

Lincoln University Alumni Group Seeks to Bring Jobs and Tourism to Chester County!

Source: Lincoln University Heritage Initiative

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November 25, 2013, Lincoln University, PA. A Lincoln University alumni group seeks immediate public support for the Lincoln University Historic District on its Southern Chester County campus that will bring jobs and tourism to the region.

The Lincoln University Heritage Initiative (LUHI) has launched a petition to urge the Board of Trustees to consider a proposal for a historic district on the 160 year old campus in Chester County, PA. The petition urges the University to preserve rather than demolish historic buildings that have great architectural, historical and cultural significance not only on the campus but in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the United States. Lincoln University is the nation's first historically Black college and university (HBCU) founded in 1854.

The Lincoln University Heritage Initiative (LUHI), a non-profit organization, was formed by concerned alumni in May 2013, after Dr. Robert Jennings, President of the University, announced plans at the Annual Meeting of the National Alumni Association of Lincoln University to demolish Azikiwe-Nkrumah Hall, the oldest building on the campus, to make way for a new welcome center.

On May 31, 2013, a Petition to Save Azikiwe-Nkrumah Hall, signed by over 750 alumni and friends of Lincoln University was presented to Dr. Jennings with a request that he abandon the plan to demolish the Hall and relocate the planned Welcome Center elsewhere on the 422 acre campus. Dr. Jennings responded in an "Open Letter to Alumni regarding Azikiwe-Nkrumah Hall," posted on the University website, in essence, that Azikiwe-Nkrumah Hall was not a historic building and the state legislature had approved its demolition and replacement four years ago due to its poor condition.

Azikiwe-Nkrumah Hall, built during the Civil War, has been in continuous use since 1865, first as a residence for professors and later as the African Center, the first institution of its kind in the United States to bring political refugees from South African apartheid countries to the United States for college-level education. The Hall, presently used as a Security Office, was named for two of Lincoln University's distinguished alumni, Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe, B.A, 1930, the first president of Nigeria and Dr. Kwame Nkrumah, B.A, 1939, B.S.T., 1942, the first president of Ghana.

In June, 2013, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission confirmed that 15 buildings on the campus, including Azikiwe-Nkrumah Hall, were historic and determined eligible in 1985 for the National Register of Historic Places as a Lincoln University Historic District and that Azikiwe-Nkrumah Hall may be individually eligible for the National Register upon further review. The University has not applied for the designation in the ensuing 25 years.

The LUHI alumni group, who are skilled architects, engineers, urban planners, grant-writers, scientists, historians, media professionals, fundraisers and educational and public administrators, have made numerous requests, without success, to Dr. Jennings and the Board of Trustees to 1) meet with LUHI; 2) to assist in obtaining national recognition of 15 historic buildings on the National Register of Historic Places; and 3) to assist in developing a Lincoln University Historic District that will bring economic benefit to the University and the region. LUHI's preliminary research indicates a substantial economic benefit to the University and the surrounding region from heritage tourism, currently a \$1 billion a year industry in Pennsylvania.

LUHI has learned that a soon to be released "Campus Master Plan," dated October 2013, prepared by

architects and engineers hired by the University, expressly calls for the demolition of Houston Hall, Cresson Hall and Bond House, three additional historic buildings on the campus that are eligible for the National Register.

Support for the proposed Lincoln University Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places is on record from the Congress of the United States, the PA House of Representatives, the Majority Leader of the Pennsylvania Senate, the PA Department of Education, the Lower Oxford Township Historical Commission, the Friends of Lincoln Village and the Alumni Association of Lincoln University.

The public is asked to immediately help tell the Board of Trustees of Lincoln University to consider the LUHI proposal for the Lincoln University Historic District by signing the online petition at <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/lincolnuniversityhistoricdistrict/> or sending an email to Ms. Kimberly Lloyd, Chairlady of the Board of Trustees at thekalgroupllc@gmail.com.

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