



**AFRICAN AMERICAN
MUSEUM IN PHILADELPHIA**



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**MURAL ARTS PHILADELPHIA/AFRICAN AMERICAN MUSEUM
ANNOUNCE EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTING
CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM WITH IMPACTED ARTISTS**

PHILADELPHIA – October 15, 2020 – Mural Arts Philadelphia, in partnership with the African American Museum in Philadelphia (AAMP), announces the *Rendering Justice* exhibition, an expansive examination of mass incarceration and an unflinching depiction of contemporary America. Curated by artist Jesse Krimes, the exhibition will be hung at AAMP and then on view as a virtual display from October 28, 2020 through January 3, 2021. **Media**

are invited to a press preview of the Exhibition on Wednesday, October 28 at 1 pm. RSVPs requested due to space limitations in order to adhere to COVID-related safety precautions.

A limited number of media will be allowed to enter the Museum to see the exhibition in person.

The artworks are part of Mural Arts Philadelphia’s *Reimagining Reentry* program, which supports artists who are

formerly incarcerated or who have been impacted by the criminal justice system in the creation of public art projects and are applying their creative practices to address critical issues of mass incarceration in Philadelphia. Works included feature varied responses to the displacement of bodies and revocation of autonomy entailed in incarceration. The works affirm how artists maintain a sense of identity, regain their agency, and grapple with coercive forces until—and after—they reenter society.

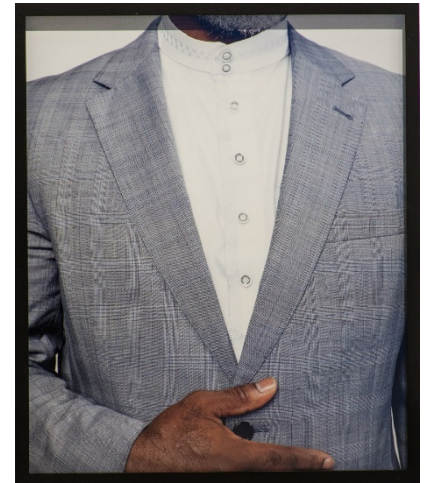


Artist Russell Craig paints Prophesied, his portrait of James “Yaya” Hough on leather. The large-scale portrait will be hung on the exterior of the African American Museum in Philadelphia as part of the Rendering Justice exhibition. Photo by Steve Weinik for Mural Arts Philadelphia.

Rendering Justice was created in partnership with the African American Museum in Philadelphia and is made possible with a grant from the Art for Justice Fund, an initiative founded by Agnes Gund in collaboration with the Ford Foundation and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors.

Mass incarceration in the United States reflects our nation's fixation on confinement and punishment, which is unmatched internationally and unprecedented in recorded history. The persistence of mass incarceration, in turn, relies on ignoring and erasing the stories of human beings upon whom the criminal justice system inflicts unspeakable suffering.

The *Rendering Justice* exhibition features a cohort of nine artists from across the country whose work highlights a broad range of issues bound in mass incarceration, with a particular focus on Philadelphia. While the number of people jailed and imprisoned by Philadelphia's criminal justice system has declined dramatically in recent years, the city remains one of the most heavily incarcerated in the nation. This exhibition focuses on rendering visible the people and perspectives hidden by the criminal justice system. The featured works constitute a broad, multifaceted response to mass incarceration using multiple mediums including video, sculpture, painting, photography, installations, poetry readings, and performances. At its core, the exhibition is not only a condemnation of the prison system, it is also an affirmation of the resilience and dignity of people who remain behind bars, and those who have come home. *Rendering Justice* helps reaffirm a larger truth: vast and rich human potential, artistic or otherwise, is wasted when 2.3 million people are behind bars.



AbdAllah Lateef and Philadelphia
by Deborah Willis, Ph.D.

The works displayed will include original artwork from *Reimagining Reentry* fellows, created through workshops with men currently incarcerated at SCI Phoenix, women incarcerated at Riverside Correctional Facility, young men and women in Mural Arts Philadelphia's Restorative Justice Guild and Art Education Programs, and formerly incarcerated members from the larger community. The artists are Russell Craig (Philadelphia, PA), Reginald Dwayne Betts and Titus Kaphar (New Haven, CT), Michelle Daniel (Jones) and Deborah Willis, Ph.D. (New York, NY), Mary Elizabeth Enoch Baxter (Philadelphia, PA), James "Yaya" Hough (Pittsburgh, PA), Jared Owens (Charleston, SC), and Michael "OG Law" TaBon (Philadelphia,

PA). For a complete list of artworks and artist bios, visit the press room at bit.ly/MuralArtsPressKit.

