



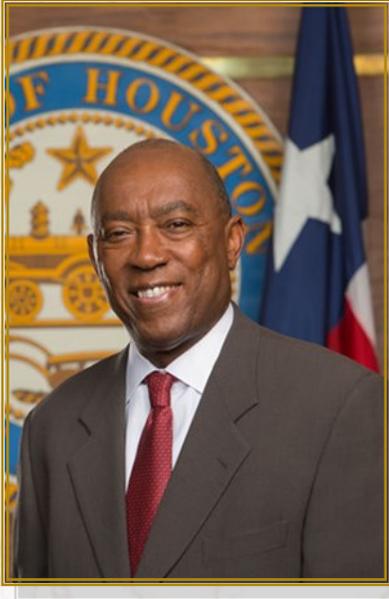
# **INTERNATIONAL** **HOUSTON**

**SUMMER 2017**



# HOUSTON

## A Hub of International Commerce



Houstonians often ask me why I lead trade missions abroad. I explain that these official visits strengthen economic ties with Houston's closest trading partners; develop new connections that can lead to increased foreign direct investment in Houston; and create a two-way exchange of people, ideas, and culture that mutually benefit our city alongside our partners. These complex, strategic relationships are necessary to ensure that Houston is well positioned to be a global leader in multiple industries, contributing to a strong, diversified economy and a truly international city.

That's why, on the heels of my State of the City Address in May in which I unveiled my plans to launch technology and innovation initiatives, I traveled to Israel to meet with tech trailblazers. Israeli businesses and policy leaders – from Bio Jerusalem and Startup Nation to the Israeli Innovation Authority – have propelled the country to be a world leader in technology and innovation. Trade delegations like the one I led to Israel, provide our city's leaders the opportunities to learn how to attract the venture capital, design the creativity hubs, and propose the right public policies to make Houston a future tech leader.

While we absorbed information on renewable technologies and smart cities in Tel Aviv, our delegation also used our trade mission to explore Jewish history while also showcasing our experience in energy. Israel aims to transition from an energy importer to an energy independent country with the development of two new gas field discoveries co-owned by a Houston-based business. Our trade delegation further underscored Houston's role as the global energy capital by promoting the Offshore Technology Conference, which attracted more than 65,000 participants from around the world, as well as the World Energy Cities Partnership, a global network of cities that also met in Houston in May.

Deepening ties with foreign cities and countries goes beyond economic investment; it's about people. During the trade mission in June, I had the opportunity to meet with the Palestinian people near the City of Ramallah in the West Bank. I also had the great fortune of sharing in my annual *iftar* dinner here in Houston with local leaders who recognize the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. During Ramadan and the subsequent *Eid* celebrations, I met with people from all over the world who undergo a month of fasting as part of their faith.

At City Hall, we continued our cultural engagement by hosting the first Africa Day event, coinciding with the International Africa Unity Day, to celebrate African culture in Houston. We also invited and hosted the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, who spent two days on an official visit to Houston to highlight the outstanding work that Houston's officials and community leaders are doing to support and integrate refugees into the socio-economic fabric of our city. That visit was followed by a city-wide celebration on World Refugee Day, which brought together Houstonians of all backgrounds to experience the culture of refugees from all over the world in Levy Park.

As our city's economy and the people become more international, I will continue to engage with international leaders at home and abroad. To ensure that I am fully relying on the cultural knowledge and international experiences of the leaders across Houston, I launched two international councils, which will advise me throughout my administration on our shared efforts to promote Houston as a Welcoming and World Class City.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sylvester Turner'.

Sylvester Turner  
Mayor of Houston

# Summer 2017 Highlights:

Want to know more about  
Mayor Turner's Trip to Israel?

Check out the article, "Trade  
Mission: Israel" on page 11

Interested in the Deputy  
High Commissioner of  
Refugee Affairs visit?

Take a look at "Refugee Day in  
Houston" on page 23

Want to learn about African  
Arts and Culture in  
Houston?

Find out in our "Africa Day"  
article on page 19



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### Quarterly Protocol Tip:

When seating dinner guests, generally  
the place of honor is to the right of the  
host.

# INTERNATIONAL UPDATES

April 20

## **Mayor Turner welcomes South African mayoral delegation**

Mayor Turner meets with the Mayor of Ekurhuleni, during his reciprocation of Mayor Turner's mission to South Africa last October

May 7-14

## **Advance Mission to China**

A delegation from the City travels to Houston's 2nd largest business partner on an advance mission to promote Houston in preparation for the Mayor's mission to China

(more on page 16)

May 28

## **Mayor Turner keynotes IFTAR Dinner**

Mayor Turner speaks at the IFTAR Annual Ramadan Dinner organized by members of the Sister Cities of Houston

June 9-15

## **Mayor Turner's Trade Delegation to Israel**

Mayor Turner leads business delegation to Israel to meet with prominent Israeli government and business leaders to strengthen international ties

(more on page 11)

April 26-28

## **Inaugurating Two International Councils**

Mayor Turner met with his newly created council to discuss how to further promote Houston's international community (more on page 6)

