



GREAT MIGRATIONS: PAST AND PRESENT

Exhibit at the Heritage Society at Sam Houston Park

At the end of the 2017 spring semester, Honors College American History students and Houston History students created artistic, literary, film, computer, and music projects focused on the largely unrecognized Great Migration and patterns of migration and immigration to Houston, which will be displayed at **the Heritage Society at Sam Houston Park July 5 to August 19, 2017.**

Dr. Irene Guenther's modern U.S. History classes examined in-depth the Great Migration (1917-1970), both as it occurred and its current consequences and manifestations. The Center for Public History's Dr. Debbie Harwell had Houston History students incorporate the local with the national focus from the mid-nineteenth century to the present.

These deeply researched creative projects inform us about the numerous reasons for – and the lasting legacies of – the Great Migration and the dramatic growth of Houston's ethnic communities. Through their study, students come to understand the roots of movements such as Black Lives Matter and organizations like the Equal Justice Initiative, which remind us that while work still needs to be done, everyone benefits from the rewards that inclusiveness offers. Houston's multi-ethnic, multi-racial society serves as a touchstone of what is possible.

The Great Migration of more than six million African Americans out of the rural South to other regions of the United States, including 44,000 who came to Houston, is one of the most important, courageous, and consequential movements in our nation's history. In search of true freedom, equality, and opportunity, those brave migrants – fleeing systemic racism, abuse, oppression, enforced poverty, and terror – transformed American culture, society, demographics, and politics in a multitude of ways. As they arrived in their destination cities – Houston, Chicago, Baltimore, New York City, Detroit, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Oakland, St. Louis, and Omaha, among others - African American migrants found themselves facing different forms of oppression, segregation, and violence, a caste system “by fact” rather than “by law.” Nonetheless, as they migrated, they brought with them their music, food, and faith, their talents, and their belief that they, too, deserved the full rights and equality of citizenship delineated in the Constitution.

Similarly the influx of migrants and immigrants lured by the possibility of a better life have made Houston the most demographically and culturally diverse city in the United States. The study of African American, Mexican American, and Asian American immigration patterns highlight the factors that pushed them to leave their homes, such as discrimination, violence, poverty, and political unrest, alongside the factors that pulled them to Houston, especially jobs, educational opportunity, and increased freedom. As with the Great Migration nationally, these individuals who came from the rural South and a host of other countries have made their mark on Houston's social, cultural, economic, political, and neighborhood histories, the city's explosive growth, as well as attitudes about racial and ethnic inclusiveness.

The exhibit Great Migrations Past and Present will be at The Heritage Society at Sam Houston Park, 1100 Bagby, Houston 77002. Hours are 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Tuesday to Saturday, and Wednesday 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. Limited free parking is available.

For a map visit, <http://www.heritagesociety.org/campu-map/>.

For more information on the exhibit, please visit The Heritage Society website, <http://www.heritagesociety.org/exhibits/> or The UH Honors College website, <http://www.uh.edu/honors/about/news-events/greatmigration2017>

