



HART Program
Houston Action Research Team
Engaged Research Opportunity
Spring 2023

Black Sub_Texts: Archiving Black Life

The [African American Library at the Gregory School](#) is a branch of the Houston Public Library (HPL) in the Fourth Ward, Houston. Its holdings consist of curated collections that represent the African American experience in Houston and Texas. These archives include the personal papers of individuals and families, the records of organizations and businesses, oral histories, photographs and more. Among those are materials from and about Houston Freedmen's Town settlement, an historic African American community which was founded in 1865 by formerly enslaved people.

This multi-year project focuses on recovering and providing a comprehensive and robust history of Houston's Freedmen's Town settlement, located in the Fourth Ward, through the development of a temporal digital map. Students will identify and catalogue archival materials for integration into an interactive map that traces the evolution of the Freedmen's community since its inception in 1865. Part of this work includes building a digital archive to support the map project and generating public histories based on found primary materials. Student data collection will likely include but not be limited to newspaper clipping, photographs, correspondence, deeds, maps, ephemera, and other primary historical documents, that will be affixed to specific locations on a digital map of Freedman's Town. A temporal map of this settlement will further broaden public awareness of, and access to, the collections and materials available for studying black life in Houston housed in this library.

This project will support the ongoing research and work of the Gregory School around their Freedman's Town/Fourth Ward collections (i.e. digitizing and making accessible archival resources). It will also serve as a subcomponent of the *Black Life in Houston: An Atlas of Racial Inequity, Displacement, and Integration (Black Atlas)*, a temporal map that comprises multiple research projects led by 11 Rice University faculty in the School of Humanities, Social Sciences and Engineering. Through their work, participating students will learn how to see and use history (literary, social, cultural, political) as a vehicle for promoting equitable and just futures.

During the Spring semester of 2023, this Houston Action Research Team will:

- Regularly visit the Gregory School and other related area repositories to identify and collect primary research materials on Houston's Freedmen's Town in relation to the following prescribed research thrusts:
 - race, medicine and public health; labor, business, and economic development; and social and cultural life(To engage these research thrusts, our work will largely center around the following sites and subjects: Houston Union Hospital, Houston Negro Hospital, Houston Negro Hospital Nursing School, Pilgrim Temple Building; jazz, blues, and gospel musicians; lounges, theaters, and cinemas; clubs and fraternal organizations)
- Engage with community stakeholders in Freedmen's Town

- Regularly share and discuss data collected during weekly team meetings
- Gain experience using digital platforms for archiving and curating public histories
- Employ digital platforms (AirTable) and software (Zotero) to build a database/archive that catalogues and stores collected archival materials for possible integration into the digital map
- Develop and refine complex research questions and translate findings into accessible public histories
- Research, analyze, and synthesize collected primary materials for potential integration into digital map
- Generate publicly accessible captions to accompany found primary materials. These captions will be integrated into the digital map and used to both identify and historically contextualize primary documents.
- Create an oral presentation with accompanying PowerPoint slides for the Gregory School, that features primary data uncovered during the semester. Students will also submit a brief report that synthesizes their findings in relation to the research thrust that they have focused on during the semester.

This engaged research opportunity is available to Rice undergraduate students for Spring 2023. An interdisciplinary team of four students, each of whom will bring different, but equally important, skills, knowledge, and experiences, will undertake this project. Team members will each work approximately 10 hours per week on this project between January 16 through April 30 under the guidance of Professor Nicole Waligora-Davis (English) and the CCL and a graduate student team advisor, and will receive \$10/hour for their project work. Work time will be flexible, although team members must attend weekly meetings and must coordinate time to work with other team members on the project as needed. Undergraduate students from all fields of study with interests and/or skills in at least some of the following areas are encouraged to apply:

African American and American history; legal studies; urban development and design; art, music and cultural studies; archival research; digital humanities; professional writing; public presentations; teamwork; community engagement

*Students will be compensated for transportation costs through mileage reimbursement

APPLICATIONS ARE DUE Thursday, January 5th at 11:59pm
To inquire or apply contact Dr. Jessica Khalaf, jkhalaf@rice.edu
For more about Rice's HART Program, visit: <http://ccl.rice.edu/hart>