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## **JACOB LAWRENCE'S FAMED *MIGRATION SERIES* TO REUNITE AT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION**

**Community Events, Online Resources, and Special Programs Planned for Fall  
to Commemorate Lawrence's Legacy and to Facilitate Migration Dialogue**

WASHINGTON—This fall, the 60-panel masterwork *The Migration Series* by renowned African American 20th-century artist Jacob Lawrence will be on display at The Phillips Collection in *People on the Move: Beauty and Struggle in Jacob Lawrence's Migration Series*. A powerful visual epic, *The Migration Series* (1940–41) documents the historic movement of millions of African Americans from the rural South to the urban North more than a century ago. Reuniting 30 panels owned by the Phillips with 30 panels on loan from the Museum of Modern Art, Lawrence's complete series will be on display beginning October 8, 2016. This exhibition builds on the museum's rich and meaningful history with the artist and his work over the course of decades in exhibitions and internationally recognized educational initiatives.

"Since the time Duncan Phillips first acquired the odd-numbered panels of Lawrence's series in 1942, *The Migration Series* has remained a cornerstone of our permanent collection and a force in our educational work with international communities," said Director Dorothy Kosinski. "While Jacob Lawrence's masterpiece was created more than 70 years ago, it continues to resound powerfully with the global plight of migrants today. I look forward to the Phillips continuing its leadership role in using *The Migration Series* to stimulate dialogue and reflection on global challenges in the 21st century."

"In panel 61 of *The Migration Series*, Lawrence leaves us with the message, 'And the migrants keep coming,'" said curator Elsa Smithgall. "During a time when record numbers of migrants are uprooting themselves in search of a better life, Lawrence's timeless tale and its universal themes of struggle and freedom continue to strike a chord not only in our American experience but also in the international experience of migration around the world."



Jacob Lawrence, *The Migration Series*, Panel no. 1: *During World War I there was a great migration north by southern African Americans, 1940–41.* Casein tempera on hardboard, 12 x 18 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1942 © The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York



Jacob Lawrence, *The Migration Series*, Panel no. 9: *They left because the boll weevil had ravaged the cotton crop*, 1940–41. Casein tempera on hardboard, 12 x 18 in. The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC, Acquired 1942 © The Jacob and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence Foundation, Seattle / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York

In addition to the reunion exhibition, there will be several special events and programs throughout the fall inspired by Lawrence’s masterwork and to commemorate the artist’s legacy. In conjunction with the exhibition, the Phillips will launch a dynamic interactive website that will engage audiences with the historic and contemporary implications of migration. Special features include never-before-published video interviews with Jacob Lawrence as well as multiple perspectives from artists and scholars across disciplines. The website invites users to add their voices to the dialogue by offering their own visions for a 61st panel in the series or creating poems using words from prominent Harlem Renaissance poets.

The Phillips will also welcome and facilitate community participation through a variety of forums—including visual art, theater, dance, music, and discussion events. Alongside the exhibition in October, plays commissioned by the Phillips and inspired by Lawrence’s *Migration Series* will be debuted and read on October 20. This will include five 10-minute plays written by five local playwrights: Norman Allen, Tarrance Chisholm, Annalisa Dias, Jacqueline Lawton, and Laura Shamas. The production team for each play includes Lawton as Artistic Director, Otis Cortez Ramsey-Zöe as Dramaturg, and Derek Goldman as Director.

To further celebrate the significance of Lawrence’s artwork, the University of Maryland (UMD), a Phillips partner, will host a special performance of Derek Bermel’s musical score *Migration Series*. The UMD School of Music concert will feature the Symphony Orchestra, Jazz Band, Chamber Singers, and Wind Orchestra on Friday, December 2.

In the coming weeks, The Phillips Collection will announce additional community events, performances, and programs planned in association with the exhibition.

### **ABOUT JACOB LAWRENCE**

Jacob Armistead Lawrence was born in Atlantic City, New Jersey, in 1917. The son of southern migrants, he moved with his mother and sister to Harlem in 1930 at the age of 13. During his participation in community art workshops there, Lawrence quickly discovered his love for art through the encouragement of such teachers as painter Charles Alston. Throughout the 1930s, Lawrence’s art was inspired by the cultural visionaries of the Harlem Renaissance. In 1938, Lawrence had his first solo exhibition at the Harlem YMCA and started working for the WPA Federal Art Project. In 1940, he received a grant from the Rosenwald Fund to create a 60-panel epic, *The Migration of the Negro* (now known as *The Migration Series*). The following year, when the series was exhibited at Edith Halpert’s Downtown Gallery, the then 23-year-old artist catapulted to national acclaim.

In the following decades, Lawrence continued to create paintings drawn from the African American experience as well as historical and contemporary themes, such as war, religion, and civil rights. He taught with Josef Albers at Black Mountain College in North Carolina in 1946 and later at the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture in Maine. He moved to Seattle in 1971, teaching at the University of

Washington until 1983. During his later years, Lawrence worked in a variety of media, including large scale murals, silkscreen prints, and book illustrations. Until his death in 2000, Lawrence honed a unique visual language of abstraction that remained steeped in the human condition.

### **HISTORY OF THE MIGRATION SERIES**

*The Migration Series* portrays the mass exodus of more than a million African Americans from the rural South to the industrial North, following the outbreak of World War I. This Great Migration, fueled by wartime labor shortages in the North and oppressive conditions in the South, resulted in the largest population shift of African Americans since the time of slavery.

