



NEWS

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Cincinnati Park Board Names Artists Selected to Design New Monument Honoring Cincinnati's Black Brigade

*Historic monument will be first piece of public art to be installed in
Cincinnati Riverfront Park*

CINCINNATI, OH:---Artists who will design a monument to Cincinnati's Civil War-era Black Brigade—the first piece of public art to be commissioned in the new Cincinnati Riverfront Park—have been selected by the Cincinnati Park Board. The artists were approved at the Park Board's Thursday, September 17, 2009 meeting. Selected artists are John Hebenstreit and Carolyn Manto, Sculptors; Tyrone Williams, Writer; and Erik Brown, Graphic Designer. (See attachment for bios and project assignments.)

The art installation—which will be set in a grove of trees within sight of the Roebling Suspension Bridge overlooking the Ohio River—will commemorate the voluntary service of hundreds of African-American men who, in 1862, erected barricades in Northern Kentucky during the Civil War. These volunteers were later recognized as the Black Brigade, and were part of a group of 8,000 Cincinnatians who built the barricades. (See attachment for expanded history.)

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Flag of Cincinnati's Black Brigade

A call to artists and a Request for Qualifications—issued in Spring, 2009 by the Cincinnati Park Board—brought over 40 responses. A review process, led by Jan Brown Checco, Art Administrator for Cincinnati Parks, resulted in a short list of potential artists, from which the finalists were selected. The Park Board continues to maintain an Artist Registry with the names of all who applied, and may apply in the future, from which to select artists for future commissions.

The Cincinnati Riverfront Park Design Team was seeking a group of designers and artists—including sculptors, graphic designers and writers—who would work collaboratively. Their charge: To create a durable and unique monument that would be wholly reflective of the cultural diversity inherent in the story of the Black Brigade.

Over the next 15 months, individual elements of the monument—which will be installed south of new Mehring Way in the park's East Tree Grove—will be designed and fabricated. The monument's concept calls for it to be built into the earth, much like the original fortifications. It will consist of bronze statues and plaques, interpretive signs, and carved stones which will include the names of all 700 members of the brigade. Sasaki Associates, the park's designers, is working with the artist team and will be creating the overall site plan and landscape plan, to ensure that the monument is well-integrated into the site.

William Mallory, Sr. championed the cause of the monument, saying that this important story in Cincinnati's history should be memorialized for all time through a permanent monument to the bravery and sacrifice of the men of the Black Brigade.

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“The contributions of Cincinnati’s Black Brigade has been largely left out of history books, but the Black Brigade monument in Cincinnati Riverfront Park will ensure that this story will be told for all time and for all generations,” said Mallory. “On the day the park is dedicated, I want to see the grandest celebration in the history of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky.”

“This monument will provide a moving tribute to all those who advocated for social justice, freedom and equality in a time of war and upheaval,” said Willie F. Carden, Jr., Director of Cincinnati Parks. “It is fitting that this monument will be consecrated on the shores of the Ohio River where this historic struggle unfolded; and where the fight for human dignity ultimately prevailed.”

For more information about Cincinnati Riverfront Park, visit www.crpark.org; or contact Joyce Kamen, Cincinnati Riverfront Park Public Relations, at 513.543.8109; or Manda Hurdelbrink at 513.324.8610.

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ATTACHMENTS



THE STORY OF THE BLACK BRIGADE

The story of the Black Brigade signaled an important passage in Cincinnati's social history and prompted significant changes in treatment of our black population. Brutally rounded up by an appointed corps of rough-neck provost guards, dozens of black men were forced into hard labor south of the Ohio River on September 2, 1862, to build fortifications against Confederate raiders from the South. Their inhumane treatment resulted in protests in the local press that advocated passionately on their behalf. Rapid intervention by Union officers led to an invitation to the men to volunteer their services, reversing the unfair conscription. Given the same dignity of choice that was offered to the rest of the population, a total of seven hundred black men reported to serve. They felled trees, cleared brush, dug trenches, gathered materials and built barriers that ultimately prevented an invasion of Cincinnati by John Morgan and his guerillas. Under the respectful and just command of Colonel William M. Dickson, The Black Brigade was given its own company flag, and was motivated to be the most productive of all of the 8,000 men who worked on defense of Cincinnati fortifications.

SELECTED ARTISTS PROFILES AND PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS

The selected team of artists will work collaboratively, yet each finalist will have specific assignments



John Hebenstreit—Sculptor

Cincinnati sculptor John Hebenstreit works in bronze, terra cotta, wax and plaster. John's work is figurative, yet most of his effort is concentrated on creating balance within a piece. Some of his pieces include a life-size bronze bust of Cincinnati's first African-American Mayor, Theodore M. Berry, for the Cincinnati Park Board; and a life-size bronze figure sculpture of a monk commissioned by Towne Properties for the Mt. Adams Monastery as a monument to one of Cincinnati's oldest historical landmarks.

- ***John will create two life-size bronze sculptures and several bronze relief panels depicting various aspects of the Black Brigade story.***



Carolyn Manto—Sculptor

Carolyn works in classical sculpture, drawing, and painting. She has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors including the First Place Award for the 24th National Sculpture Competition in Old Lyme, Connecticut. Her bronze sculpture entitled "Joined in Freedom's Journey," is installed at the National Underground Railroad Freedom Center in Cincinnati, Ohio.

- ***Carolyn will create two life-size bronze sculptures of a mother and child and several bronze relief panels depicting aspects of the Black Brigade story.***





Tyrone Williams—Writer

Tyrone Williams teaches literature and theory at Xavier University in Cincinnati, Ohio. He is the author of two books of poetry. A new book of poems, The Hero Project of the Century, is forthcoming in 2009.

- *Tyrone will be refining text for the interpretive panels of the monument and also creating epigraphs which interpret the high relief bronze panels illustrating the story.*



Erik Brown—Graphic Designer

Erik has been involved in the creation of several unique, award-winning designs for recreational and public sign wayfinding systems, including Disney's Dixie Landings and Port Orleans resorts. Erik also designed graphics for venues at the Atlanta 1996 Centennial Olympic and Para-Olympic Games.

- *Erik will do the graphic design for the monument including typefaces, signs and maps.*