May 14-16

## **Port of Houston hosts Gulf Shipping Conference**

The Gulf Shipping Conference, a leading container shipping and international logistics conference, returns to Houston

May 31

## **City Hall Hosts Africa Day**

Prominent African organizations, restaurants, and Houstonians gather in the legacy room at City Hall with Mayor Turner to celebrate Africa (more on page 19)

June 17

## **World Refugee Day**

Houston hosts World Refugee Day and celebrates its refugee community

(more on page 23)

May 1-4

## **Offshore Technology Conference (OTC) 2017**

Houston once again hosted the world's largest OTC week, bringing over 65,000 participants and attendees to Houston

(more on page 13)

May 16

## **US/China Innovation & Investment Summit**

Mayor Turner delivers keynote speech at the US/China Innovation & Investment summit at the Omni Houston Hotel

June 5-6

## **UN Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees visits Houston**

Kelly Tallman Clements visits Houston institutions to discuss refugee affairs (more on page 23)

June 28

## **Mexico vs. Ghana Soccer Match**

Mexico and Ghana face off against one another in a soccer match at the NRG Stadium

(more on page 21)

# INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS





# MAYOR TURNER CONVENES TWO NEW INTERNATIONAL COUNCILS

In late April 2017, Mayor Sylvester Turner convened the inaugural meetings of two separate councils - the International Advisory Council and the International Communities Council - as part of his new two-pronged strategy for Houston's international development. Bringing together industry experts and community leaders, Mayor's Turner's goals are to both expand Houston's reputation and ties abroad, while also representing and engaging our existing international communities within the city's borders.

"This sort of work cannot be done by any one of our organizations alone, or by continuing in silos," said Mayor Turner, referring to the international promotion and development of Houston. "Hence the purpose of these councils is to bring us together, share infor-

mation, erase walls and build cooperation."

The first council, the International Advisory Council, is a group of high level civic and business leaders hand-selected by the Mayor to highlight opportunities for promoting Houston as a global city abroad, while sharing information on ongoing international initiatives for the purpose of greater collaboration among various organizations. Members are drawn from some of Houston's major international institutions, such as Mr. Bob Harvey, CEO of the



Greater Houston Partnership (GHP), and The Honorable Sultan Al Angari, Dean of the Consular Corps of Houston. Topics of discussion range from creating international media strategies, to suggesting major focuses for trade missions, to attracting international conferences, such as the World Petroleum Congress, which is set to take place in Houston in 2020.

While the Advisory Council is primarily focused on matters beyond Houston's borders, the International Communities Council concerns itself with the diverse and thriving global residents that make Houston the world city it is today. With one in four of our citizens foreign born and over 145 languages spoken within our city,

there is no doubt that these international communities represent a vital part of our city's personality and culture. The Communities Council, comprised of approximately two dozen community organizations such as India House and the Houston Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, seeks to ensure that the residents of international communities are represented and heard by the Mayor's office. By providing these additional links with these communities via select organizations, Mayor Turner hopes to better understand the problems and concerns of our international Houstonians, so that he can better address them and ensure that Houston will continue to be a "world class welcoming city."

These two councils, organized by the Mayor's Office of Trade and International Affairs, serve to pool the valuable resources of our city together, and create an organized and concerted effort to further Houston's international development. Though each member of the Councils represents a different culture, country, or industry, they are united by one central goal: to advance this international and diverse city we call home. Driven by this goal, and with the support and leadership of Mayor Turner, we look forward to seeing what these two councils can accomplish in the years to come.





# AN OASIS IN THE CITY— JAPANESE GARDEN ROOTED IN INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP

When entering Houston’s Japanese Garden in Hermann Park, the sights, sounds, and even smells are wholly different from what you experience just outside its gate. This tranquil space, filled with fragrant trees, winding paths, soothing water features, and Japanese architectural details, has an immediate calming effect. Equally moving are the relationships its creation and subsequent upkeep have engendered within the Houston community and with friends in Japan.

The garden, dedicated in 1992 as symbol of the friendship between Houston and Japan and in recognition of Houston’s vibrant Japanese community, was the result of a partnership between members of Houston’s Japanese-American business community and the City of Houston. Since its opening, the garden has led to cross-cultural ex-

changes and cultural programming with the support from donors such as the City of Houston; Hermann Park Conservancy; the Japanese government; Japan America Society, Houston; and Houston’s sister city in Japan, Chiba City.

As our sister city in Japan, Chiba City, has been a part of the garden’s development since the very beginning. It was through their efforts that world-renowned Japanese landscape architect Ken Nakajima was commissioned to design the garden. Chiba City was also responsible for bringing the esteemed landscape architect Terunobu Nakai to Houston in 2007, in celebration of the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our sister city relationship. Following his initial visit, Mr. Nakai furthered the ties between our two cities by visiting Houston annually to provide guidance on maintaining

the garden until his death in 2011. The garden now has a memorial stone commemorating his contributions as well as the friendships he made in Houston, while the father-son duo Hiroshi and Taiki Iwasaki, who worked with Mr. Nakai, have taken up the duty of his annual visit.

