

COLORED
CONVENTIONS

PROJECT

ColoredConventions.org

Request for Qualifications

Due: Friday, March 19, 2021 by 5pm EST

The City of Philadelphia Mural Arts Program is proud to announce our partnership with the Colored Conventions Project, an award-winning initiative that brings seven decades of early Black organizing to digital life at ColoredConventions.org. Together we are seeking proposals for the first in a series of murals to be dedicated to the rich history of the Colored Conventions Movement which was founded right here in Philadelphia. The project will run approximately from the beginning of June until late summer, and the artist fee will be \$10,000. This is a two-phase selection process, in which several artists will be short-listed and then asked to prepare a concept, and the selection will be based on both qualifications and concepts. The deadline for applications is March 19.

The Colored Conventions Movement

Over the course of seven decades, hundreds of thousands of Black people traveled to attend state and national meetings publicly advertised as “Colored Conventions.” They gathered to advocate for educational justice, for voting and political rights, for access to jobs and equal pay, as well as for freedom from anti-Black violence. Launched in 1830 at Mother Bethel AME Church in the last year of Bishop Richard Allen’s life, the first meeting was held in response to white mob violence in Ohio that forced two thousand Black residents to flee to Canada. It was a meeting that launched a movement. The meeting spread to almost every state in the growing nation and into Canada where so many Black people, enslaved and free, fled in attempts to make freedom real for themselves and their children.

Philadelphia hosted four of the five first national Black convention meetings. The inaugural gathering brought Black leaders came together to discuss a national response to anti-Black violence and discrimination. Launching the movement in Philadelphia made sense. The city was home to one of the largest free Black communities in the U.S.; the most important independent Black religious denomination, Bishop Allen’s AME Church, also called Philadelphia its home. And the “City of Brotherly Love” was no stranger to the anti-Black hostilities, violence, and disenfranchisement that were central concerns of the convention movement. Black convention delegates, organizers, and attendees were often conductors of the Underground Railroad by night and convention delegates by day. In the movement’s earliest days (except for 1834), each

national convention was held again in Black Philadelphia (more were held in PHL in 1855, 1867, and 1869). The work of the "Colored Conventions" marks the beginnings of an organized, recorded, and enduring commitment to securing full and equal citizenship for Black people in North America.

Providing a powerful structure and platform for Black organizing, more than 400 state and national Colored Conventions were held between 1830 and the 1890s. Filling churches, Black Mason halls, city buildings, lecture halls, and theaters, these well-attended conventions illustrate a diversity of Black intellectual activism, cultural life and political thought. The meetings included the most prominent writers, organizers, church leaders, newspaper editors, educators, and entrepreneurs in the canon of early African American leadership—and tens of thousands more whose names went unrecorded. While most delegates were male, there were notable Black women delegates including Philadelphia's Frances E.W. Harper, the most beloved Black poet and novelist of the mid-19th century. The records show that Black women participated by raising money and creating networks, building all-important infrastructure that made the movement possible.

These Black conventions reflect the long history of collective Black mobilization. As empowering hubs of Black political thought and organizing, they provided spaces for Black communities to develop political plans and community-building projects, celebrate racial unity and protest state violence, and work tirelessly to secure Black people's civil rights. For more information visit: ColoredConventions.org

Project Goals

- Establish a vibrant work of public art inspired by the continuity of the past, present and future of narratives of Black activists, political thought leaders and free and enslaved people of color in the city of Philadelphia.
- Effectively connect The Colored Conventions Movement to the City of Philadelphia's long history of Black organizing movements through art and community engagement that creates critical discourse.
- Support the voices of Black artists, activists, business owners and scholars.
- Celebrate the innovation of digital engagement and scholarly research to uplift and tell untold narratives of Black history and life.

Artist Fee and Budget

Each of the shortlisted artists (or teams) will be paid a fee of \$500 to develop a preliminary concept.

The fee for the selected artist will be \$10,000. This is an all-inclusive fee for artist services related to community engagement, final design, mural production and mural installation.

The total budget for the mural is \$25,000 including, artist fees, artist assistant costs, supplies, materials and equipment (including lifts); technical consultants; fabrication and mural

installation. External costs such as marketing, security and evaluation will be handled by Mural Arts Philadelphia.

Artist Scope of Work

The artist will be expected to work throughout this project with a task force composed of local residents, the Colored Conventions Project team, local government representatives, Mural Arts Philadelphia staff, and selected task force members who are experts in the historical context of this project

Though a specific wall has not been selected for this project yet, the wall is expected to be in the area of the historic Wesley AME Church located at 1500 Lombard Street and site of one of the first Colored Convention's meeting.

Mural Design

The artist will be expected to complete a mural design concept from April - July 2021.

