexican Americans in Marfa. There is not in Marfa, however, a facility that currently serves as a repository of this history, nor a center of Mexican American culture.</p>	
Goals	<p>The Blackwell School Museum should have a sufficiently expansive vision to incorporate the larger theme of Hispanic Culture and History into exhibits, outreach, collections, oral history, and educational materials. While the primary focus will always be on the school itself, the school is deeply entwined with the Mexican American community and should take responsibility for telling the larger story of the community experience.</p>	
<p>Strategy: <b>Represent Hispanic Culture and History</b></p> <p><i>The yellow background signifies a Tier 2 Activity.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop through research a more thorough understanding of the history of Mexican Americans in Marfa and Presidio County.</li> <li>• Engage scholars and the Marfa community in dialogue about Hispanic culture today.</li> <li>• Integrate research and dialogue into exhibits, outreach, activities, and more.</li> </ul> <p><i>Partnerships</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with the University of Texas at El Paso and Sul Ross State University to provide support for academic research into the Hispanic history of Marfa.</li> </ul> <p><i>Grant Funding</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foundation Grants to foster partnerships and research.</li> </ul> <p><i>Staffing</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The BSA will employ a staffer to coordinate research and engagement.</li> <li>• Grant writing will be performed by museum staff.</li> </ul> <p><i>Volunteer Opportunities</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct research.</li> <li>• Catalog research and documents; populate databases.</li> </ul>	

## Interpretive Themes

1. School segregation was practiced in Marfa through the existence and use of the Blackwell School which served Mexican American students from 1889 to 1965.

2. The story of the Blackwell School is not a single story but a mosaic of the individual experiences of students, teachers, families, and neighbors.

3. The preservation of the Blackwell School represents the confluence of commemorating history and embracing a better future.

4. Mexican Americans have a long, rich, and varied history in Marfa and the surrounding area.

5. Hispanic culture is an integral part of Marfa today.

Interpretive themes are those ideas and concepts that are critical for achieving visitor understanding and appreciation of the significance of the Blackwell School. Themes do not include every story that may be told, but they do provide the foundation from which exhibits and media can be developed. Interpretive themes describe how the story of the Blackwell School will be told.

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