“It takes a lot of time and thoughtfulness to utilize some of the specialized Japanese pruning techniques that are involved in maintaining the garden correctly,” said Parks Department employee Brent Moon, who had the opportunity to work with Mr. Nakai and later visit Chiba City. For Brent, the experience went beyond learning the mechanics of the proper techniques, to seeking a deeper understanding of Japanese culture and the philosophy of Japanese gardening, which continues to inform his work today. Now working in greenspace

management as senior superintendent of horticulture in the Parks Dept., he remembers fondly having the opportunity to work with Mr. Nakai and the other members of the Japanese team.

The garden would not be what it is today without diplomatic engagement by the government of Japan, which has been a strong supporter of this project. In 2012 the government, through the Consulate General of Japan, donated 20 cherry blossom trees to commemorate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the cherry blossom trees Japan donated to our nation's capital. Additionally, the tea house nestled in the garden was a gift from Japan through Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu, while a welcome greeting of inscribed with his calligraphy is sandblasted onto a 16,000-pound boulder, commemorating Mr. Kaifu's visit to Houston during

the 1990 Economic Summit.

This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Japanese Garden in Hermann Park. In recognition of its importance to ongoing Houston-Japan ties, this anniversary came in conjunction with a 10-year improvement plan to maintain the cultural authenticity of the garden. The plan includes a new park entrance gate, installation of bamboo fences, additional plantings native to Japan, and the repair of existing park structures. At the local level, civic and bicultural engagement have driven eight years of monthly stakeholders' meetings to review the progress of the improvement plan.

In addition to anticipating these new developments, park officials look forward to welcoming the mayor of Chiba City and his official delegation, who will come to

This fall, Houston will celebrate the 45<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our sister city relationship. As a joint, collaborative project that has spanned multiple decades, the Japanese Garden serves as a living tribute to the international friendship that exists between Houston and Japan, the potential for cultural exchanges through the sister cities program, and Houston's dedication to understanding and appreciating international cultures.

Whether it's for its lovely vistas, unique flora and tranquility or for its cultural and diplomatic significance, the Japanese Garden at Hermann Park has become a vital part of Houston's identity. As our city grows and reaches out to international partners around the globe, this garden will continue to flourish alongside our thriving friendship with Japan.



# INTERNATIONAL TRADE





# TRADE MISSION: ISRAEL

When Israelis speak of their country, they analogize it to something Americans are particularly familiar with: the start-up. The comparison is apt on a number of levels-Israel was founded with very little in the way of resources, resting initially on the brains, vision, doggedness and, frankly, chutzpah of its founders. And like many tech start-up, Israel, though geographically small, has found a way to punch well outside of its weight class globally.

It is a story that, in some ways, resonates strongly with Houston, a city that embraces the entrepreneur and visionary. Add to this the deep ties between Houston and Israel, which cut across a number of fields of business, academic and cultural exchange, and it is a surprise that Mayor Sylvester Turner was in fact only the first Mayor to lead a business delegation to Israel.

June 9-15, Mayor Turner, accompanied by a delegation of Houston executives representing the Texas Medical Center, LoneStar College and Rice University, the Houston Airport System and Visit Houston, Noble Energy, local real estate, law



and tech firms, took a deep dive into Israel's economic, political and non profit systems, emerging with an enhanced understanding of the country, its people and the unique opportunities that exist for bilateral cooperation.

In polling delegates who accompanied the Mayor, while they each had a favorite moment, the broad trend was an appreciation for the mission's depth and thorough exploration of the Israeli national ecosystem. The mission was broken into broad themes, all of which touched on the role of innovation and technology, and meetings were arranged with those organizations in Israel leading their respective fields. In meetings with the Israeli Innovation Authority, Bio Jerusalem and Start-up Nation, delegates explored the role of government and non profits in encouraging a start-up culture. With visits to government officials in the cities of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Be'er Sheva, delegates explored the topics of smart city management and local governments as a partner in development. Touring developments like the Sorek Desalination plant and

the Be'er Sheva Cyber City tech park, delegates witnessed the role of infrastructure investments in enhancing the economic vitality of a nation. Briefed by executives from Noble about the game changing natural gas finds in Israel's Mediterranean basin, delegates were able to understand better this burgeoning opportunity within the region. And through enriching visits with non profits like Etgarim or national memorials like Yad Vashem, participants experienced first hand the strength and determination of Israeli society to leave a better world behind for future generations.

While in country, Houston's delegation received a lot of attention—not just from major media, but also from the country's political leadership. In a meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu, Mayor Turner was able to make a case for broader engagement of Israel with Houston, especially in areas touching on medicine, energy and tourism.

And, in another meaningful arrangement for all Houston delegates, the delegation spent a day in the West Bank and Palestinian Territories, touring Al Amari Refugee camp, meeting with the Mayor of El Bireh—a satellite community of Ramallah—and Rawabi, a new planned development. For those from Houston, which is home to a large population of Palestinian Americans, it was a unique opportunity to explore the history and development trends affecting this area.

