

Preserving Old Central

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Introduction:

The project's prevailing research question asks how Galveston's African American citizens utilized local institutions to refute Jim Crow segregation's constraints on their daily lived experiences. In order to answer this question, "Preserving Old Central" has four objectives:

1. To discover how the local institutions facilitated social networks that resisted segregation's impact on Galveston's African American citizens.
2. To analyze these networks using the artifacts and ephemera stored at local institutions to discover how they mirror or diverge from the experiences of other African American communities around the state and the nation.
3. To document the networks' functions and practices.
4. To disseminate our analysis and documentation of the social networks' functions.

To that end, we propose using Literary and Cultural studies methods to analyze and historically contextualize selected memorabilia and ephemera in Old Central Cultural Center's collection. The project situates the selected objects within local, state and national socio-historical contexts to demonstrate Central High School's pivotal role in both shaping Galveston's cultural geography and providing social and cultural resources for Galveston's African American community. Bolstered by the analysis and utilizing museum studies methods, the PIs would design and curate an exhibit drawn from Old Central Cultural Center's (OCCC) memorabilia and ephemera collection. This project supports the TAMUG Department of Liberal Studies' recently established Memorandum of Understanding with OCCC, a 501C3 cultural organization.

TCRF Fund Expenditures and Impact:

To support both documenting the social networks that resisted racial segregation's multiple impacts and disseminating the project's analysis and documentation of that work, the TCRF funds supported the purchase of a range of materials to establish a mobile traveling exhibit entitled "Living Textbooks: African American Educators at Texas' First African American High School." These purchases included a set of five nesting exhibit pedestals with mobile crates, three jewel tabletop cases, five custom pedestal covers, four book cover displays, and other archival materials including exhibit description cards to begin constructing the exhibit. The display materials for the exhibit were delivered in late September 2019. Through OCCC's partnership with Sherwin-Williams, exhibit pedestals will be painted in late September or early October 2019. Once painting is completed, the five display cases will be assembled. The artifacts are drawn from the period between 1941 and 1968 and the display cases will be thematically focused on the following Extracurricular Engagement, Curricular Innovations, and Community Networks. Work on constructing the exhibit is ongoing and the anticipated date of completion for the traveling exhibit is December 2019.

During July 2019, the exhibit narrative was completed and the TCRF funding enabled the printing of 2,000 exhibit brochures that will travel with the completed exhibit. The brochure is an essential element of the exhibit. It will help audiences to interpret the artifacts such as school curricula, exams and meeting minutes that they encounter in the exhibit. It also provides social, political and economic contexts for both Central High School's significance and explains to audiences how the artifacts signify within that range of contexts.