

Written by gallupsun
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Two professors from The University of New Mexico-Gallup delivered presentations on Gallup's migration history at El Morro Theatre Aug. 22 in conjunction with the *World on the Move* exhibit sponsored locally by the City of Gallup's Octavia Fellin Public Library and Rex Museum.

UNM-Gallup Professor Bruce Gjeltrema told migration tales of early Gallup history, including the settlement of 20th century European and Asian immigrants who came looking for work, and the forced removal of Diné from their homeland during the Long Walk in the 1860s.

UNM-Gallup Fine Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Division Chair Matt Mingus shared stories about Mexican nationals who were brought in as strike-breakers but were later deported, along with the myths and truths of Gallup's treatment of its Japanese residents during World War II.

"Today's Gallup is completely predicated on stories of migration – of people moving here for economic or political gain, of people moving on because of a lack of opportunity, of people being forced out of town, and of people reacting to the potential, sometimes fictitious movement of people," Mingus said.

"WORLD ON THE MOVE"

Octavia Fellin Public Library Director Tammi Moe invited Gjeltrema and Mingus to give presentations at El Morro Theatre to coincide with the traveling exhibition *World on the Move: 250,000 Years of Human Migration*, which was featured at the Rex Museum from mid-July to mid-August.

World on the Move was developed by the American Anthropological Association together with the Smithsonian's Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage and Smithsonian Exhibits. It was administered by the American Library Association's Public Programs Office.

OFPL was one of 15 libraries chosen to host the traveling exhibition.

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The UNM-Gallup presentations at El Morro, entitled *Moving To and Through Gallup: Stories of Migration*, were part of the library's local programming in conjunction with the exhibition.

"This is very exciting for me to have both Dr. Mingus and Dr. Gjeltrema here to share with us today the history of migration to and through Gallup," Moe said. "Dr. Gjeltrema is an American history specialist and Dr. Mingus is a European history specialist. Both are widely published and award-winning professors, and I just really thank them for taking the time to come out today. I'm really looking forward to hearing what we're about to hear."

Gjeltrema's presentation primarily focused on the founding of Gallup and the broader early history of the region, which had long been part of the expansive hunting grounds of the Zuni people and had been utilized by the Navajo people as part of their pastoral homeland between the four sacred mountains.

"This land is an invaded land, a land that was held by others before what we talk about being Gallup existed," Gjeltrema said.

Gjeltrema talked about the Long Walk, during which the U.S. government forcibly removed the Diné and forced them to march hundreds of miles to internment camps.

He also talked about early settlements and economic activity in the area that brought in immigrants from Europe and Asia looking for work, including Croatians, Slovenians, Hungarians, Italians and Japanese. Later, Mexicans were brought in as strike-breakers to work the mines.

He added that professionals later stepped off the railroad and made their homes in Gallup for a spell, but most did not stick it out. There were few who stayed and put down multi-generation roots, plus others who helped establish the infrastructure for the growing population.

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"The vast majority of people who darkened the doors of the town were travelers," Gjeltrema said. "If someone mentioned to these travelers the name of Gallup, New Mexico to them, they might reply like generations of people after them: 'I went through there once.'"

THE MYTH OF RESISTANCE

While Gjeltrema hinted at the coal mining strikes of the early 1910s and '20s when Mexican immigrants were brought in, Mingus delved deeper into the subject with talk of other forced relocations.

Mingus detailed how tensions between Mexican workers, union members, local business people and land owners ultimately led to the 1935 Gallup Riot, during which the sheriff and two people among the crowd were shot and killed outside the courthouse.

In the aftermath, volunteers were deputized to round up, arrest and jail more than 100 people in connection with the riot. Mingus said that during all of the chaos, 100 more Mexican nationals were also arrested and deported summarily without a court order.

Mingus also talked about the relocation facts and fiction surrounding Gallup's Japanese and Japanese-American residents in the 1940s.

Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066, leading to the forced relocation and internment of more than 120,000 people of Japanese descent.

From that history, a false narrative emerged: Gallup resisted the order and refused to turn over its Japanese residents. This claim is untrue though, Mingus said. The order never even applied to New Mexico.

While many people of Japanese descent did call Gallup home and were generally treated well,

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this was common in most places in the U.S., he added.

'THIS HISTORY DEFINES THIS TOWN'

Mingus also shared a few historical facts that contrasted the Gallup resistance myth.

He said Gallup complied with a presidential proclamation for Italian, German and Japanese residents to register at the local post office. Local law enforcement, under the supervision of the FBI, also raided the homes of Japanese residents and confiscated their guns in addition to other belongings.

Additionally, in 1942, the federal government asked New Mexican communities to accept 40,000-60,000 Nisei people. "Nisei" refers to second-generation Japanese-American citizens who were born in the U.S. Mingus said that Gallup, along with Albuquerque and Santa Fe, opposed the relocation of Japanese-Americans into their communities.

"Whether we are talking about early 20th century European immigrants who worked their way from the bottom of a mine into owning a storefront, or the Mexican nationals who were extra-judiciously deported after the 1935 Gallup riot, or the myth of Gallup's protection of its Japanese neighbors from internment, or Gallup's refusal to accept wrongly displaced American citizens into their community, this history defines this town," Mingus said.

Mingus acknowledged that in order to move into a better future, the people of Gallup must also accept all of the city's past.

"If we're interested in continuing to make Gallup a diverse and welcoming community, the best way forward is to embrace solidarity, to acknowledge that regardless of how someone got here, they're an important part of the continuous waves of migration that have made this place a wonderful and fascinating home for so many," he said. "That, I believe, is the only way to ensure that we will avoid repeating our past failings and that we will take actions today as a city that will make future Gallupians proud of us."

UNM-Gallup professors share Gallup's history of migration, forced removals, the myth of resistance

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