

The African American Heritage Museum of Southern New Jersey
Traveling Museum

Catalog Items

Docent # 15 – Paintings

Print

"The Problem We All Live With"

Painting of the Ruby Bridges Story by Norman Rockwell

1966

This painting, by the great American painter and Saturday Evening Post illustrator Norman Rockwell, portrays the story of the first day of school for a young African American girl by the name of Ruby Bridges. On November 14, 1960, six-year-old Ruby Bridges, surrounded by federal marshals, became the first African-American student to attend the all-white William Frantz Public School in New Orleans, Louisiana. It was in 1960 that a federal court ordered the desegregation of schools in the South, and although Ruby Bridges' father thought she could get a perfectly good education at an all-black elementary school, Bridges' mother insisted that her daughter pave the way for other black children in the newly-integrated school system. On the morning of her first day at Frantz Elementary School in New Orleans, Ruby Bridges' mother told her: "Now I want you to behave yourself today, Ruby, and don't be afraid." Ruby and her mother went to the school where so many people were outside shouting and throwing things that the little girl thought it must be Mardi Gras. She seemed to be remembering her mother's words as she entered the school without showing any fear at all. Despite the fact that it was 1960, there were U.S. marshals walking beside her, and she was the first black child to enter an all-white school in the history of the American South.

(R40)

Print

"Ancestors in Conference"

Painting of the Black Last Supper by Kolongi

This painting portrays the Bajan artist Kolongi's vision of what "The Black Last Supper" would have looked like. In attendance would have been, Haile Sellassie, Bob Marley, Frederick Douglas, Kwame Nkrumah, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Malcolm X, Maurice Bishop, Patrice Lumumba, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Elijah Muhammad, Marcus Garvey, and the Unknown Soldier.

(R41)

Catalog Items

Docent # 15 – Paintings

Flag

“Faith, Love, Justice and Non – Violence”

The Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Flag is full of symbolism. The significance of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. flag is thus so:

* **The expression on his face** in the circle is one of contemplative regret, as if to say: "I have seen the Promised Land; I may not get there with you".

* The **black circle** represents the never-ending struggle of African-Americans to achieve freedom and justice.

* The **twenty - two stars** represent the **twenty - two times** King went to jail fighting for justice and equality. They also represent the students who engaged in sit-ins all over the South. He had said, "Only when it is dark enough can you see the stars" who are the dedicated civil rights workers. King considered other stars in the civil rights movement to be the freedom riders that decided to take a ride for freedom to end segregation. In addition, he said the stars were "the Negroes in Albany, Ga., who decided to straighten their backs up, and when men and women straighten their backs up they are going somewhere, because a man can't ride your back unless it is bent". The stars also were "the Negroes of Birmingham, Ala., who aroused the conscience of this nation and brought into being the Civil Rights Bill", and King said the darker the hour, the brighter they shone.

* The **five stripes** represent the colors of the whole human race, for whose freedom King sacrificed his life.

* In addition, **the green background** comes from the **23rd Psalm** - "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures, he restoreth my soul".

(K71)