

Part 1: Examples of Migration Story Programs in Illinois

Faith in Place – Chicago

Goal: Nurture Environmental Stewardship in Communities of Color

Working throughout the state of Illinois, [Faith in Place](#) helps congregations implement environmental programs that build on their faith traditions. For the past six years, they have been using migration stories as a method for helping communities of color relate to climate change. In 2012, with a Toyota TogetherGreen grant, they partnered with Audubon Chicago Region to create the formal curriculum Migration, Monarchs, Birds & Me. The curriculum helps congregations ask questions about their practices and values, tell their own stories, relate them to the migration and climate change stories of Monarchs and birds, and then take climate action such as removing invasive species.

In 2015, Faith in Place hired a new staff member to grow the program and develop a migration stories toolkit.

Faith in Place’s approach focuses on resilience and traditional practices as key components of the cultures of communities of color—including their migration stories—that relate to Monarch and bird migration and that can be revived to nurture environmental stewardship today. Their curriculum poses questions like these:

- Who were we before and after we migrated?
- How did we use water and energy, there and here?
- How did we preserve our culture and values?

Faith in Place works with congregations to hold workshops on traditional practices such as canning, hospitality, and organic farming, revealing climate action as embedded in traditional culture. Their overall message is that communities of color have been resilient and can draw on their deep knowledge and extend their hospitality to help the natural world, and themselves, survive.

Helpful Links

- Faith in Place: <http://www.faithinplace.org/>
- Toyota TogetherGreen Case Study: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/togethergreen/10427342355/in/photostream/>
- Audubon’s *Birds and Climate Change Report* (2014): <http://climate.audubon.org/>



Faith in Place migration stories circle at St. Benedict of the African East Catholic Church in Englewood (Chicago).

Photo courtesy of Veronica Kyle.

Climate Connections

Human migration disrupts our ties to place and can diminish our knowledge of how to live in harmony with our environment, as we let go of traditional practices. Many of these practices, such as organic gardening and canning, are more climate-friendly than contemporary practices that are more energy-intensive and, often, toxic. Since most migration involves leaving behind rural areas for urban centers, it also weakens our direct ties to nature and our awareness of how critical natural systems are to our lives.

- Includes a section titled You Can Help as well as links to other resources
- Audubon video: *Conservation Status of North American Birds in the face of Climate Change* (10 min.): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0EZnss2hMA&feature=youtu.be>
- Terralingua: <http://terralingua.org/> - Resources on “the importance of biocultural diversity for the survival of all life on earth”

Sacred Keepers Sustainability Lab – Chicago

Goal: Develop Youth Leadership

Working in Chicago’s historic Bronzeville community, [Sacred Keepers Sustainability Lab](#) trains African American youth to be community and environmental leaders by linking indigenous cultural values to environmental science. In their summer internship program, teens spend eight weeks studying the northern migration routes of African Americans since the Great Migration in the 1920s and of Monarch butterflies, which migrate annually between Michoacán, Mexico, and Canada, stopping over in Chicago. Habitat loss, agricultural chemicals, and climate change all threaten the butterflies’ route. Exposed to history, ecology, and migration from multiple perspectives—including from community elders—the youths’ charge is to identify what makes Bronzeville Bronzeville: why their families migrated there and how their family and community stories relate to the Monarchs’ journey.

In summer 2014, the youth studied ecology basics and commercial corridors, learned about community planning and design with architects from the Bronzeville-based Illinois Institute of Technology, toured Bronzeville landmarks with [local historian Lorenzo Young](#), and interviewed residents. Art is also central to the program. The youth worked with African and Native American storyteller Edith Armstrong, who uses indigenous methods to tell stories of human and animal migration and displacement, and with a local poet to write love letters to nature. The culminating project brought together community members, teachers, and youth to build public art totems showing the dual migration of Bronzeville families and Monarchs.

The totems will be integrated into classroom learning during the academic year by teachers practicing place-based education. Some of these teachers have received training in Monarch ecology through Sacred Keepers’ partnerships with the U.S. Forest Service International Programs and the [University of Minnesota Monarch Lab](#) (see USFS story for more details).

