



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UST Alum Authors Award-Winning Book

HOUSTON (June 27, 2006)— His passion for history was cultivated at the University of St. Thomas as an undergraduate student, was honed by his advanced studies and has culminated in an award-winning book titled “Labor, Civil Rights, and the Hughes Tool Company.”

Michael R. Botson Jr. was deliberate in his choice of where to attend undergraduate school. He chose UST because of its size, its commitment to liberal arts and the small professor-to-student ratio. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in history in 1988 and describes his schooling at UST warmly. “The magic of UST is that the education I received was not so much about what kind of job I could find with my degree but what kind of person I could be with this degree,” Botson said.

Recently retired Professor Emerita Virginia Bernhard served as inspiration and mentor. “Dr. Bernhard’s enthusiasm as a teacher and writer inspired me,” Botson relayed. “I decided to specialize in Texas history after taking her Texas history class.” Bernhard also served on Botson’s dissertation committee. And both are recipients of the prestigious T.R. Fehrenbach Book Award.

“Mike once told me he knew long ago what he wanted to write about, but knew he needed to polish his writing and research skills,” Bernhard said. “We’re very proud of him.”

Botson’s book covers a momentous but relatively obscure period in Texas labor history. Slavery’s legacy manifested in the Jim Crow laws that were enacted in the Southern and border states of the United States and in force from 1876-1964. These laws, passed on both a state and local level, segregated people along racial lines. The laws found expression in virtually all aspects of life, from education to marriage, housing, transportation, restaurants and hospitals and even drinking fountains. They were also evident at work, including the Independent Metal Workers Union of a Houston business, Hughes Tools Company.

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Botson writes, “On July 12, 1964, the National Labor Relations Board decertified the racially segregated Independent Metal Workers Union as the collective bargaining agent at Houston's mammoth Hughes Tool Company. The unanimous decision ending nearly 50 years of Jim Crow unionism at the company marked the first ruling in the Labor Board's history that racial discrimination by a union violated the National Labor Relations Act and was therefore illegal. This ruling was for black workers the equivalent of the Brown vs. Board of Education decision by the Supreme Court in the area of education.”

Botson holds a Ph.D. in history from the University of Houston and is a professor of history at Houston Community College. “Labor, Civil Rights, and the Hughes Tool Company” is published by Texas A&M University Press.

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