

Art Museum reveals assessment

Interviews with staff found problems and deficiencies at all levels of the hierarchy.

By **Stephan Salisbury**
STAFF WRITER

An assessment of the workplace environment of the Philadelphia Museum of Art has found problems and deficiencies at all levels of the hierarchy — from the boardroom on down, museum leaders told staff members at an online meeting Tuesday.

The assessment, conducted by VallotKarp Consulting of New

York City and based on extensive staff interviews and focus group sessions, came in the wake of allegations of inappropriate behavior and even abuse leveled against two male managers at the museum. The allegations surfaced earlier this year; neither manager is still employed by the museum.

“I was encouraged by how honest [the presentation] felt. It didn’t feel watered down. It ... painted a pretty bleak picture of the culture of the museum.”

Museum educator Adam Rizzo

Leslie Anne Miller, chair of the board of trustees, said the museum was committed to making changes in how the museum treats its staff, how it listens, and whom it hires, with greater diver-

sity and accountability the ultimate goals.

The staff interviews, conducted over the last several coronavirus-riddled months, found that many staff members questioned the museum’s commitment to achieving those precise goals. (VallotKarp did not investigate the allegations.)

“I was encouraged by how honest [the presentation] felt,” said museum educator Adam Rizzo, who had criticized the museum’s initial response to the allegations about the managers and is now among the organizers of an effort to unionize employees. “It didn’t feel watered down. It ... painted a pretty bleak picture of the culture of the museum. It wasn’t an enjoyable thing to see.” See **MUSEUM** on B4



GOING FOR THE GOLD

Tracing a projected image of the “Stay Golden” mural are (clockwise from top left) David McShane, Isaac Scott, Princeton Cangé, and Gerald Brown. Right, Cameron Jarvis does his part. The mural in Strawberry Mansion was designed by Scott, Brown, and Roberto Lugo. Its title refers to the common usage of the color gold in African Diaspora communities. Story, **B8**.



Staff photographs by **Tom Gralish**

NAACP president called out over post

Black and Jewish leaders ask that he apologize or leave for the anti-Semitic image on Facebook.

By **Chris Brennan**
STAFF WRITER

Thirteen Black and Jewish elected officials and community leaders called Tuesday for Minister Rodney Muhammad, the leader of the NAACP in Philadelphia, to apologize for an anti-Semitic image he posted on his Facebook page last week.

Some demanded that Muhammad resign or be removed from his post.

State Sen. Anthony Hardy Williams, a Philadelphia Democrat, said he would no longer work with the local NAACP if Muhammad remains in charge.

“I cannot accept anything less ... than an apology and, frankly, stepping out of the way,” Williams said in a conference call hosted by the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia.

Muhammad had already faced calls for his resignation after posting and later deleting the image Friday. It showed photos of Ice Cube, DeSean Jackson, and Nick Cannon above a caricature of a hook-nosed, yarmulke-wearing figure on the sleeve of an unseen person who is crushing a mass of people with a ring-bedecked hand.

See **MUHAMMAD** on B8



Rodney Muhammad

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Advocates say DA falling short on pretrial bail

CAMDEN: Parents can choose hybrid model or elect all-remote instruction.

By **Melanie Burney**
STAFF WRITER

The Camden School District on Tuesday released a plan to reopen schools in September with a hybrid model that allows parents to choose some in-person learning or all-remote instruction for their children.

Under a preliminary plan presented to the school board by Superintendent Katrina McCombs, students would be divided into two groups, and would spend two consecutive days in school and the remaining

three days learning at home.

Parents may also opt for all-remote learning, McCombs said. Nearly 60% of parents have indicated they were uncomfortable sending their children to school because of health concerns related to the coronavirus pandemic, she said.

Those who select virtual or online learning cannot switch to in-person learning until the second semester at the end of January. The deadline to sign up is next Wednesday.

See **CAMDEN** on B5



DA Larry Krasner's recent remarks have been cast as “racist” and “fear-mongering.”
HEATHER KHALIFA / Staff Photo

REPORT: It shows tension in the criminal justice progressive ranks.

By **Chris Palmer**
STAFF WRITER

Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner has frequently been accused by officials, including Mayor Jim Kenney, of being too lenient with defendants amid an ongoing surge in gun violence. But he’s now facing criticism from people with the opposite perspective, as bail reform advocates say his office has too often tried to send people accused of crimes to jail during the

coronavirus pandemic.

The advocates, who want to end the practice of jailing some defendants before trial unless they pay to be released, have been frustrated before over when and how often Krasner’s office asks judges to detain people before trial.

But tensions have boiled over recently, with Krasner telling the news organization Democracy Now that the city’s community

See **BAIL** on B5

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Isaac Scott climbs the scaffolding to work on "Stay Golden." Scott, Gerald Brown, and Roberto Lugo hope to "activate the community, reflect on the radical energy in the city ... and commemorate the powerful spirit of Black and brown people."

