



# Educational Resources

## SOUTH STREET & THE COMMUNITY

### WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- Introduction to the history of the South Street neighborhood
- Self-guided tour of the South Street neighborhood surrounding Philadelphia's Magic Gardens (PMG)
- Reading materials about South Street and the communities that existed there
- Online resources from other organizations about South Street and neighborhood displacement
- A 10-minute video of the history of PMG and Isaiah and Julia Zagar
- PMG videos about nearby mosaics
- Other educational videos about the Crosstown Expressway and South Street history
- Lesson plans

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## INTRODUCTION

As a haven for Eastern European Jews fleeing persecution and Southern Blacks escaping slavery, South Street became fertile ground for emergent forms of cultural, political, and religious expression. It was the center of jazz, comedy, anarchy, and fashion for 19th century Philadelphians. It was also the home of activists who fought segregation on public trolleys – back in 1865 – and the main artery that ran through W.E.B. DuBois's Book *The Philadelphia Negro*, the first sociological study of an African American community.

In 1955, Philadelphia slated South Street and its neighborhoods for demolition to make room for an expressway. Racist urban planning practices like this were common across the country and shaped many U.S. cities. As a consequence, South Street became known to many as Philadelphia's Mason-Dixon Line, separating the mostly white residents in Center City from the mostly Black residents to the south.



SOUTH STREET AND 3RD STREET, CIRCA 1990S



SOUTH STREET, CIRCA 1950S



PROTEST TO STOP THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CROSTOWN EXPRESSWAY AT PHILADELPHIA'S CITY HALL, BROAD AND MARKET STREETS, 1968

As community members since 1968, PMG creator Isaiah Zagar and his wife Julia have seen South Street change. They played a meaningful role in the fight against the expressway. When they were young newcomers to the street they offered support to longtime neighborhood organizers and brought a fresh perspective on what South Street might become. As elders, they have become its creative anchors.

PMG and Zagar's public murals serve as a record of South Street history, as countless people and events are immortalized in the artwork. These same events helped to make his work possible. One might wonder if his work could have found the space it needed to flourish in any other city, in any other neighborhood, at any other time. The history of South Street and the epic proportions of Zagar's work are inextricably linked.

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## PMG TOURS

- [Neighborhood Walking Tour](#), a self-guided mural tour which explores the Zagars' personal history, their longtime connection to South Street, and the many themes found in Isaiah's mosaics

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## BOOKS AND ARTICLES

- ["South Street,"](#) *The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, Dylan Gottlieb, 2015, a timeline of the history of South Street from the early 1800s - 2010s
- ["Saving South Street through the Lens of Denise Scott Brown,"](#) *Hidden City Philadelphia*, Jeremy Eric Tenenbaum, February 4, 2020, an article which includes photos of South Street taken by architect Denise Scott Brown who helped to stop the Crosstown Expressway
- ["The Story of the South Street,"](#) *Issuu*, Rick Snyderman, Ruth Snyderman, and Amy Grant, December 2018, an article that captures the stories and history of South Street from the perspective of the Snydermans, who were contemporaries and friends of Isaiah & Julia Zagar
- ["Exiles on South Street: How the Famed Strip Got Its Mojo"](#) *Philadelphia City Paper*, Jonathan Valania, November 3, 2010, an article that provides an oral history of the South Street Renaissance, including interviews with Isaiah and Julia Zagar
- ["The Philadelphia Negro"](#) by W.E.B. Du Bois (1899, republished 1995), the first sociological study of Black people living in America
- ["Black Citymakers: How The Philadelphia Negro Changed Urban America"](#) by Marcus Anthony Hunter (2013), particularly the chapter "Philadelphia's Mason-Dixon Line" about the Crosstown Expressway project slated for South Street

## BOOKS AND ARTICLES

- [\*William Dorsey's Philadelphia and Ours: On the Past and Future of the Black City in America\*](#) by Rodger Lane (1991)
  - [\*The Jewish Community of South Philadelphia \(Images of America\)\*](#) by Allen Myers (1998)
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## FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

- [South Street Head House District](#), the business improvement district for the neighborhood where PMG is located; website includes information about local shops, restaurants, and events
- [Hidden City Philadelphia](#), an organization dedicated to exploring Philadelphia's urban landscape
- [Center for Inspired Teaching](#), a D.C. based organization dedicated to teaching teachers and school leaders how to practice engagement-based education through intensive digital programs and in-person fellowships; in 2020, they held a digital [Speak Truth session](#) with 60 high school students about how gentrification has affected their neighborhoods in both positive and negative ways

## PMG VIDEOS

- [Introduction to Philadelphia's Magic Gardens](#), a 10-minute overview of the history of PMG and Isaiah and Julia Zagar

These videos highlight four stops from PMG's [self-guided tour](#):

- [The Zagar Home](#), a conversation with the Zagars about the creation of their current home, a fully mosaicked building on South Street
- [The Eye's Gallery](#), a visit to Julia Zagar's Eye's Gallery, during which you will learn about the South Street Renaissance, how the commercial corridor of South Street was threatened with demolition, and why Isaiah viewed his first mosaics in this building as therapy
- [Bilal from Pakistan mural](#), a video that explores this mural at 604 S. Clifton Street, how Isaiah met his assistant Bilal Khan in 2012, their time together creating mosaics, and how this mural was created through a community workshop
- [Homage to Mike Mattio, Master Plumber mural](#), a video that explores a mural (700 block of Reese Street) featuring famous performing and visual artists, as well as one of three generations of local plumbers

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## VIDEOS ABOUT SOUTH STREET HISTORY

- [The Whole South Street Story](#), a 27 minute video that gives viewers a glimpse of different businesses, people and cultures on South Street from the 1920s-1990s; includes interviews with both Isaiah and Julia Zagar
- [Crosstown](#), a 40-minute documentary about how a coalition of 27 community groups in Philadelphia rallied to save South Street from being destroyed by the Crosstown Expressway

# VIDEOS ABOUT SOUTH STREET HISTORY

- [Philadelphia: The Great Experiment](#), a 13-episode documentary series depicting Philadelphia's evolution; this [webisode](#) includes footage and interviews from local historians and South Street natives about the Crosstown Expressway
  - In 2017, the Queen Village Neighbors Association and the Historic Gloria Dei Preservation Corporation held a panel discussion with veterans of the Crosstown Expressway fight; find the full video recording [here](#)
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## LESSON PLANS

- [Mosaic Messages](#), a lesson plan that teaches students how to think critically about the environment and their impact on their community through paper mosaic techniques; recommended for grades 3-6, but can be adapted for other ages
- [Global Oneness Project's Relocating Residents: The Impact of Housing on Community](#), teaches students how architecture and neighborhood design can have consequences on human activity and relationships; also available in [Spanish](#)