Using bold forms, colors, and gestures, Lawrence distilled the migration experience into a powerful expression of the human condition. From lynching in the South to the bombing of African American homes in the North, Lawrence’s panels delve deeply into the struggles of people in search of greater economic, social, and political freedom.

Lawrence approached the panels methodically as part of a series. He wrote captions, made preparatory drawings, and primed the hardboards with gesso before painting each one with a hand-mixed casein tempera. To ensure a uniform appearance, he applied a given color onto each panel in succession, starting with the darkest hue of black and proceeding to the lighter values. Integrating text and image, Lawrence created his epic statement in poetic cadences of simple shapes and colors as well as recurring symbols of movement: the train, the station, and people traveling.

New York art dealer Edith Halpert arranged for *The Migration Series* to be published in *Fortune* (November 1941), exhibited at her Downtown Gallery (November 1941–January 1942), and jointly purchased in 1942 by The Phillips Collection (odd-numbered panels) and the Museum of Modern Art (even-numbered panels). At the young age of 24, Lawrence received national acclaim for a series he later deemed the “creative highlight” of his career.

### **JACOB LAWRENCE AND THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION**

In 1942, museum founder Duncan Phillips expressed great enthusiasm for Lawrence’s *Migration Series* upon seeing it at the Downtown Gallery. That year, Phillips gave Lawrence his first solo museum exhibition and soon after purchased the odd-numbered panels. The Phillips has remained deeply committed to sharing and expanding Lawrence’s legacy and achievements with broad and diverse audiences. Enriched by a close relationship with the artist during his lifetime, The Phillips Collection has for the last 25 years played a leadership role in the study, presentation, and teaching of Jacob Lawrence’s important contribution to the history of modern art:

- In the 1990s, the Phillips organized an eight-city national tour of the complete *Migration Series*. It also led a major study of Lawrence’s life through symposia, conferences, and interdisciplinary panels.
- In 2000, Lawrence personally selected the Phillips to organize his retrospective. The highly-acclaimed exhibition premiered at the Phillips and traveled to five other major cities.
- In 2007–08, the Phillips launched a five-venue NEA American Masterpieces touring exhibition featuring selections from the series. The tour brought Lawrence’s masterpiece to underserved communities throughout the United States and was accompanied by a major educational outreach program.

- In 2013, the Phillips partnered with the U.S. Department of State to conduct a series of workshops in Pakistan focusing on art and social change. Using Jacob Lawrence’s *Migration Series* (1940–41) as a catalyst for conversation about the power of storytelling through art, emerging artists, middle and high school students, art educators, and museum professionals worked together to create visual narratives about identity, personal struggle, and Pakistani history.
- In 2015, The Phillips Collection again partnered with the U.S. Department of State to facilitate workshops in Bosnia and Herzegovina using Jacob Lawrence’s *Migration Series* as a springboard for documenting their own personal migration stories through art. Phillips educators spent two weeks working with emerging artists, students, orphans, educators, and museum professionals from across the country.

### CATALOGUE

This exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue, *Jacob Lawrence: The Migration Series*, co-published by The Phillips Collection and the Museum of Modern Art. Featuring images of all 60 panels and short descriptive texts, the book explores the cultural and political settings from which Lawrence’s art was inspired. Phillips curator Elsa Smithgall discusses the work’s early exhibition history and describes how it came to be acquired by two museums. MoMa curator Leah Dickerman discusses Lawrence’s ability to use art as a medium for social change. Introduced by poet Elizabeth Alexander, the catalogue also includes a section that features 11 poems written by 10 poets that were specially commissioned in response to Lawrence’s epic masterwork.

### EXHIBITION SPONSORS

*People on the Move* is organized by The Phillips Collection, Washington, DC and The Museum of Modern Art, New York in collaboration with the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.



The exhibition is presented by  
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### WEBSITE SPONSORS

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### **ABOUT THE PHILLIPS COLLECTION**

The Phillips Collection, America’s first museum of Modern art, is one of the world’s most distinguished collections of Impressionist and Modern American and European art. Stressing the continuity between art of the past and present, it offers a strikingly original and experimental approach to Modern art by combining works of different nationalities and periods in displays that change frequently. The setting is similarly unconventional, featuring small rooms, a domestic scale, and a personal atmosphere. Artists represented in the collection include Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Vincent van Gogh, Edgar Degas, Henri Matisse, Pierre Bonnard, Paul Cézanne, Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee, Claude Monet, Honoré Daumier, Georgia O’Keeffe, Arthur Dove, Mark Rothko, Milton Avery, Jacob Lawrence, and Richard Diebenkorn, among others. The permanent collection has grown to include more than 1,000 photographs, many by American photographers Berenice Abbott, Esther Bubley, and Bruce Davidson, and works by contemporary artists such as Anselm Kiefer, Wolfgang Laib, Whitfield Lovell, and Leo Villareal. The Phillips Collection regularly organizes acclaimed special exhibitions, many of which travel internationally. The Intersections series features projects by contemporary artists responding to art and spaces in the museum. The Phillips also produces award-winning education programs for K–12 teachers and students, as well as for adults. The University of Maryland Center for Art and Knowledge at The Phillips Collection is the museum’s nexus for academic work, scholarly exchange, and interdisciplinary collaborations. Since 1941, the museum has hosted Sunday Concerts in its wood-paneled Music Room. The Phillips Collection is a private, non-government museum, supported primarily by donations.

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