Jane Golden, Executive Director of Mural Arts Philadelphia, said, “How do we level the playing field for artists whose talents have been hidden? This is a question we at Mural Arts Philadelphia have been asking ourselves for years and *Rendering Justice* spotlights that inquiry. This exhibition shines a light on people whose talent has often gone unacknowledged and allows for untold stories to have a wider audience. We are grateful to the African American Museum in Philadelphia for their partnership.”

Dejay Duckett, Director of Curatorial Service of the African American Museum in Philadelphia says, “*Rendering Justice* is an exhibition that embodies art as a vehicle for activism and social justice, particularly for those whose lives have been upended by the U.S. prison system. AAMP is so pleased to be partnering with Mural Arts Philadelphia to present the work of these prolific artists.”

On the exterior of the museum, the public can visit ***Prophesied*** by **Russell Craig** which will be dedicated on October 28 and on display through January 3. *Prophesied* is a dedication to James “Yaya” Hough, who has been a mentor to the artist. Hough’s mentorship of Craig began while they were incarcerated together at State Correctional Institute at Graterford. This powerful portrait is made of leather bags sewn together and painted in Hough’s likeness. Upon close examination, the viewer will find miniature, multimedia portraits of Hough and other Black men throughout, representing the many iterations of the subject throughout his 27 years in prison. The patchwork of dismembered leather bags sourced from a former inmate and friend of Craig is tough and tanned, intended to call attention to the oppression and brutality from law enforcement, and mass incarceration Black people face in the United States. Craig enjoys the play of different materials - not just the physical application of paint with brush, but also the narrative and meaning of those materials.

Due to public gathering restrictions during the pandemic, Mural Arts Philadelphia and AAMP have developed a virtual tour of the exhibition narrated by curator Jesse Krimes and AAMP staff, providing an in-depth look at the artwork on display. The video will be accessible at both aampmuseum.org or muralarts.org beginning on October 28.

Free virtual events will spotlight the fellows and their individual works through December:

Rendering Justice, Conversation with Russell Craig & James “Yaya” Hough
Free Virtual Event

Tuesday, October 27, 5:30 - 6:30 pm

Reimagining Reentry Fellow Russell Craig and artist James “Yaya” Hough explore the experience of incarceration and how it affects artists and their work, as well as the role of mentorship both inside and outside prison walls. Upon completion of Craig’s mural that features Hough, his longtime mentor, the pair discuss the impact of their experiences in a conversation moderated by Nicole Fleetwood.

Point of Triangulation: Intersections of Identity, Conversation with Michelle Daniel (Jones) and Deborah Willis, Ph.D.
Free Virtual Event

Tuesday, November 10, 5:30 - 6:30 pm

Tuesday, November 10, 5:30 - 6:30 pm

Point of Triangulation sparks dialogue around public perception and bias. The mural design depicts five community leaders from Philadelphia who all have lived experiences of incarceration, shown from two different perspectives. On one side, each person is photographed in their prison sweats, while the image on the opposite side depicts each leader in everyday clothing they wear now that they’ve come home from prison. The figures are juxtaposed in such a way in order to contrast the narrowly prescribed identity of “criminal” or “felon” with an individual’s larger, greater truth of themselves. The installation is thus intended to humanize each person and elevate their many positive contributions to the community. It also challenges viewers to consider the stigma and perpetual re-criminalization that formerly incarcerated people confront while reflecting on their own biases or preconceptions. The subjects featured in the mural will participate in a conversation with the artists to discuss their experiences and justice reform.

Redaction, Conversation with Titus and Betts
Free Virtual Event

Thursday, December 3, 5:30 - 6:30 pm

Thursday, December 3, 5:30 - 6:30 pm

Throughout their careers, visual artist and filmmaker Titus Kaphar and memoirist, poet, and attorney Reginald Dwayne Betts have used their varied mediums to confront the abuses of the criminal justice system. Their *Redaction* series, originally on display at MoMA, presented more than 30 new prints and a series of public programs that examine the issue of money bail, the condition of the state and federal court system by which those arrested, but unable to afford bail, remain incarcerated even though they have been neither tried nor convicted. Titus Kaphar and Dwayne Betts will discuss their most recent iteration of *Redaction* which includes portraits of Guild members and features redactions of the Declaration of Independence. A large-scale mural depicting their redaction of the Declaration of Independence will eventually be installed in Philadelphia.