With only four full days on the ground, Mayor Turner and the

delegates were able to squeeze every ounce of impact from its busy agenda and left delegates optimistic for future exchanges. Initial feedback points to continued talks and planned exchanges between Houston delegates and the partners they met in Israel.

Missions that keep such hectic pace find it easy to lose track of the interpersonal impact and diplomatic opportunities that naturally follow. The Israel trip quickly showed this would not be the case. As Mayor Ruvik Danilovich of Be'er Sheva put it, "I have only known you a short time, but I already feel like family." Sentiments like these and the abundant follow up already taking place show that this mission was a success for a growing partnership and stronger bilateral ties.



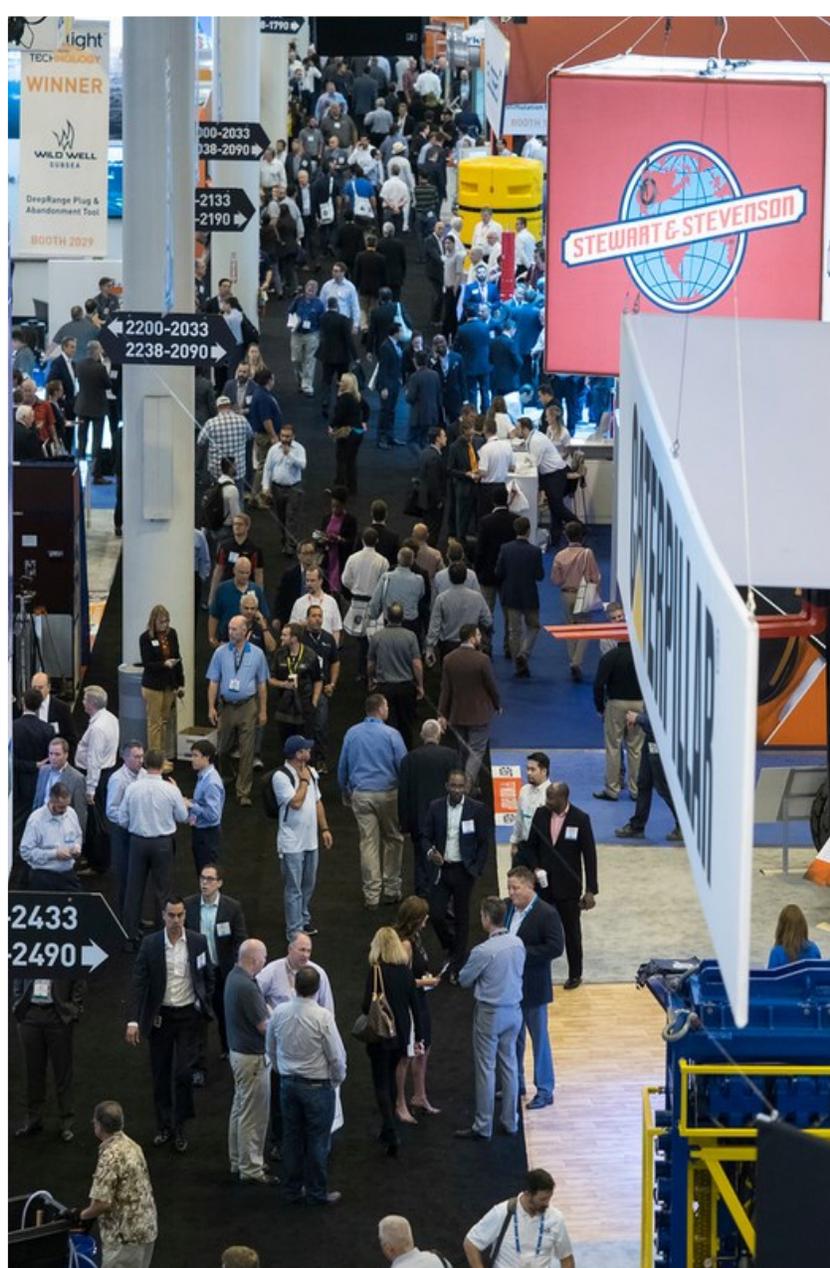
# OFFSHORE TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE WEEK IN HOUSTON

**May 1, 2017**—Over 64,000 attendees made their way to Houston this year for the 49<sup>th</sup> Annual Offshore Technology Conference. The conference, which featured over 2,300 exhibitions - including an eight-foot tall oil tanker model and virtual reality crane simulation - provided a unique forum for discussion on the latest offshore drilling technologies and innovative techniques, as well as updates on major recent developments in the energy industry.

Since the conference's inception in 1969, OTC Week has generated an accumulated \$3 billion USD of income, annually drawing VIP attendees and participants from the leading energy companies and governments around the world, and further solidifying Houston's reputation as the Global Energy Capital. This year's OTC included a speaking panel with the CEO of Mexico's PEMEX, as well as exhibitions from Saudi Aramco, ExxonMobil, the Kuwait Oil Company, and Qatar Petroleum, further indicating the international appeal of OTC in Houston.

