Probing Paramore: Race, Migration, and the Social Determinants of Health in Central Florida

Keith Augustus Burton, PhD • Jason Hines, PhD, JD

Project Statement

This project explores the legacy of slavery and its aftermath through the intersecting themes of Race, Place, Migration, and Health. We will investigate the lived migration stories of African American and Afro-Caribbean residents connected to Orlando's historic Parramore neighborhood, with particular focus on two congregations whose members experienced displacement and relocation. By combining oral history, archival research, and voluntary, ethically reviewed DNA analysis, the project seeks to understand how historical and contemporary migration patterns shape identity, belonging, community continuity, and health.

Recently emancipated American citizens founded Parramore in the late nineteenth century as Orlando's primary African American community. Like other post-Reconstruction African American communities, it has experienced repeated social trauma due to segregation, redlining, urban development, and health inequity. Tracing the migration and health trajectories of Parramore's residents can assist in assessing how structural inequities rooted in slavery's legacy continue to shape health outcomes across generations. A study of Parramore's history also enables us to situate contemporary health disparities within a specific local context, allowing the evaluation of the impact of structural and environmental factors that have shaped access to housing, education, employment, and healthcare for generations.

An exploration of immediate ancestry through genealogical and genetic data enhances the quality of the study and provides another angle from which to understand the social determinants of health. Shared family histories from African American and Afro-Caribbean participants will reveal patterns of migration and insights into cultural practices that influence current health behaviors, stress levels, and community cohesion. Exploring close and distant ancestry through genealogical narratives and genetics helps gauge the broader historical and societal forces that continue to shape contemporary health outcomes.

The emphasis on social determinants of health directly relates to the mission of AdventHealth University and its commitment to "develop leaders who will practice healthcare as a ministry." Undergraduate fellows will participate in every stage of the project, developing interdisciplinary competencies in public health, history, and community engagement. The project will culminate in a public forum and digital exhibit that highlight the intersection of migration, memory, and health in the Parramore neighborhood. The findings will inform approaches to education and healthcare that affirm human dignity and promote wholeness for historically marginalized communities.

Research Questions

1. What were the migration causes and patterns for African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans connected to Parramore?
2. How did neighborhood change—including segregation, forced relocation, and urban renewal—impact identity, belonging, and mobility?
3. How have these migration and displacement experiences influenced community health, wellness, and access to care over time?
4. To what extent do genealogical and DNA connections between African American and Afro-Caribbean families align with community narratives of kinship, resilience, and shared health experiences?

Project Description

The project integrates three strands of research:

1. **Oral Histories**. Undergraduate fellows will conduct interviews with church members to record migration memories from earliest recollections to the present day. Interview protocols will include questions about health and wellness, including stress, trauma, diet, access to care, and community support systems.
2. **Archival Research**. Students will work with church records, city archives, and historic maps to document the displacement and resettlement of congregations and families in Parramore.
3. **DNA and Genealogy**. Through voluntary participation, researchers will utilize DNA kits to explore the relatedness between African American and Afro-Caribbean families within the congregations. Findings will be contextualized with oral histories and genealogical research to highlight both biological and cultural continuities, and to open conversations about intergenerational health risks, resilience, and wellness.

Public-Facing Component: A community forum hosted at a historic church will showcase oral histories, student findings, and DNA results in a storytelling format. The discussion will focus on equity and social determinants of health, connecting migration narratives to ongoing challenges and opportunities.

Project Partners

- *Mount Olive AME Church*: The congregation was founded in 1881 and displaced from Parramore in 1977; its members hold valuable memories of migration.
- *Mount Sinai Seventh-day Adventist Church*: The congregation, formerly located in Parramore, offers perspectives from current and former members on Afro-Caribbean and African American migration.

