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**NEW ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM WITH
PHILADELPHIA DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE LAUNCHES**
*Mural Arts Philadelphia and Fair and Just Prosecution Announce
Resident Artist in Groundbreaking New Program*

November 21, 2019 (PHILADELPHIA) – [Mural Arts Philadelphia](#) and [Fair and Just Prosecution](#) announced today the selection of artist James “Yaya” Hough, who will be part of a groundbreaking Artist-in-Residence program at Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office (DAO). The six- to nine-month program will culminate with works of public art that explore the human toll of incarceration and highlight the importance of creating alternatives to a punitive and incarceration-driven justice system. These new works, along with programming, will offer the public and members of the District Attorney’s office a chance to engage in direct dialogue on criminal justice reform issues. This unique opportunity is one of the *Activating Art and Advocacy* projects funded by generous support from [Art for Justice](#).



The Artist-in-Residence program will not only be the first time an artist will take residency in a Philadelphia government agency, but it is also thought to be the first formal artist-in-residence program at a District Attorney’s office in the United States. The artwork will expand public awareness about the need for innovation and new thinking in the criminal justice arena and highlight the efforts being spearheaded by the Philadelphia DAO. The reach will be both local and national, with learning being shared with Fair and Just Prosecution’s network of prosecutor leaders and criminal justice stakeholders.

“Art helps us understand how the system of justice works,” said **Jane Golden, Executive Director of Mural Arts Philadelphia.** “It can be a bridge between the public and the District Attorney’s office. At Mural Arts Philadelphia, we believe that this new Artist-in-Residence program, in partnership with Fair and Just Prosecution and the District Attorney’s

Office, will demonstrate the powerful role that art and storytelling can have in helping us be part of informing policy decisions in our city. We have seen this happen over the years, and now, thanks to the *Activating Art and Advocacy* initiative from Art for Justice, we can accomplish even more in this arena.”

“Art is a powerful way to move hearts and minds and, in doing so, propel change,” said **Miriam Krinsky, Executive Director of Fair and Just Prosecution**. “This unique artist-in-residence program in Philadelphia underscores the creative thinking a new generation of elected leaders is bringing to the field of prosecution – and their efforts to drive policy change. It will bring prosecutors closer to those impacted by the justice system, strengthen understanding and bonds of trust with the community and help to promote public health and safety.”

A panel of partners on this project, as well as local Philadelphia artists, chose **James “Yaya” Hough** to be the artist collaborating with Mural Arts Philadelphia, Fair and Just Prosecution, and the DAO. During the residency, Hough will collaborate with the partner organizations to deepen the understanding between the DAO, justice-involved individuals, and communities impacted by incarceration. Through the work and the art that is created, Hough aims to center the lived experiences of justice-involved individuals and their families and to expand public awareness about criminal justice reform efforts.

“Mass incarceration feeds off of the dehumanization of other people, separating families and weakening entire communities in the process,” said **Larry Krasner, District Attorney of Philadelphia**. “There are few better demonstrations of the tremendous human potential wasted by a system of mass incarceration than the deeply moving expressions of creativity produced by formerly incarcerated artists. This innovative residency program will help reveal the spark of humanity and the potential for rehabilitation within many in the system and illuminate a way forward for this and other prosecutors’ offices. Together we can build a system that actually achieves the goal of helping people who do wrong become better and improving public safety.”

“We launched the [Activating Art and Advocacy initiative](#) to encourage artists and activists to come together and propose bold collaborations to address mass incarceration. We’re proud of the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office new Artist- in-Residence program. Through Mr. Hough’s art, this effort has the power to deliver on a big promise: expose the pain, injustice, and racial bias in our criminal justice system to meaningfully inform policy and practice,” said **Helena Huang, Project Director, Art for Justice**.

James “Yaya” Hough Biography

James “Yaya” Hough is from Pittsburgh, PA. At age 17 he was charged and convicted of murder. While Hough regrets his actions and now fully understanding how precious life is, he

also has first-hand knowledge of how punitive and unforgiving the system can be, having served 23 years of a mandatory life without parole sentence. During that time, Hough came to understand the root causes of what led him to prison. He also continued his education to better empower himself and others. Since 2006, Hough has put his artistic talent to work with Mural Arts Philadelphia as a muralist, completing over 50 projects in Philadelphia, State Correctional Institution (SCI) Graterford and SCI Phoenix. He is involved in Decarcerate PA! and Project LifeLines and seeks to be part of changing the prison system in Pennsylvania and abolishing Life Without Parole. This summer, Hough was released from SCI Phoenix. He is now living in Pittsburgh again and making art.



James "Yaya" Hough - How Big House Products Makes Boxer Shorts. Photograph: James "Yaya" Hough

About the Partners and Funder

Fair and Just Prosecution (FJP) is a national network of elected prosecutors working towards common-sense, compassionate criminal justice reforms. To learn more about FJP's work, visit the [website](#) or follow on Facebook [@FairAndJustProsecution](#).

Larry Krasner and the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office – As Philadelphia's 26th District Attorney, Larry Krasner has garnered national acclaim for his ambitious and progressive efforts to reform Philadelphia's criminal justice system, working fearlessly to shift the goals and dialogue around criminal justice towards a system that seeks to do justice, enhance accountability, and promote alternatives to incarceration and punitive responses.

The Artist-in-Residence Program is funded by the [Art for Justice Fund](#), which is disrupting mass incarceration by funding artists and advocates working together to reform our criminal justice system. It makes direct grants to artists and advocates focused on safely reducing the prison population, promoting justice reinvestment and creating art that changes the narrative around mass incarceration. This groundbreaking project will be one of the Activating Art and Advocacy projects funded by Art for Justice.

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 us on social media: @muralarts on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), [MuralArtsPhiladelphia](#) on Facebook, and [phillymuralarts](#) on YouTube.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: high-resolution samples of the artist's work are available in the Mural Arts Philadelphia press room at <http://bit.ly/MuralArtsPressKit>.