

K-12 Teacher Research Grant Program – 2019 Cohort

[An African American Family in Segregated Dallas:](#) **Culmer Family Biography**

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Culmer Family Biography

Harold Harcourt Culmer was born in Cat Island, Nassau, Bahamas (now San Salvador) on March 6, 1908. He went on to earn his medical degree from Howard University. His wife, Etta Williams Howard, worked as a teacher before she got married. She was born on September 18, 1914 in Union County, North Carolina when Dr. Culmer was working on his residency. They were married in on Christmas Eve, 1942. One of the most noticeable things about the couple was their height difference. Mrs. Culmer was 5'10" tall but Dr. Culmer was only 5'4" tall.

During World War II the US army had a shortage of doctors. He enlisted and moved to Texas because Texas had the largest number of military camps. After the war however, Dr. Culmer struggled to find a place to practice medicine. On the East Coast there were several black hospitals but Dallas only had one- Pinkston Hospital. At that time, black hospitals were privately owned by black doctors and those doctors could not treat patients in county hospitals. Dr. Culmer decided to build his practice around making house calls. He would visit his patients at their homes at treat them there. Eventually, he built his own clinic in the Green Building in the segregated part of North Dallas. His last clinic was located on Gaston Avenue, near Baylor Hospital.

The Culmers loved to travel and take road trip with their chow dog. In 1951, they took a trip to Havana, Cuba. They adopted a two-year old Cuban boy named Miguel Gregorio on this trip. His father was a black Cuban and his mother was white and he had been placed in an orphanage. The Culmers brought Miguel back to Dallas and eventually enrolled him at the all black St. Phillips Catholic School. Miguel eventually graduated from Dallas' Bishops College. He went on to marry three time. The first two marriages were annulled, or ended quickly, and the third one lasted for at least thirteen years. However, the last marriage and other disagreements caused a final fight and he and his parents never spoke again. Etta and Dr. Culmer both passed away in 1993. Miguel's whereabouts are unknown.

For fifty years, the family had lived at 6633 Aubrey St, in Dallas in a pink wood framed home off Mockingbird Ln near Love Field. This was a segregated black neighborhood known as either "Elm Thicket" or "North Park". After Etta Culmer's death, the home was purchased by a national rental car company and demolished. The family's expensive furniture including silver and artwork has all disappeared.

Source: Culmer Family Papers: A Guide, AR395, Special Collections, University of Texas at Arlington Library.