

For Immediate Release
June 3, 2021

‘Making Space’ Kicks Off Mural Project

Elgin, IL- The Elgin Social Justice Collective’s *Making Space* project kicks off the mural portion of their project this Saturday, June 5, 2021 with a mural site re-dedication at the pocket park, otherwise known as Butcher’s Alley, in Downtown Elgin. Additional mural engagement sessions are scheduled in the coming days with the goal of gathering as much community input as possible.

The site of the new mural has historically been a place for public art in Elgin. The location for the new mural is where a community art mural stood for 10 years in Elgin. In 2016, the painted image was discovered to be the bottom half of a famous lynching photograph. Protests erupted and the mural, “American Nocturne,” was taken down. There were many public meetings for the public to express their anger, frustration, and hurt regarding this mural. Most people expressed their thoughts as feeling tricked or duped. The empty mural supports have stood for the past five years as a reminder that public art is meaningful, significant, and should tell the truth. When the Elgin Social Justice Collective (ESJC) was formed, it was decided very early on that any permanent mural should be located in the pocket park where the previous mural stood for so long, and that it would be accompanied by plentiful signage and a QR code to view the project documentary.

This first event is something that Jeanelle Austin of the George Floyd Global Memorial, recommended to project facilitator, Dr. Rise’ Jones and ESJC co-founder, Paige Roeber. Working with local faith leaders, the Mural Site Re-Dedication event is intended to acknowledge the previous hurt of the mural site and re-dedicate the site to a new purpose, moving towards healing and a reclamation of power and intention. Speakers include the mural artist, Pablo Serrano; Pastor Andrea Williams of Community Center Christina Ministries; Pastor Tate of Progressive Baptist Church; Reverend Halbert of St. James AME Church; Reverend Barry Jones of New Hope Baptists Church; Reverend Allen of New Beginnings Ministries Worldwide; and Pastor Blalark of Living Gospel Church of God and Christ.

Residents are encouraged to attend the Mural Site Re-Dedication and bring along photos, stories and mementos of their lived experiences to install on the mural poles. This act is intended to represent a physical reclamation of the space and its new use. Items will be left on the poles for the duration of the weekend, allowing the opportunity for the Elgin community members to see these on display and add to it. Artist Pablo Serrano will work to incorporate these into the new mural. The space will also host members of the documentary team with a series of prompts for attendees to speak to for possible inclusion in the documentary. This content will also help to shape the final mural.

Additional programming for the day includes the first installation and use of one of the Art Cubes, which serves as a blank canvas for community members to speak to their experiences with the Black Lives Matter movement and its impact on their lives. Three cubes will be located around Elgin, one at Wing Park, one at the future mural location, and one at Elgin Community

College, all of which will be on display and available for use for 3 weeks. After the display is completed, the Art Cubes will be documented, dismantled and stored in anticipation of the next Juneteenth event when they will reappear for use.

For those not able to attend the event, there are many other mural input sessions planned. These mural engagements are intended to get input from Elgin residents on what they hope to see in the new mural. The following events are planned in order to reach as many people as possible:

- June 7th 5:30-7:00pm at the mural site. Art Cube Engagement and story sharing with artist Pablo Serrano. Bring your paint to install art in real time on the Art Cubes and share stories of your life to help inspire the new mural going up in the pocket park in downtown Elgin.
- June 8th 11:30am-12:30pm, 2:30pm-3:30pm, and 5:30pm-6:30pm via zoom. Mural input sessions with artist Pablo Serrano.
- June 11th 4:00pm-6:00pm at the Downtown Neighborhood Association's Farmers Market. Meet artist Pablo Serrano and share your thoughts, ideas and goals on the new mural.
- June 12th 10:00am-12:00pm at the mural site. Meet artist Pablo Serrano and share your thoughts, ideas and goals on the new mural.

For those that are unable to attend any of the mural engagements, an online survey has been created. The survey is offered in both English and Spanish and is available on the website (<https://elginhistory.org/making-space/>). The survey will be available through mid-June.

“Making Space: a mural and documentary project” was announced in late 2020 under the leadership of the Elgin Social Justice Collective and is sponsored by the Elgin Cultural Arts Commission, the Elgin Human Relations Commission, Side Street Studio Arts, the Elgin Area Chamber, Funky Rooster Tattoo and Art Gallery, the Downtown Neighborhood Association and the Elgin History Museum. The project has been supported with a grant from the Illinois Department of Public Health in partnership with The Chicago Community Trust.

The Elgin Social Justice Collective is a group of community volunteers, founded by Paige Roeber and Corey Dixon, that came together to identify and develop a project that would address questions that arose during protests of this past summer.

Keep up to date and find out how you can support the project by liking and following us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/ElginMakingSpace](https://www.facebook.com/ElginMakingSpace) or checking the webpage (<https://elginhistory.org/making-space/>) for updates. For more information about the project as well as sponsorship information, contact Amanda Harris at makingspace@elginhistory.org.

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