Dignity NOW! and Ain’t I A Woman Film Screening, Conversation with Mary Baxter
Free Virtual Event

Thursday, December 10, 5:30 - 7:30 pm

Thursday, December 10, 5:30 - 7:30 pm

Mary Baxter, aka Isis tha Savior, completed a 12-week curriculum about reclaiming dignity through storytelling with a workshop with mothers and mothers-to-be

incarcerated at the Riverside Correctional Facility. The workshop began in early December and continued through early March. Mary has produced a documentary, *Dignity NOW!*, about the storytelling process and its impact on these participants. Join us for a screening of *Dignity Now!* and Mary's previous triptych, *Ain't I A Woman*, and a discussion after the screening with Mary Baxter, hosted by BlackStar Film Festival's Artistic Director and CEO, Maori Karmael Holmes.

Other public murals are completed or in process by artists in the Fellowship. ***PhilaGuernica*** by **Jared Owens** is completed and installed at 1133 Callowhill Street, Philadelphia.

PhilaGuernica is a reimagining of Picasso's *Guernica*, turning a dystopian representation into a utopian Philadelphia ideal. The painting's original depiction of war was changed to be more hopeful and focused on the positive aspects of Philadelphia's youth culture. Designed with input from youth in Mural Arts Philadelphia's class at Northeast Treatment Centers, the mural was painted onto parachute cloth and mounted onto aluminum panels.



Point of Triangulation: Intersections of Identity by **Michelle Daniel (Jones) and Deborah Willis, Ph.D.** will be installed in late fall in the underpass at 21st Street and John F. Kennedy Boulevard, Philadelphia. *Point of Triangulation* sparks dialogue around public perception and bias. The mural design depicts



eight community leaders from Philadelphia who all have lived experiences of incarceration, shown from two different perspectives. On one side, each person is photographed in their prison sweats, while the image on the opposite side depicts each leader in everyday clothing they wear now that they've come home from prison. The figures are juxtaposed in such a way to contrast the narrowly prescribed identity of "criminal" or "felon" with an individual's larger, greater truth of themselves. The installation is intended to humanize each person and elevate their many positive contributions to the community. It also challenges viewers to consider the stigma and perpetual re-criminalization that formerly incarcerated people confront while reflecting on their own biases or preconceptions.

A third mural from **Titus Kaphar and Dwayne Betts** will be finalized and installed in the coming months.

Rendering Justice and the *Reimagining Reentry Fellowship* are supported by the Art for Justice Fund and are projects of Mural Arts' Restorative Justice program, supported by the City of Philadelphia, Berkowitz Family Foundation, Connelly Foundation, PA Department of Community and Economic Development, Fierce Advocacy Fund, Fleischner Family Foundation, Hess Foundation, Hummingbird Foundation, Jane and Joe Goldblum, Independence Foundation, Lenfest Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts, Ann & Frank Reed, Patricia Segal and Stephen Segal Family Charitable Foundation. The project is also in collaboration with the City of Philadelphia's MacArthur Foundation Safety and Justice Challenge, Managing Director's Office of Criminal Justice.

The African American Museum in Philadelphia was founded in 1976 in celebration of the nation's bicentennial and is the first institution funded and built by a major municipality to preserve, interpret, and exhibit the heritage of African Americans. The mission of the museum is to bring together diverse communities in a greater appreciation of the Black experience through the combined narrative of art, history, and culture. Throughout its evolution, the museum has objectively interpreted and presented the achievements and aspirations of African Americans from pre-colonial times to the current day.

Mural Arts Philadelphia is the nation's largest public art program, dedicated to the belief that art ignites change. For over 30 years, Mural Arts has united artists and communities through a collaborative and equitable process, creating nearly 4,000 artworks that have transformed public spaces and individual lives. Mural Arts aims to empower people, stimulate dialogue, and build bridges to understanding with projects that attract artists from Philadelphia and around the world, and programs that focus on youth education, restorative justice, mental health and wellness, and public art and its preservation. Popular mural tours offer a firsthand glimpse into the inspiring stories behind Mural Arts' iconic and unparalleled collection, which has earned Philadelphia worldwide recognition as the "City of Murals." For more information, call 215-685-0750 or visit muralarts.org. Follow along on social media: [@muralarts](#) on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), and [@MuralArtsPhiladelphia](#) on Facebook, and [phillymuralarts](#) on YouTube.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: descriptions of the artwork, artist biographies, and high-resolution images are available in the Mural Arts Philadelphia press room at <http://bit.ly/MuralArtsPressKit>.