



Pulitzer-winning author to speak in Tulsa for John Hope Franklin symposium

■ She will talk about the lasting impact of the Great Migration.

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Posted: Sunday, May 24, 2015 12:00 am



Wilkerson

Isabel Wilkerson

When: 6:30 p.m. Wednesday

Where: University of Tulsa's Lorton Performing Arts Center, 550 S. Gary Place

Tickets: Free

By NOUR HABIB World Staff Writer | 0 comments

Pulitzer Prize winner Isabel Wilkerson will speak about the enduring impact of the 20th century's Great Migration during an event Wednesday that will kick off the John Hope Franklin Center for Reconciliation's annual symposium in Tulsa.

"This was, in effect, a mass migration and a fleeing from the oppression of the Jim Crow South," Wilkerson said during a recent phone interview.

About 6 million African-Americans left the rural South for urban areas in the Northeast, Midwest and West during the Great Migration.

"Their arrival into the rest of the country changed the demographics, the politics, the culture of the entire country," she said.

Wilkerson left her job as the Chicago bureau chief for The New York Times to write a book about the Great Migration. "The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration" was published in 2010.

In coordination with Wilkerson's visit to Tulsa, the Tulsa City-County Library has chosen the book for the One Book One Tulsa

program this summer.

Cindy Hulsey, adult service coordinator for the Tulsa City-County Library, said the library partnered with the John Hope Franklin center to bring the author to Tulsa.

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Hulsey said she was "absolutely blown away" by the book when she read it.

"It's a nonfiction book, but it is so beautifully and elegantly written that it absorbs you just as a novel would," she said.

The book will kick off a series of programs at the library around the theme of migration.

Wilkerson will speak at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at the University of Tulsa's Lorton Performing Arts Center, 550 S. Gary Place. The event is free and open to the public.

This will be Wilkerson's first time in Tulsa.

"It will be an honor to be speaking in Tulsa because of Tulsa's own history," Wilkerson said. "The race riots of 1921 are an example of many of the challenges and tensions that occurred in the 20th century that have ramifications to this day."

Wilkerson said Oklahoma has been central to the idea of migration throughout its history. She said one of the inspirations for her book was "The Grapes of Wrath," a novel that focuses on a family driven out of Oklahoma during the Great Depression.

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