

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**UNCG Public History Students Bring “GTMO” to the
International Civil Rights Center and Museum**

What comes to mind when you hear “Guantánamo”? A prison? A military base? What about a place of refuge? Or your home? In the post-9/11 era, it’s hard to think of the American naval base at Guantánamo Bay (GTMO) as anything but a detention facility. However, Public History Master’s Students at UNC Greensboro have uncovered a rich set of stories about the base that they are featuring in a new exhibition, *The Guantánamo Public Memory Project*, which opens December 12, 2013 at the International Civil Rights Center and Museum in Greensboro.

Exhibit visitors will encounter rich personal stories, learn how the U.S. Naval Station at Guantánamo Bay has impacted individual lives, and explore how American foreign policy has shaped the base for more than a century. Visitors will also get to add their own voices to the GTMO debate by submitting their opinions via text messaging.

Inspired by their work with this national project, the UNCG graduate students have created a set of public programs to extend its reach. Entitled *GTMO & GSO*, these programs include a cultural event series, children’s story hours, and exhibit supplements that highlight local resonances with the GTMO story.

The “Voices from Guantánamo” cultural event series features military personnel, scholars, and people who lived at GTMO sharing first-hand accounts of life at the base. The first program, on December 12th, marks the exhibit’s opening at the museum. The panel explores base life during the Cold War, a period that, while tension-filled internationally, many base residents remember as idyllic. In addition to exploring the exhibit during the opening, visitors will also have the chance to sample (free of charge) authentic Cuban cuisine provided by Miami’s Cafe of Winston-Salem.

The second program, on January 9th, 2014, explores the hardships faced by Cuban and Haitian refugees during the 1990s. On January 31, the final program will consider the contemporary controversies surrounding detention at GTMO.

In addition to the cultural events series, elementary-aged children are invited to Children’s Story Hours that feature books about immigration and cultural difference. Finally, “flip-books” added to the national exhibit explore how the issues surrounding GTMO resonate with Greensboro’s own history. Together, these components invite visitors not only to explore the history of the naval station, but also to explore how local history has been shaped by the issues that Guantánamo raises, and how social tensions cross international boundaries.

The exhibit's arrival is the culmination of work that began a year and a half ago. Eleven universities from across the country collaborated to research and design the traveling exhibition. Guided by Dr. Benjamin Filene, Director of Public History and Associate Professor, the UNCG students delved into GTMO's history, interviewed former GTMO residents, and collaborated with an exhibit designer to create the exhibit panel on life at the base in the Cold War era.

"Starting this project, we never imagined the complexities we would uncover surrounding everyday relations between Cubans and Americans," says student Hayley Whitehead. "We hope this exhibit will inspire people to look past GTMO's gates and see the people who lived both within and outside of them." Since opening in New York City, the exhibit has sparked dialogue across the country as it has traveled to the cities of each participating school.

"When you see how GTMO's history resonates with Greensboro's, it makes you appreciate how powerful this story really is," says student Megan Coker.

If You Go :

Exhibit Opening (free) • Guantanamo Public Memory Project,

• **December 12, 2013, 6:00 p.m.**, International Civil Rights Center & Museum, 134 S. Elm St., Greensboro

(Admission to the exhibit is free during public programs. On other days, admission is included with a regular ticket purchase to the museum: \$10 adults and \$8 students with i.d.)

"Voices from Guantánamo" Cultural Events Series, admission free

- **December 12, 2013, 7:00 p.m.:** "GTMO and the Cold War," ICRCM Auditorium
- **January 9, 2013, 7:00 p.m.:** "Severed Roots: The Cuban and Haitian Refugee Crises at GTMO," ICRCM Auditorium
- **January 31, 2013, 7:00 p.m.:** "GTMO After 9/11: Detainees, Defense and 'Legal Exception,'" ICRCM Auditorium

Children's Story Hours, admission free

• **December 14, 2013, 10:00 a.m.:** International Civil Rights Center & Museum, Attendees will receive a complimentary voucher to see the GTMO exhibit at the ICRCM.

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