Editor's note: The best of us must be remembered everyday, but Black History Month gives us a chance to remember those that encouraged us all to greatness. The Call & Post takes a look at a Black business that has emerged over the years.

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With high profile projects under their belt, multiple design awards and a changing of the guard,

it's no wonder that Whitley/Whitley Architects is looking forward to another 50 years in business. After almost a half-century of achievements, Whitley/Whitley Architects continues to build on its reputation for design excellence, with cousins Scott and Kent Whitley leading the way for one of Cleveland's oldest minority architectural firms. Founded in 1963, by brothers James and William, the firm was a culmination of a dream for the two architects.

Since its inception, their brand of high quality architectural work has gained the firm national recognition for excellence in design. The Whitley's are one of only a handful of architects in Ohio to have won the prestigious "Progressive Design Award". According to Scott, this award is considered the "Oscar" of the profession. Their company has been seen as a pioneering black firm in the predominately white field of architecture. Only about 1.5% of architectural firms in the United States are owned by African Americans. Whitley/Whitley Architects provides the full range of architectural design and planning services. The firm has completed projects in Cleveland, Ohio, Washington, D.C., St. Louis, Missouri, Gary, Indiana, Los Angles, California, Chicago, Illinois and Buffalo, N.Y. Some of the projects they can boast about include The Wolestein Center at Cleveland State University, the Rapid Stations at Tower City, Cleveland Clinic's Guest House Facility, Kent State University's Fashion Museum, Cuyahoga County Community College's Learning Center and all of the elementary schools, the middle school and high school in East Cleveland's school district.

It appears Scott and Kent followed the exact footsteps as their fathers William and James. Just as their fathers grew up together, went to school together, played high school football together, studied architecture in college together and eventually practiced architecture together, so did Scott and Kent. Scott joined Whitley/Whitley immediately after graduating from Howard University. He says, "I enjoyed the luxury of getting a head start in the profession. My father and uncle are great mentors. I was always able to be a part of the behind closed door meetings that I probably shouldn't have been in. I would never have been able to get that kind of experience working elsewhere."

Kent worked for an architectural firm in Washington D.C. for two years after graduating from Howard University before he returned to Cleveland. When asked why he returned to work for his father he stated, "I was inspired by the numerous national design awards they received, and by the respect they garnered in the industry. Working in Washington, D.C. was an enlightening experience, but ultimately I knew I'd have a greater opportunity to succeed at the family firm." Kent laughs as he explains, "As kids, there was no way of escaping the influence of architecture and being creative. Scott and I were building shelters and spaceships out of card board boxes from the time we were 5 or 6 years old. For as long I can remember, we always worked in our father's office".

It is apparent that Scott and Kent have been inspired by their talented fathers. The two marvel over the many stories of the firm's humble beginning during the 1960's. "We've heard them all," quips Kent, "but we never get tired of hearing them and they never get tired of telling them". By all accounts, the election of Carl B. Stokes as Cleveland's and the country's first black mayor helped catapult their business from designing small projects to designing much more significant projects in scope and fees. "It was a different time; and a different political atmosphere. As our community's power rose, so did our opportunities," says James... "Our first project was The Advent Lutheran Church at the corner of East 154th Street and Harvard Avenue. Once Stokes took office, we were able to participate in work involving municipal, institutional and transportation facilities. It was an exciting era to be apart of," William recalls.

Today, Scott understands that the landscape is changing in architecture and business in general. He states, "Business and technology are changing at the speed of light. The world is a much smaller place and although there is a great deal of competition, there are also opportunities locally, nationally and globally. We want to take Whitley/Whitley to the next level of creating exciting, and compelling architecture by keeping up with cutting edge technologies, incorporating social networking in to our business practices and expanding our office to other cities and possibly other countries." The two junior Whitley's acknowledge the heavy weight of maintaining their parent's legacy. How confident are they about lasting another fifty years in business? Kent responds, "We aren't worried, we have been trained by the best and we are blessed to be able to continue to work and collaborate daily with our fathers". William agrees, "With Scott's broad experience and passion for design and Kent's keen social and political skills for new business, the boys shouldn't have any problems getting to the next 50 years."