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WASHINGTON GLADDEN SOCIAL JUSTICE PARK

MESSAGE OF UNITY



Sculpture aims to show everyone is equal

Danae King | Columbus Dispatch | USA TODAY NETWORK

The sculpture installed Downtown last month at the corner of East Broad Street and Cleveland Avenue offers a message that is much needed right now, says the Rev. Joel King. • The cousin of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. attended the unveiling of the "Our Single Garment of Destiny" sculpture on Jan. 18 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day – shortly before the beginning of Black History Month, which is February. • The sculpture's name comes from words the late civil rights leader wrote in "Letter from Birmingham Jail" published in 1963. The paragraph featuring the sculpture's name reads, in part: "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

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Boy saved as organ donations set record

Ohio transplant effort aided nearly 450 in 2020

Megan Henry | Columbus Dispatch
USA TODAY NETWORK

Tyler Parker knew his whole life he would eventually need a lifesaving gift, a new liver.



Parker

The 13-year-old Columbus resident was born with Alagille syndrome, a rare genetic disorder that can affect multiple organ systems in the body, including the liver, heart, skeleton, eyes and kidneys.

Liver damage is a signature feature of Alagille syndrome.

"We knew at some point he was going to need a transplant," said Tyler's mom, Holly Parker. "It wasn't if – it was when."

The family, who live on the Northeast Side, got the call about Tyler's new liver in the early hours of March 12, after waiting on the transplant list for 15 months, and the now-seventh grader at Dominion Middle School received a new liver later that day at Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus.

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GOP senators

Teri Grant of Columbus, far left, brought her grandchildren to the Washington Gladden Social Justice Park in Downtown on Jan. 18 to see a new sculpture inspired by Martin Luther King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail." Grant's grandchildren, from left, are Lia Cooper, 8; Xavier Cooper, 12; and Troy Cooper, 14. FRED SQUILLANTE / COLUMBUS DISPATCH

Sculpture

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Joel King of Gahanna believes the message of unity that the sculpture offers is critically needed, especially during a time of racial tension in the city. He noted the 174 homicides in Columbus in 2020, including two Black men shot and killed by police officers in December.

"We're still all in this one garment together. We're going to have to work together or we're going to perish as fools," he said.

The 5,500-pound metal sculpture features the shapes of six people, modeled off of real-life social justice advocates living in the artists' hometown of Portland, Oregon.

"I think it was a beautiful piece of art-work and structure for that park," King said of the sculpture's placement as the first installation at the Washington Gladden Social Justice Park.

Artists Julian and Adriana Voss-Andreea, a husband and wife, made the sculpture so that when the piece is viewed from a certain angle, it almost disappears because of its construction using thin vertical plates.

That, too, is part of its message. "It literally disappears," said the Rev. Tim Ahrens, senior pastor at the neighboring First Congregational Church. "That whole concept that we are woven together and at many points there are those in our fabric of the family that disappear ... in an individual family and society."

To Joel King, the transformation of the sculpture as one walks around it represents generations phasing in and out, and people still having to continue living and fighting for social justice.

"I hope they see the beauty," he said. "We're all God's people. We all need one another."

The sculpture "honors those in the past that fought for social justice while also creating an inclusive, inspirational space for people to come together to continue this fight," Julian Voss-Andreea said in a streamed dedication of the sculpture.

Jo Ann Hardesty, a Portland city commissioner, said in the dedication that she was one of the social justice activists the piece was modeled after.

"When we bring who we are to this work for racial, social and economic work ... we can create the kind of beauty



A new sculpture, "Our Single Garment of Destiny," was unveiled Jan. 18 on Martin Luther King Jr. Day at Washington Gladden Social Justice Park at the Columbus College of Art & Design. When viewed from different angles, the sculpture seems to disappear, representing people who are invisible to the rest of society. FRED SQUILLANTE/COLUMBUS DISPATCH

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The Rev. Joel King
Cousin of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

that you will see displayed today," Hardesty said. "This is part of the legacy that's been unfulfilled, but we are the people to finish Dr. King's legacy and to make sure we have equality for all of us."

The sculpture is the social justice park's first art installation. The park was originally dedicated in October 2018 as the first such park in the country.

Nannette Maciejunes, executive director of the Columbus Museum of Art, was on the selection committee for the sculptors of the piece, which did a nationwide search before selecting the Portland couple.

The committee was charged with deciding the placement of the first piece of art in the park before getting started, said Maciejunes, and it was arts donor Loann Crane who said the first piece needed to be on the corner.

"That will define the corner," Maciejunes remembers Crane saying. "It's got presence because it's on Broad Street, the front of the park. It also is an entry point to the arts campus and the Columbus College of Art and Design and the Columbus Art Museum."

The Crane Group and the Crane family donated an undisclosed amount of money for the sculpture.

Crane pointing out the significance of this being the first piece was a turning point in the selection process for Maciejunes. She said the sculpture will define the quality of what else will be in the park, what it's about and what it's trying to share with the community.

"It has such presence," Maciejunes

said of the sculpture. "I'm just so excited. The quality of other pieces now have to step up to that."

Ahrens hopes the sculpture becomes a public art piece that people flock to and circle around, like "Cloud Gate," a bean-shaped mirrored sculpture in Chicago.

"I just want it to be a piece that takes you out of yourself and stays with you so you never forget. No. 1 how we're connected, and No. 2, how some of us get lost in our society and disappear," Ahrens said.

Ahrens read Martin Luther King Jr.'s letter with new eyes when the sculpture came to the park.

"He is speaking to the United States of America," Ahrens said of Martin Luther King Jr. "We need to see ourselves as one single garment tied together, that what affects one obviously unknowingly affects another."

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