Mural aims to reflect community resilience

By Tom Gralish
STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

A mural painting is underway in Strawberry Mansion with a mission — a hope, the artists say, of “activating the community, reflect on the radical energy in the city and around the country, and commemorate the powerful spirit” of Black and brown people.

Stay Golden, as the piece is called, was organized and designed by Philadelphia artists Gerald Brown, Roberto Lugo, and Isaac Scott, and is going up at 33rd and Diamond Streets with help from Mural Arts Philadelphia.

The three artists are not traditional muralists, having backgrounds in other media.

Brown is a Chicago native who received a bachelor of fine arts degree from Syracuse University, with a double emphasis in sculpture and ceramics. Scott, a ceramic artist from Madison, Wis., is working on his master of fine arts degree at Temple University's Tyler School of Art and Architecture. Lugo, an assistant professor at Tyler, uses porcelain as his medium of choice. His work is in major museums around the world.

Long involved in social causes through their art, the three participated in the Fishtown “End Racism Now” street painting and after graduation wanted to keep the spirit generated by that project going. Brown liked that so many people came out and “were able to artistically contribute to the messaging.”

They approached Mural Arts about doing a street painting, but what they were offered was support in the creation of a mural.

The title, the artists said, is “reflective of a common usage of the color gold in

African Diasporic communities. It is a unifying color among Black and brown people and speaks to the resilience of our people through adversity.”

The artists wanted the work to be done quickly, Scott said, “while in the moment with all the protesting that’s going on in the city and around the country.”

Scott started taking pictures when the coronavirus pandemic shut down his classes at Tyler. He created an Instagram account just for his photography and began posting color shots of flowers, power lines, murals and graffiti.

Then the George Floyd protests began, and his posts were in black and white, starting with an image of a fist in the air he made at the Philadelphia Museum of Art during the first protest, on May 30. He marched with protesters, photographing everything, and two days later was among those teared up on I-676.

That fist shows up in their mural. Brown wanted it to reflect “the urgency and immediacy” of what people were saying, and went door-to-door in the neighborhood and got residents to sign on to the project. Her aim was “to make sure the mural itself existed for the people.”

While it is not a Mural Arts project, the agency provided paint, supplies, scaffolding, and technical support.

Longtime artist David McShane assisted throughout, including with the projection transfer of the artists’ sketch to the wall.

Jane Golden, Mural Arts executive director, said, “We love that they are taking a moment in time and making it into a permanent mural with a powerful message.”

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Chelsey Luster holds a paint roller. It is not a Mural Arts Philadelphia project, but that agency provided paint, supplies, scaffolding, and technical support.

TOM GRALISH / Staff Photographer



Muhammad

Continued from B1

The image included a quote — “To learn who rules over you, simply find out who you are not allowed to criticize” — often misattributed to Voltaire. The quote has been traced to a neo-Nazi convicted on a federal child pornography charge in 2008.

Williams and others on the call noted that the image is used widely by white supremacists.

The Rev. Kenneth Huston, president of the Pennsylvania conference of the NAACP, and others on the call said they hoped Muhammad’s misdeed would further mobilize the combined efforts of groups combating racism and bigotry. Huston said his group is in “deep conversation” with the NAACP’s national leadership about Muhammad.

“We are anxiously awaiting to see what our national direction will be,” Huston said. “And we’re prayerful that we will get that answer expeditiously.”

Muhammad, in an interview Friday, said he paid no attention to the image in his post. He has not apologized for sharing it.

“If the image of that man on that sleeve is offensive, then you’re opening me up to a sensibility,” he said. “I’m not going to share it anymore.”

Muhammad insisted that his point was about conversations being shut down through censorship.

“History has shown us that there have been ruthless totalitarian regimes that have shut down voice and opinion,” he said. “That certainly can’t build a healthy society.”

Steve Rosenberg of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia again called on Muhammad to resign during Tuesday’s conference call.

“We cannot allow this type of behavior from anyone, much less a leader of one of our nation’s most prolific and important civil rights organizations,” he said.

Ryan Boyer, business manager for the Laborers’ District Council, said he told Muhammad the Facebook post was “evil.”

“It dehumanizes people,” Boyer said. “It’s hurtful.”

State Sen. Sharif Street, a Philadelphia Democrat, noted that the local NAACP leader is elected by the group’s membership.

“There will be a reckoning for this, either now or in the future,” he said.

City Councilmember Jamie Gauthier said Muhammad “has repeatedly displayed his lack of compassion and understanding of the dangers of anti-Semitism.”

“The idea that a civil-rights leader would not just share [an] anti-Semitic message, but then refuse to take ownership of it and apologize, it’s not just disappointing, it’s completely unacceptable,” she said.

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