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“44 Years to the 44th President – Connecting Our Past with America’s Historic Future.”

	<p>School of Journalism & Mass Communications wants to send SJSU diverse students to the Inauguration of Barack Obama</p> <p>Group to connect with America’s civil rights movement in tour of Southern historic landmarks.</p>	
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(San Jose, CA) - One of the west coast’s most respected schools for journalism education has begun fundraising to send a group of selected students to history in the making on January 20, 2009 in Washington D.C. “Before they get there, we want our Bay Area ethnic and cultural students to explore, learn, connect and report back to their communities the connection we share with the civil rights movement which made the election of the first African-American as president possible,” says [Dr. Michael Cheers](#), who conceived this cross-country learning experience for San Jose State University journalism, advertising and public relations students. “Now we are asking local individuals and businesses to help us raise the funds needed to pull off this once in a lifetime opportunity to connect California’s diverse communities with America’s historic past.”

Cheers, an award-winning, internationally known photojournalist and National Geographic Fellow is the Coordinator of the SJSU Photojournalism degree program. He and his students were inspired by a poignant online multimedia election night presentation featuring the life and the historic impact of the Obama election for the 95-year-old aunt of SJSU colleague and former CNN Correspondent, [Professor Bob Rucker](#). The two African-American journalists talked with their students about covering the inauguration in a unique way. “They were excited about being a part of history and finding their cultural connection to the civil rights movement,” Rucker says. “Some also saw the connection to the ongoing struggle of same-sex couples to have the right to marry as the modern day struggle for equal protections and civil rights.”

The two veteran educators believe by taking a group of diverse students to Washington DC in January, by way of a van driving tour through Memphis, Tennessee (home of the national Civil Rights Museum), Selma, Alabama and Atlanta, Georgia (places Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. made famous with his voting rights marches in the 1960s), Cheers and Rucker believe the SJSU students will get a better understanding and an invaluable appreciation of the blood, sweat and tears 44 years ago which set America on the course to this year's "Change" election in 2008.

More than 600 Journalism School students, representing nearly all Bay Area ethnic and cultural communities, can apply for selection by Cheers and Rucker to go on the cross-country trip. Between six to ten students will be chosen. "Each applicant must identify their understanding of civil rights history, and demonstrate their skill at using laptop and new technology software to write multiple news stories and shoot, edit and post photos and video online as part of a daily reporting assignment while on the trip," says Rucker. Cheers adds "this will be a working trip, an 'education on wheels' designed to produce work which can be shared with the Bay Area community back home and people around the world."

To realize this goal, however, Cheers and Rucker must raise a minimum \$25,000 to cover the costs of student airline flights to Memphis where they plan to start their van tour through the South. They will also need overnight motel/hotel accommodations for ten days on the road, and insurance must also be secured. Students will get academic credit for their effort, but they must pay that cost along with food and daily expenses. "We are hoping local Silicon Valley high tech companies and media outlets will help underwrite this effort and sponsor this historic caravan," Rucker says. "It's a golden opportunity for local businesses to showcase some of their new technology and connect with Bay Area cultural communities in a personal and powerful way like the San Jose Mercury News slideshow and audio presentation about my 95-year-old aunt and mother." [LIVING TO SEE IT](#) was produced by photojournalist Pauline Lubens at Rucker's San Jose home on election night.

Cheers and Rucker are asking local community leaders to help them raise the funds and secure donations of new technology before SJSU goes on Thanksgiving break in two weeks. SJSU student applications for the Inauguration trip will be taken beginning on campus Monday, November 17th in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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Messages will also be taken at the Journalism School office, 408-924-3240 or 3242.

SJ Mercury News feature LIVING TO SEE IT online at: <http://www.mercurynewsphoto.com/blog/2008/11/05/savoring-obamas-victory>