Engagement and Education

The artist will be responsible to schedule exploratory sessions to understand the historical context of the Colored Conventions in Philadelphia and to work with a select number of task force members for conceptual input that will help form the overall conceptual design of the mural.

The artist will be expected to work with the task force to plan and implement a community outreach plan with the public at large, under strict Covid-19 guidelines and regulations.

Artist Responsibilities

With support from Mural Arts staff, Artists will:

- Develop a design concept that keeps with the theme and rich history of and spirit of the Colored Conventions Movement in Philadelphia.
- Participate in up to three public community meetings regarding the design process.
- Incorporate notes to finalize the design with input from the committee and community.
- Produce approved final design into a large-scale art piece for installation at the selected site. Plan and implement the installation of the mural and collaborate with Mural Arts Philadelphia to complete the artwork within the contracted budget and schedule in Fall 2021
- Attend the mural dedication in the Fall 2021

Mural Arts Philadelphia's Responsibility:

- Provide paint and sundries for mural production.
- Provide all needs for community meetings with support from partners.
- Provide technical assistance if needed
- Coordinate marketing of the project
- Coordinate equipment and permits regarding installation

Project Detailed Schedule

- **Thursday, March 4th:** Artist Information Session@ 6 pm
Artists who apply are strongly encouraged to attend this event and **RSVP by Wednesday, March 3rd with this [link](#)**. *Note: If you have limited internet access an information sheet can be provided upon request. Those who register will automatically receive the informational sheet.
- **March 5th, 2021:** Deadline to submit any questions about the project.
- **Friday, March 19th @ 5 pm EST RFQ submissions are due**
- **The week of March 29th:** Task Force meets to select a shortlist.
- **Week of April 13th:** Selected artists will have an opportunity for dialogue with the task force to help artists shape design proposals and engagement plans.
- **Tuesday, April 27th:** Scheduled Task Force meeting
- **Monday, May 3:** Shortlisted artists present design proposals and engagement plans with preliminary feedback from the task force.
- **Tuesday, May 27:** Task Force selects finalists.
 - Implementation of the community engagement process.
- **Week of July 12:** Selected artist/ team completes the design review process
 - Meeting(s) to plan project implementation/painting
- **October-** Painting complete
- **Fall Dedication/** Press conference

Artist Selection Process

Eligibility

We are seeking artists, artist collaboratives or artist teams who can make a commitment to working in Philadelphia as necessary to fulfill the responsibilities of this project. For the purposes of this RFQ “artist” refers to an individual artist or a collaborative team of artists. Artists who are culturally connected to the subject matter are strongly encouraged to apply. Collaborative groups may apply, but please note that we cannot offer additional funding to groups. Artists must be citizens of the U.S. or have U.S. work authorization.

Selection Process

Artist qualifications/portfolios are being solicited by Mural Arts Philadelphia. Mural Arts, its artistic advisors, and key stakeholders will review the artist submissions and identify a short list of finalists.

This will be a two-round selection process. Two to three artists/teams will be short-listed to present a design proposal to the project task force. Mural Arts and the task force will select one artist or artist team from the short list, and then award the final contract.

The decision will be based on a review of artist/team qualifications and the final design proposal. Mural Arts is not required to select from the submissions it receives if, in Mural Arts’ judgment the relevance, quality, or the qualifications of the artists are not appropriate.

Round One

Artist qualifications / portfolios must be submitted to Mural Arts Philadelphia by **March 19th**.

The project task force will review the artist submissions and identify a short list of finalists.

Up to two to three artists/ will be short-listed and invited to create and present a design concept and community engagement plan.

Round Two

Shortlisted artists will be offered a design fee of \$500 to create a two-dimensional representation of their concept to be presented publicly to the assembled task force and community at large.

Following the community presentation meeting, Mural Arts Philadelphia, and The Colored Conventions Project representatives will meet to consider all variables and confirm the one design that will move forward to production.

Please note: Though chosen by the task force, the artist will still need to go through the internal design review process at Mural Arts Philadelphia for detailed review and confirmation of budget adherence before the design can be considered finalized.

Qualifications and Review Criteria

The evaluation of artist/team qualifications will be based on a review of completed works, works in progress, or as otherwise described in curatorial writings, critiques, articles or other publications. The artists' qualifications shall demonstrate:

- Ability to create work that engages a wide audience around complex historical narratives, activism, and social justice issues.
- Ability to research historic records and images and use primary resources in effective community outreach as well as incorporating ideas and inspirations into a concept for the mural project.
- Artists should submit their community engagement ideas along with their experience or thought of how to handle this remotely during COVID-19.
- Artists who create digital content material, create new technology platforms, engaging social media, and digital artwork are encouraged to apply.
- Availability to work on and complete the project within the proposed timeframe.
- Experience accomplishing projects of similar complexity within the budget, timeline and technical constraints presented, based on examples of prior work.
- Experience in managing, facilitating and participating in dialogues around social justice issues.
- Ability to create site-specific artwork that is responsive to the opportunities and constraints of the site.
- Experience in creating permanent, durable, outdoor public artworks.