Helpful Links

- Sacred Keepers Sustainability Lab: <http://www.sacredkeepers.org/>
- Bronzeville Historian Lorenzo Young: <http://www.bronzevillecac.com/UnderTheOakTree.pdf>
- Storyteller Edith Armstrong: <http://storytelling.org/MamaEdie/>
- University of Minnesota Monarch Lab: <http://Monarchlab.org/>



A public art totem depicts Monarch and African American migration.

Photo courtesy of Sacred Keepers Sustainability Lab.

Climate Connections

Examining the parallels between human and animal migrations allows residents to make connections between their personal stories and the greater ecosystem. Many non-human species are at risk from climate change and reliant upon public support, and action, for their survival. By strengthening community ties to Monarchs, Bronzeville is poised to implement local, sustainable solutions to support wildlife under a rapidly changing climate.

University of Illinois at Chicago Latino Cultural Center

Goal: Develop Pride and Civic Engagement in Latino College Students

The [UIC Latino Cultural Center \(LCC\)](#) supports the academic and personal growth of Latino students attending the University of Illinois at Chicago. Their [Migration and Transformation program](#) highlights how people's migration experiences influence their identities and lives in the United States. The program hosts public programs and storytelling circles on immigration during which people tell their families' stories about coming to the U.S., in response to the questions, "How does it feel when you've moved from the neighborhood that was familiar to you or the country where you grew up? What were some of the challenges that you confronted in this new place? What or who helped you adapt to this new place?"



Students work in the UIC Heritage Garden (left).
Butterfly Postcard (right).
Photos courtesy of the UIC Heritage Garden.

At the end of the events, participants are encouraged to write their story on a postcard (see image above for an example) and mail it to someone who can help improve the lives of immigrants. The postcard series depicts images of UIC immigrant students holding up handcrafted butterflies and include quotes describing themselves, such as: "I am Latino, Mexican, an economist, mentor and"... all ending in, "I support the immigrant community." They were created as part of the Butterfly Postcard Campaign, a collaboration among the LCC and two student groups, Fearless Undocumented Alliance and Heritage Garden Student Group. The campaign builds on the symbolism of Monarch butterflies, which migrate between Michoacán, Mexico, and Canada, stopping over in Chicago. They are a particularly powerful symbol in Chicago, which has a large Michoacano population. The LCC's campaign builds on the Monarchs' role as a powerful and positive symbol of the national U.S. immigrant rights' movement due to their ability to freely cross borders.

Monarchs, as well as birds, also play a key role in the [Heritage Garden program](#), which is a collaboration among LCC and UIC's five other Centers for Cultural Understanding and Social Change, which teaches environmental stewardship and social justice through culturally relevant horticulture. In summer 2013, the garden collaborated with a local Chicago muralist to create a butterfly art installation in the garden. They used the installation as a springboard for garnering support among UIC students, faculty, and staff for the release of the DREAM 9, a group of undocumented activists, including a UIC student, who were being detained in Arizona after crossing the Mexico-U.S. border as a demonstration against immigration policy.

Climate Connections

Many species (including humans) practice migrations as a normal part of their life history, while many more are being forced to migrate in response to a rapidly changing climate. By tying together Latino experiences with those of the imperiled Monarch butterfly, the UIC community is calling attention to a critical climate issue in a way that builds on community interests. The Heritage Garden also acts as a valuable green space, providing many ecological services, including