Team Members

- *Faculty Lead*: Keith Augustus Burton, PhD (Northwestern), is the Director of the Graduate Program in Spiritual Care at AdventHealth University. Previously, he served as the Founding Director of the Center for Adventist Muslim Relations at Oakwood University and as Chair of the Master of Arts in Peace and Social Justice program at Claremont Lincoln University. He has published several books and currently researches the impact of systemic oppression on African and Afro-Diasporan communities.
- *Co-Investigator*: Jason Hines, PhD (Baylor), JD (Harvard), chairs the Diversity Committee at AdventHealth University, where he also serves as Director of the Graduate Program in Healthcare Administration. With expertise in constitutional law and ethics, his legal work encompasses both practicing law and contributing to legal research for cases taken to the Supreme Court of the United States. His scholarship focuses on promoting societal equity and empowering marginalized communities.
- *Community Partner Leads*:
    - Dr. Marcus Green is the senior pastor for the Mount Olive African Methodist Episcopal Church, a historic Parramore church founded in 1881.
    - Dr. Compton Ross is the lead pastor for the Mount Sinai Seventh-day Adventist Church in Orlando.
- *Student Fellows*: Four undergraduates, supported with stipends, trained in oral history, archival methods, and fundamental genealogical/DNA analysis.

Anticipated Outcomes and Measures

- *For Students*: Hands-on training in oral history, archival analysis, genealogy, and equity-informed research, with attention to health equity.
- *For Community*: Preservation of migration stories and stronger recognition of shared African American and Afro-Caribbean experiences in Orlando, including the impact of migration on health and wellness.
- *For Institution and Partners*: Deeper partnerships between AdventHealth University and local churches/neighborhood groups, with resources preserved for future research on health and migration.
- *For Scholarship*: A replicable model integrating oral history, archives, DNA, and health equity frameworks to study migration legacies.

Measures of Success:

- Completion of at least 20 oral histories archived and coded for migration and health themes.
- Archival database of church and city records relevant to displacement and health access.
- Voluntary DNA participation from at least 15 individuals, interpreted alongside oral histories and health-related narratives.
- Attended a public forum with over 100 attendees, receiving positive feedback.
- Integration of diversity, equity, and inclusion perspectives linking migration to health and equity.

Sustainability

This project is the first phase of a larger initiative on social determinants of health. Oral histories and genealogical findings will be preserved at a central location, ensuring ongoing access. Faculty will incorporate the findings into their courses, and students may expand the research into senior projects or graduate theses. Use of the findings ensures alignment with institutional priorities in health equity and creates a foundation for future research into how migration, displacement, and segregation continue to affect health outcomes among African American and Afro-Caribbean communities

Budget (Budget Narrative Attached)

Investigator Stipends	$3,500
Community Partner Stipends	$3,000
Undergraduate Fellows (4 @ 1,500 each)	$6,000
DNA Kits and Analysis	$1,500
Public Forum (venue, media, refreshments)	$1,000
Total:	**$15,000**

Project Timeline

- Spring 2026—**Planning**:
  - Recruit fellows, train in oral history, genealogy, and equity methods.
  - Begin archival research, establish DNA consent protocols.

- Summer 2026—**Fieldwork**:
  - Conduct oral histories from church members.
  - Collect DNA samples (voluntary).
  - Continue archival analysis.

- Fall 2026—**Engagement**:
  - Synthesize findings.
  - Host community forum, framed by the Diversity Office around migration and equity.

- Winter 2026–27—**Reporting**:
  - Submit final report.
  - Archive findings.
  - Plan the next phase on the social determinants of health.

Logic Model

Inputs	Activities	Outputs	Short-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
• CIC funds • Faculty expertise • Churches (Mt Olive AME and Mt Sinai SDA) • AHU Diversity Office • Student fellows • DNA kits	• Oral histories (migration + health) • Archival research • DNA testing with health conversations • Equity framing • Public forum	• 20 oral histories coded for migration and health • Archival database with health access themes • DNA ancestry/health linkage reports • 1 public forum • Digital record	• Student training in oral history and health equity • Community engagement in migration and health • Equity-informed narratives • Greater understanding of how migration intersects with health outcomes	• Sustained partnerships • Future projects on health/economics • Expanded DEI role in community history and health • Model for linking migration history to health equity and social determinants of health

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