While the subject of low oil & gas prices was a central focus for OTC this year, there were several positive trends brought up throughout the conference. One notable statistic was that, despite layoffs in Houston's energy industry after 2012, energy related employment in Houston from 2016 - 2017 is anticipated to grow by 4.5%. The consensus of the experts at the expo seemed to indicate that now is the time to improve the efficiency of existing systems and rise to the challenges in the energy industry through innovation and information sharing. As the largest OTC Week in the world, the conference served as an ideal location to start those talks.

Although the energy industry is OTC's primary focus, it also serves the city of Houston in other ways. In addition to its main expo, OTC contributes to education in Houston through its support of the Energy



Education Institute and the OTC Energy Challenge, and has donated over \$140,000 in the last six years to various charities. It has also partnered with United Against Human Trafficking to help spread awareness about human trafficking to OTC participants.

In view of these philanthropic pursuits, and the number of economic benefits OTC Week brings each year, the city of Houston is proud to be host for such a distinguished and wide-reaching conference. As OTC Week continues to annually return to Houston, we look forward to further proving to international energy leaders that our city remains the energy capital of the world and an ever-more global hub of commerce.

# WORLD ENERGY CITIES PARTNERSHIP



As home to an energy sector that generates some 160 billion USD per annum and over 5,000 energy related firms responsible for 40% of the US's petrochemical capacity, few can doubt Houston's reputation as the Energy Capital of the World. Yet, with fluctuations in oil & gas prices, concerns regarding emissions, and an ever-present goal to increase efficiency and engage new strategies for development, it remains important for Houston to consider new perspectives and collaborate with international partners. It is for this reason that Houston is proud of its role as Permanent Secretariat of the World Energy Cities Partnership (WECP), an organization comprised of mayors from the world's leading energy cities, who have each agreed to share best practices and establish new mutually beneficial collaborations among their respective governments.

“What makes the [WECP] special is the linkage between the energy industry and municipal government,” said Mayor Turner during the 2016 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the WECP, in Cape Town, South Africa last October. “The Partnership empowers our energy cities to address the world's increasing energy demands through innovation, inclusive growth, and resilience.”

Since its founding in 1995 in Houston, the organization has grown to 19 international member cities that share an interest in advancing opportunities in and around the energy sector; including innovation, education economic development and sustainability. This year, from April 30 to May 3, the WECP held its annual Working Meetings in Houston, bringing together Mayors or their representa-

tives from the WECPs member cities. This year's program focused on sustainable and inclusive growth, convening a panel of experts for a conversation on the challenges of sustainably providing for growing global energy demands and the innovative local solutions, as well as a keynote address on community development and how to ensure economic growth benefits for each cities' residents. Each event hosted by the WECP was packed with industry professions, as well as distinguished diplomats, such as Ambassador Robert F. Cekuta, Ambassador Elin Suleymanov and Energy Minister Natig Aliyev.

The 2017 AGM, set to be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada, from September 30 to October 4, will coincide with the Core Energy Conference, Halifax's leading energy event for the last 35 years,

and will provide a number of opportunities for business-to-business meetings for companies accompanying the member city delegations. In response to an increasingly diversified energy industry, this AGM will focus on a wide range of topics regarding onshore & offshore exploration, renewable & non-

renewable energy sources, and domestic and export markets. As an increasingly international hub of commerce, and as the Energy Capital of the World, the City of Houston has much to gain from exploring these subjects and the international collaborations of the WECP.

*If you would like more information about the WECP AGM or the Business to Business Meetings in Halifax please visit [wecphalifax2017.com](http://wecphalifax2017.com) or contact the WECP Secretariat at [secretariat@energycities.org](mailto:secretariat@energycities.org) or (832) 393-0829.*





# TRADE MISSION: CHINA

In early May, 2017, Council Member Robinson and two members of the Mayor's office traveled to China - Houston's 2nd largest trading partner - to attend the Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair, expand bilateral ties, and promote Houston abroad. Visiting four cities in under eight days, the delegation met with key officials in each city's municipal government, including the Mayor and Vice Mayor of Chengdu, the Vice Mayors of Shenzhen and Shanghai, and the Deputy Secretary General of the Standing Committee of Beijing's Municipal

People's Congress. With talks ranging from collaboration on city infrastructure development, to exploring dockless bike technologies, the initial meetings during this advance mission speak of exciting times for future Houston-China relations.

Ever since Deng Xiaoping's visit to Houston in 1979, and the subsequent opening of the first US Chinese Consulate General in our city shortly thereafter, Houston and China have enjoyed thriving diplomatic, cultural, and business ties. Today, we are sister cities with

Shenzhen; we have direct flight access to Beijing through the Bush Intercontinental Airport; and over \$18 billion USD of Houston-China trade passes through the Houston Port per annum.