Helpful Links

- UIC Latino Cultural Center: <https://latinocultural.uic.edu/>

- UIC Latino Cultural Center Migration and Transformation Program: <http://latinocultural.uic.edu/stories/migration-and-transformation/>
- UIC Heritage Garden: <http://www.uicheritagegarden.org/>
- Monarchs and Immigrant Rights:
 - Migration is Beautiful: <http://migrationisbeautiful.com/>
 - “Migration Is Beautiful” Documentary: Artist Favianna Rodriguez Talks Immigrant Rights And Art's Role In Politics (VIDEO)” (Huffington Post, 2015): http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/01/26/migration-is-beautiful-artist-favianna-rodriguez-documentary_n_2535690.html
 - “Hopeful, ‘Unapologetic’ Art Rebrands the Immigration Movement” (ABC News, 2013): http://abcnews.go.com/ABC_Univision/art-rebrands-immigration-reform-movement/story?id=18610975
- Research Action Projects: LCC’s programs are based in part on research and action projects co-led by LCC Director Rosa Cabrera, Ph.D., and Connect Project Manager Jennifer Hirsch, Ph.D., when they were at the Field Museum. These include
 - “Engaging Chicago’s Diverse Communities in the Chicago Climate Action Plan: Community #4: Pilsen’s Mexican Community”: http://www.fieldmuseum.org/sites/default/files/DOE%20Pilsen%20Full%20Report_1.pdf and
 - Chicago Community Climate Action Toolkit: Pilsen: <http://climatechicago.fieldmuseum.org/pilsen>

U.S. Forest Service International Programs Monarch Training

Resource Highlight

Staff and partners from Sacred Keepers Sustainability Lab, Faith in Place, and many other community organizations across the Midwest have been trained in Monarch ecology and place-based education through a special partnership between U.S. Forest Service International Programs (USFS-IP) and the University of Minnesota Monarch Lab aimed at improving science education in minority communities and providing them with increased exposure to science and environmental careers.

The USFS-IP provides community partners with scholarships to participate in three-day professional development training programs either in Chicago or Minnesota. While the training focuses primarily on ecology and teaching, it also touches on cultural Connections to the Monarch, including Monarch symbolism that is rife not only in the immigration rights movement but also in Mexican culture, particularly in the Mexican-American community. In particular, the training touches on family members' knowledge of Monarchs that they have carried with them from Mexico—and sometimes also of birds that migrate from there to the Midwest. Participants are able to draw their own conclusion regarding the parallel migration routes of Mexican immigrants and Monarchs. Workshop participants with sizeable immigrant communities have expressed particular interest in the cultural connections, asking for more information as well as guidance for incorporating it into their work.

The grant includes an implementation component, and participants spend part of the last day of the training developing plans for action they will take back home at their sites. In some cases, projects focus primarily on science, classroom investigations, or schoolyard ecology; but in others, projects combine the scientific and ecological aspects of Monarchs with the cultural aspects—as in the case studies above. Additionally, particularly in their work with Mexicans from Michoacán, USFS-IP emphasizes actions that people can take in the Midwest to benefit the Monarch population back in Michoacán, such as planting milkweed habitat and other plants to serve as nectar sources. They also encourage immigrants to talk to their relatives back home about simple practices that they can do to help the Monarchs, such as properly disposing of trash so it doesn't end up in the creek or ravine, properly changing motor oil so it doesn't drop into the soil, and so on.

Climate Connections

Taking action to help Monarch butterflies is also taking climate action. Many of the practices that support the Monarchs, such as installing native plant gardens and working to reduce pollution, also aid communities in mitigating and adapting to climate change. For example, freeing creeks and wetlands of trash and chemical pollutants allows them to better perform their many natural services, such as filtering water, reducing flooding, and providing vital wildlife habitat.



Father and son dress up as Monarchs for a Dia del Nino parade sponsored by El Valor in Chicago.

Photo courtesy of Michael Rizo.

Helpful Links

- U.S. Forest Service International Programs: <http://www.fs.fed.us/global/index.html>
 - Wings Across the Americas (USFS Monarch Butterfly Program):
<http://www.fs.fed.us/global/wings/butterflies/welcome.htm>
- University of Minnesota Monarch Lab: <http://Monarchlab.org/>
 - Monarch Conservation: <http://Monarchlab.org/Monarch-conservation>
 - Monarch Butterfly Conservation Talking Points:
http://Monarchlab.org/images/uploads/attachments/MonCons_talking_points.pdf