Application Process

Preliminary Consultation

Artists who are interested in submitting their qualifications are encouraged to contact Mural Arts with any questions about the project. All questions should be submitted by **Friday March 5th, 2021** to maya.thomas@muralarts.org

Artist Information Session

Artists who intend to apply are strongly encouraged to attend the artist information session scheduled for Thursday, March 4th the at 6pm. **RSVP by Wednesday, March 3rd [here](#)**. All artists who register will have an informational sheet emailed to them following the meeting regardless if you attend the session or not. This session is open to the public. The recorded session will also be made available on the Mural arts webpage.

Submission Requirements

Interested artists should submit:

- A CV or resume for each artist or member of the team. (one page max.)
- A short-written response that answers each of these following questions:
 - Describe your experience or interest in working with historical research to create engaging public art works.
 - What interests you about the historical narrative of the Colored Conventions Movement in Philadelphia?
 - Describe your experience creating artwork that deals with social justice issues, supports critical dialogue, scholarly research and highlights important activist movements of the past and present.
 - If an artist team, how would your collaborative process work?
 - Discuss any other aspects of your practice that will assist us in evaluating your qualifications in the context of the goals and review criteria listed in this RFQ.
- Up to 8 images total, of past completed work that you consider relevant to this project.
 - Digital images must be JPEG files and must be no more than 300dpi and no larger than 1024 × 768-pixel resolution. Each image must be unlocked and downloadable for viewing.
 - Each JPEG file must be titled with the artist's name and number that corresponds to the annotated image list. File name example: JonesJane001, JonesJane002.
- Please provide a list of images, including the following information:
 - Image name, Artist's name
 - Title of artwork, Location, Date of Completion, Public Art Budget
 - Medium and Dimensions
 - Brief description
 - A list of minimum two references

Submission Instructions

Submissions will be accepted electronically by email, Dropbox or WeTransfer, please submit your application materials in one folder file attachment and send to the following email address:

Email community@muralarts.org

Subject: Colored Conventions Project

Mural Arts will reply with an acknowledgement of all submissions it receives. Questions or concerns can be directed to Maya Thomas, Project Manager Community Murals, Mural Arts Philadelphia: maya.thomas@muralarts.org

Partners

The Colored Conventions Project documents nineteenth-century Black collective organizing and highlights the many leaders and places involved in the convention movement, bringing them to digital life for new generations of researchers, students, and community scholars. The award-winning project has more than quadrupled the number of state and national records that document the movement, making them fully searchable and freely accessible for the very first time. CCP's curriculum and interactive exhibits have involved thousands of college and high school students and teachers across North America. CCP has been featured in outlets such as the [New York Times](#) and Forbes magazine. It was selected as a [NEH Essential Project](#) alongside the Dead Sea Scrolls, George Washington Papers, the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, and Ken Bruns's Civil War. It has won grant support from the NEH, the Mellon Foundation and the Council on Library and Information Resources. CCP's [principles](#) seek to mirror the collective work and partnerships used by the conventions themselves. Founded at the University of Delaware, it is now housed at Penn State University's Center for Black Digital Research, or #DigBlk, alongside DouglassDay.org and the soon-to-be launched early Black Women's Organizing Archive. For more information visit ColoredConventions.org or consult *The Colored Conventions Movement: Black Organizing in the Nineteenth Century* edited by the project's co-directors.

Mural Arts Philadelphia is the nation's largest public art program, dedicated to the belief that art ignites change. For 30 years, Mural Arts has united artists and communities through a collaborative process, rooted in the traditions of mural-making, to create art that transforms public spaces and individual lives. Mural Arts engages communities in nearly 100 public art projects each year and maintains its growing collection through a restoration initiative. Core Mural Arts programs such as Art Education, Restorative Justice, and Porch Light yield unique, project-based learning opportunities for thousands of youth and adults. In recent years, Mural Arts has evolved into a multi-disciplinary arts organization exploring the intersection of muralism, public art and contemporary art. In addition, Mural Arts has collaborated with an increasing range of community, civic, cultural and development organizations to realize projects that have expanded the city's public art portfolio in new and exciting ways. Increasingly, Mural Arts has assisted in private organizations in commissioning artworks that engage the communities where they are working. For more information: <https://www.muralarts.org/>