Though each meeting was beneficial to the goals of the visit to China, one of the most productive aspects of this advance mission was Council Member Robinson's participation in Chengdu's Global Innovation and Entrepreneurship Fair, the largest annual conference

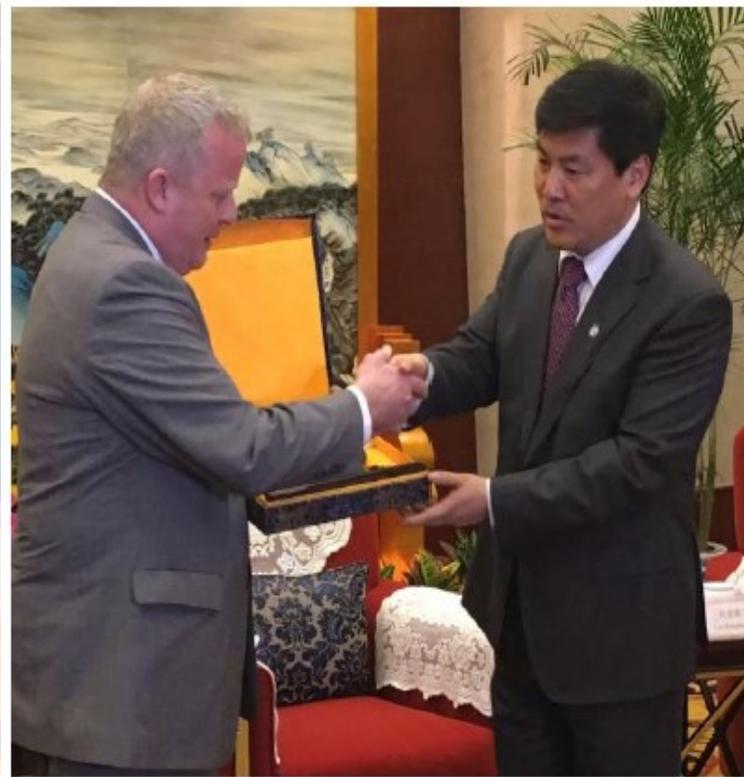
in west China. The event hosted over 600 exhibitors including tech giants like GE and Huawei, and drew in over 11,000 foreign and domestic entrepreneurs and investors, as well as four Nobel Prize winners. During this important function, Council Member Robinson was invited on stage to talk about Houston, its city development plans and its emerging preeminence in the technology

sector, particularly with regards to medical technology.

Following his speech, the council member was invited to a special discussion with the Mayor of Chengdu and several leaders of Chengdu's city government.

These, and other productive discussions during the trade mission, suggest that Mayor Turner and a business delegation

would have many areas of collaboration to explore with our partners in China. Throughout the trip, Houston's reputation – whether through our expertise in the energy, medical and tech industries or our fame as a former home to Yao Ming – inspired an attitude of enthusiasm and excitement among our Chinese counterparts, suggesting that our already robust relationship with China still has plenty of room to grow.

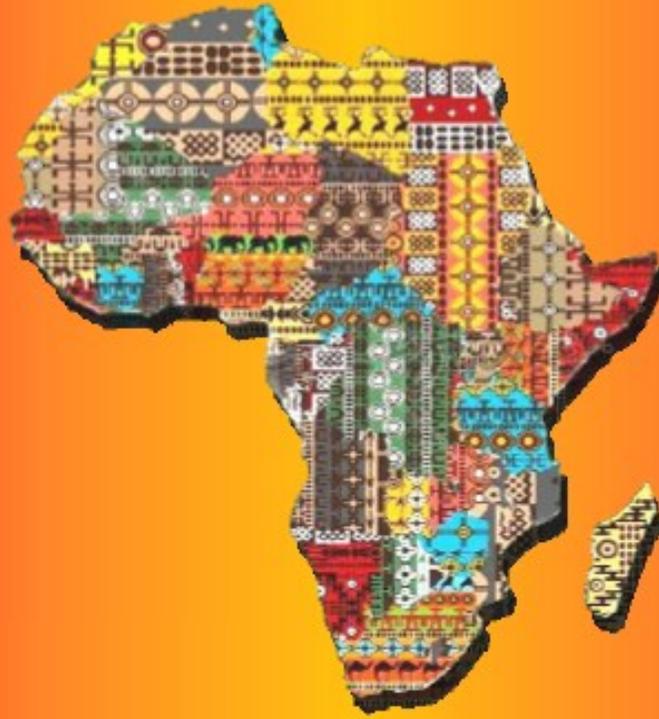


# INTERNATIONAL CULTURE



# AFRICA DAY

## 2017



On Thursday, May 25, the Legacy Room at City Hall transformed from a formal reception area into a vibrant collage of African culture. African inspired paintings - abstract and impressionistic - covered one wall, tribal print runners decorated tables, and models dressed in high fashion African attire strode about the crowds. All the while, the delicious smell of African cuisine suffused the room as caterers from Peli Peli, Cafe Abuja, and Lucy Ethiopian Restaurant & Lounge set up their various traditional dishes. The scene was the perfect atmosphere for Mayor Turner to officially proclaim May 25 as Africa Day in Houston.

“Here in Houston, we celebrate, respect, and draw strength from our differences,” said Mayor Turner before giving the proclamation. “For that reason, I thank all of the African communities in Houston for contributing to our city’s diversity and culture.”

