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Morning History Talk: Educating...or not, the Negro in Texas

With emancipation, four million formerly enslaved black people ventured out to the unknown world of freedom with gaining an education one of their primary pursuits. As one historian noted, "Their interest in education was as though an entire race was trying to go to school." However, white Southerners stood firmly against that notion as one Texan affirmed, "I'd rather put a bullet in a Negro than see him educated." Despite that kind of sentiment, as Freedom Colonies organized the inhabitants built schools as a priority of their communities foundations. This session gives an overview of how those schools came to be, the people and organizations responsible, and the schools' legacies.



Melanye Price, Ph.D.
*Endowed Professor of
Political Science
Prairie View A&M
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Morning History Talk: African American Studies at Prairie View: Towards a Culture of Scholarship, Preservation and Affirmation

Dr. Melanye Price will discuss the nascent plans to create an African American Studies Program at Prairie View A&M University, including the curricular and programmatic efforts. Dr. Price will discuss a series of imagined possibilities for the University's role in preserving African American cultural and material history, producing scholarship publications highlighting its own archival collections, and efforts to engage the entire campus in these efforts as a way of educating students of their own historical legacy and their role as the future guardians of this cultural heritage.



Rebekah Dobrasko
*Historic Preservation
Specialist
Texas Dept. of
Transportation*

Afternoon Workshop: From Rosenwald to Equalization: African American Public Schools in Texas

Dobrasko will highlight one of the most important institutions to freedom communities across the South and in Texas: the community public school. While Texas neglected funding to its segregated African American schools, the Julius Rosenwald Foundation stepped in to build new school buildings in the early twentieth century. These buildings were often the first purpose-built schools in a freedom colony, and served their communities for decades. It was not until the late 1940s and early 1950s that school districts, fearful that they would lose court cases because their public schools were not "separate but equal," began considering upgrading black public schools. These segregated public schools are quickly disappearing from Texas' landscape, but communities and alumni are working to preserve those that are left. With case studies based in Bastrop County, Galveston, and Austin, this presentation will highlight the history, architecture, and place of Texas' African American public schools.



Afternoon Workshop: A Curatorial Journey - Seen & Unseen: A Sunday Afternoon in Clarksville

Clarksville, was established in the early 1870's by freedman Charles (Griffin) Clark, and was one of the first freedom communities west of the Mississippi. As Austin Texas expanded west, the City implemented a plan to pressure the residents of Clarksville and other freedom communities to relocate to a designated "Negro District" on the east side of town. To ensure the plans success, Clarksville residents were denied public services such as street lights, running water, paved roads, and flood control measures provided to surrounding neighborhoods until the mid-1970's. In 1971, despite activism lead by key members of the community, the construction of the Mopac Expressway destroyed almost one third of the homes. Although, some were able to find new homes in what remained of Clarksville, many others relocated outside of the community. The impact of the on-going displacement of historically Black communities locally, nationally, and globally is profound and timeless.



Stephanie Lang
*Center for Community
Engagement
University of Texas,
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Featuring the works of photographers Hakeem Adewumi and Celeste Henery, this exhibition creates a provocative and often haunting narrative through photographs steeped in faith, loss, memory, and home. The viewer is encouraged to unpack images of Clarksville that directly speak to the beauty and resilience of this small close-knit community, and tireless efforts to resist the continuous attempts to erase their legacy.

Afternoon Workshop: The Texas Freedom Colonies Project: Organizing & Educating through Action Research

Dr. Roberts will discuss the Texas Freedom Colonies Atlas, a statewide crowdsourcing, heritage conservation, and research database dedicated to making visible previously unmapped Black settlements and producing knowledge that supports the work of the African American preservation movement. The Atlas is really a portal, which contains a map, long-form survey, and storytelling page through which visitors may add text, audio, or images to existing place profiles, along with new place dots to the map. The workshop will not only explain how the Atlas works but also describe ways the website influences contemporary preservation practice, challenges mainstream preservation groups, is used in the classroom, and builds capacity among grassroots preservationists. Dr. Roberts will teach participants to use the Atlas and will give a report on collaborative research with black settlements, museums, public agencies, and national black settlement mapping efforts. Participants will be invited to become Project partners and shape the organization's agenda.



Andrea Roberts, Ph.D.
*Assistant Professor,
Urban Planning
Associate Director,
Center for Housing &
Urban Development
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