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Contributions pouring in for black museum

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One thousand local black men and now, 1,000 local black women, are among the latest contributors to an ambitious fund-raising plan to turn a dilapidated **school** building into a **museum** devoted to African-American history.

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The men have pledged \$100 each — a goal the women have vowed to meet, said James Kelly, president of the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, which is overseeing the **museum** project.

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A decades-long dream to transform the former **Colman School** into the **museum** is reaching a critical deadline. The Urban League has a purchase agreement to buy the building for \$1.2 million by January 2003 from the Seattle **School** District.

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The Urban League has \$200,000 in earnest money and about another \$200,000 in cash toward the purchase, Kelly said. It announced earlier this week that it has received a \$250,000 matching grant from the Paul Allen Foundation. It also has secured \$5,000 each from First AME Church and The Links, a national African-American organization that has a local chapter.

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On Tuesday afternoon, hundreds of supporters gathered at the **school** building near Interstate 90 in Rainier Valley to bless the site and applaud their determination to see the **museum** come to fruition.

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An even larger goal looms: The **museum** is being proposed as the cultural landmark of a \$17 million Urban League Village that would include housing and office space.

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Controversy marred the revitalization project in its earliest stages.

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Omari Tahir-Garrett, convicted earlier this year of assaulting then-Seattle Mayor Paul Schell, and others began an eight-year occupation of the building in 1985 to gain support for creation of a black-history **museum**, but some of them objected to including housing or commercial enterprises.

Kelly, however, said the public's interest in the **museum** is growing. For example, in July, the Urban League secured a \$750,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation toward the Village project.

"That's a vote of confidence," Kelly said.

"You can't ask for a better endorsement than that."

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INFORMATION

Museum contributions

Contributions can be made to the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, 105 14th Ave., Seattle, WA 98122. For more information, call the Urban League at 206-461-3792, Ext. 3040.

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