Joining Mayor Turner at the podium in support of Houston’s African community were Council Members Christie, Cisneros and Edwards, as well as Nigerian-American Houston Dynamo’s player, Jalil Anibaba. The event, organized by the Mayor’s Office of Trade and International Affairs, is yet another example of Mayor Turner’s strong support for growing ties with the continent of Africa, further evinced by the 30

high ranking African delegations hosted by Houston since the beginning of the Mayor’s administration. During these various visits, Mayor Turner met with diplomats such as the South African Ambassador to the US, His Excellency Mzinwa Johannes Mahlangu, Mayor Msina of Ekhulureni, South Africa, and Speaker for the Mozambican Parliament, Veronica Macamo to discuss means of further expanding diplomatic, business and cultural ties.

With over 61,000 African residents calling the Houston area their home - some 4.5% of Houston’s total foreign-born population - African culture has become an important part of Houston’s

Institutions like the Gite Gallery bring to Houston unique artwork and artifacts from Sub-Saharan Africa, while renowned Houston art spaces like the Menil Collection host African exhibitions such as “ReCollecting Dogon,” which showcases 25 Malian works from the Bandiagara Region. And the continent’s contribution to Houston’s art scene extend well past the visual. Each year, top African performers take to the stage during the One Africa Music



Fest, while annually Houstonians are invited to explore African-inspired high fashion during African Fashion Week.

Standing amidst the celebration of all of these wonderful influences Africa has had on Houston, it was easy to see why we are known as a world-class welcoming city. As Africa continues to grow and develop its presence internationally, so too will our relationships with the continent. We look forward to the many Africa Day celebrations to come.





## MEXICO VS. GHANA AT NRG STADIUM



On Wednesday, June 28 over 36,000 members of Houston's international community took up seats at the Ghana vs. Mexico soccer match. Ghanaian fans cheered wildly, blasting trumpets and shouting encouragement to their team, while Mexican fans draped themselves in the Mexican flag, donned ornate and creative costumes and threw streamers. Though the event was supposedly just a friendly soccer match, the energy of the crowds and the suspense of the last few minutes felt more like a World Cup Final.

"Our games are like a mini-Super Bowl," said Gabe Gabor, media officer for the Mexican National Football Team's US tour.

This "mini-Super Bowl," which took place in conjunction with the Ghana Business Expo and the Mexico National Football Team's 15<sup>th</sup> annual US tour, was preceded by a festival around the NRG Stadium, complete with live music, appearances from Mexican soccer legends, and even a wrestling ring and full cadre of masked luchadores wrestlers.

The game, festival, and Ghanaian expo, all served to bring together Houston's international community, celebrating each country's unique qualities, while also recognizing the city that has brought so many diverse groups together. With such strong support for this international soccer match here in Houston, we look forward to next month's Manchester City vs. Manchester United game at NRG Stadium.

The graphic features a dark blue background with a starry night sky. Two spotlights at the top corners cast beams of light that converge towards the center. At the bottom, a glowing white silhouette of a city skyline is visible above a dark horizon line. The text is centered within the light beams.

SPOTLIGHT  
HOUSTON  
ISSUE FEATURE

# REFUGEE DAY IN HOUSTON



**Saturday, June 17--** Hundreds of refugees stood alongside their fellow Houstonians with hands over hearts, singing the US national anthem to honor the country that provided them a new home. Following the anthem and pledge of allegiance, Mayor Turner and other political figures, such as Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee and Representative Gene Wu, took to the stage, celebrating Houston's refugee community as a vital part of our city's thriving international culture. This scene, emblematic of Greater Houston Area's status as the most diverse city in America, commenced the 2017 World Refugee Day celebration at Levy Park.

"By living and working in Houston, our international communities contribute to our city's unique

spirit," declared Mayor Turner, addressing the crowd of onlookers.

Following the speakers was a combination of dance and song performances: musicians from Burundi - dressed in the red, white and green of their country's flag - showcased their culture through a drumming routine; a woman from Mexico danced barefoot to traditional folkloric music while balancing a candle atop her head; while opposite the stage, dozens lined up for free face painting and henna tattoos.

"It was a mosaic of arts, culture, food and people," said Ali Al Sudani, Director of Refugee Services for the Interfaith Ministries of Greater Houston. "It was an amazing opportunity for our

refugees, and to me, as a former refugee myself, to witness firsthand the true spirit of our city and the support and welcoming messages from Houstonians and elected officials."

Established in 2001 by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR, also known as the UN Refugee Agency), World Refugee Day commemorates the women, men and children who have been forced to find a new home due to instability in their own countries of origin. It is also a time for cities and communities to show solidarity to those displaced around the world and honor their unique cultures and perspectives. Here in Houston, we further celebrate Refugee Day as an opportunity to strengthen our international community.

Just weeks before this event, the United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Kelly T. Clements, traveled to Houston from UN headquarters in Geneva for a two-day visit to discuss refugees with refugee service providers, resettlement agencies, Houston Independent School District administrators, community leaders, and city officials. During a public event at Rice University, organized by the Mayor's Office of Trade and International Affairs in collaboration with the Boniuk Institute and the Baker Institute, Clements discussed the challenges of accommodating displaced refugees to a room packed with more than 200 attendees. With over half of all

refugees being under the age of eighteen, she emphasized the importance of opening our doors to our foreign neighbors.

During her speech, Clements recognized that the Welcome Houston Initiative, a task force created by Mayor Turner to develop strategies for making Houston a more inclusive place for refugees, was already taking steps in the right direction. "The Initiative recognizes that working together with new Houstonians, including refugees, is not only the right thing to do, it is also in the economic interests of the city, with foreign born residents contributing more than \$116 billion to the city's economy in 2014."

Both World Refugee Day and the visit of the Deputy High Commissioner serve as evidence of Houston's commitment to embracing its refugee community. Perhaps the best indication of Houston's bright and welcoming future was seen at the conclusion of the festival, when everyone took to the stage, dancing, laughing and imitating one another, each honoring their respective cultures while celebrating their newfound place in Houston's thriving international community. It seems fitting that the final words of Mayor Turner's speech that day were, "In Houston we don't build walls, we build relationships."



# ABOUT OUR OFFICE



**Matthew Shailer**  
Director of Trade & International Affairs  
Mayor's Office

In December 2016, Matthew celebrated his 10<sup>th</sup> year in the Houston Mayor's Office, where he has worked under three mayors to promote Houston and its citizens on the global stage. As director of the office of trade and international affairs, Matthew coordinates the various international initiatives of the mayor's team as they relate to visitor facilitation, outbound city promotion, consular affairs, international business services, community outreach and event management.

Matthew is completing a JD at the University of Houston, a MLA at the University of St. Thomas (concentration in international affairs), and has a BA and certificate in strategic foresight from the University of Houston.

## **Oni Blair**

Senior Advisor

Mayor's Office of Trade and International Affairs

Oni K. Blair, a career diplomat for the U.S. Department of State, is on loan to the Mayor's Office to advise on international trade, business development and community outreach. Prior to returning to Houston, Oni was the Director of the Office of Near Eastern Affairs in the State Department's Human Rights Bureau. Throughout her career in Washington and at the U.S. Embassies in Iraq, Pakistan, and Jordan, she has developed strategies to advance U.S. interests; managed contracts and projects of up to \$150 million; and managed large teams. She is the Chair of the Board for the non-profit Atlas Corps and a Term-Member of the Council on Foreign Relations.



**Paul Cuclis**  
Communications and Outreach Manager  
Mayor's Office of Trade & International Affairs

Paul joined the mayor's office in 2015. As a communications manager, he oversees the office's web development and social media presence, manages the monthly event calendar and quarterly newsletter, engages in outreach with office partners and assists with the coordination of largescale international events.

After graduating from Trinity University with a Bachelor of Arts in English, Paul went on to work abroad in China as both a Culture & Travel journalist and a midstream natural gas researcher. He is highly proficient in Mandarin Chinese, and an avid student of Chinese culture.

## Mayor's Office of Trade & International Affairs

### Location

Houston City Hall  
901 Bagby St., 4th Floor  
Houston, Texas 77002

### Contact Information

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# ABOUT OUR OFFICE



**Mazda Denon**

Administration Affairs and Events Manager  
Mayor's Office of Trade & International Affairs

Mazda joined the mayor's office in 2016; he has been a committed volunteer since 2013. As an Administrative Affairs and Events Manager, Mazda has a wide variety of duties including budgeting, record keeping, developing key relationships with suppliers, vendors and potential event venues, and developing signature events.

Mazda is fluent in French and English. He holds two bachelor's degrees in Accounting and Finances and is currently working on his Graduate Certificate at Texas A&M in International Affairs with emphasis in Intelligence.

**Deanea LeFlore**

Chief of Protocol  
Mayor's Office of Trade & International Affairs

Deanea develops international government relations strategies to achieve Houston's diplomatic, trade and development objectives. Daily, she liaises with members of Houston's consular corps and international partners to bring economic, cultural, and educational opportunities to Houston. Since 2001, she has overseen the visits of 30 heads of state and over 2,000 cabinet members and ambassadors, connecting these distinguished guests to Houston-area leaders and organizations.

Deanea serves on the board of Casa Cultural de las Americas and is a past board member of Protocol & Diplomacy International. She speaks fluent Spanish and is a student of Arabic. Deanea has a BA in Spanish and International Studies and is a certified protocol consultant



**Niké (Beltran) Luqman**

International Partners and Agreements Manager  
Mayor's Office of Trade & International Affairs

Nike joined the Mayor's Office of Trade and International Affairs in February 2013. She serves as the consular affairs and international partnerships manager.

Nike is a native Spaniard who's made Houston her home and the United States her country. She is fluent in Spanish and English. She graduated from Baylor University and has travelled and lived in many parts of the world, developing lasting friendships. She finds Houston and her position in the Mayor's office an extension of her passion in discovering and connecting with national and international communities.

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