



STANWYCK CROMWELL (ABOVE); SYHELINA METAFERA (RIGHT)
 Above: One of two pieces contributed by Stanwyck Cromwell for Eastern Connecticut State University's virtual exhibit, "Racism: The Other American Pandemic." Right: Helina Metafera exhibits her work in the virtual exhibit, which will be available until Sept. 8.

A persistent crisis

'Racism: The Other American Pandemic' virtual exhibit at ECSU until Sept. 8

BY SUSAN DUNNE

The fight for racial justice has defined 2020, as much as COVID-19 has. And as the coronavirus pandemic surges, recedes and surges again, "Racism: The Other American Pandemic," an exhibit at Eastern Connecticut State University reflects a crisis that has been surging for 400 years.

More than 30 artists contributed work to the show, which highlights aspects of the Black experience, focusing primarily on systemic racism.

"Racism is an invisible plague that has been lodged in our social bodies for the last four centuries," said Yulia Tikhonova, coordinator of gallery and museum services at ECSU, who curated the exhibit.

"It hides in our subconsciousness. It affects our most daily routine and thoughts. It is a caste system, whose rules and restrictions and privileges are the very air we breathe every day. It is impossible to

escape, whether as victim or perpetrator," Tikhonova said.

The artworks in the exhibit range from images intended to shock – depictions of lynchings and Klansmen – to others that celebrate the beauty of Black women. Some artworks reflect historical view of the races; one artist, Dread Scott, takes his name from one of the most infamous decisions in the history of the U.S. Supreme Court. Other works acknowledge the dignity and necessity of outrage and protest.

The exhibit shows the power of the Black Lives Matter movement to transcend borders. Irish artist Emmalene Blake contributed a mural of George Floyd. Ruhee Maknoja, whose work is inspired by Middle Eastern influences, puts a unique spin on the KKK in her artwork. Québécois artist Nicole Royer

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Filmmakers challenged to shoot while staying safe

Works from 48-Hour Film Project New Haven screen Aug. 6

BY SUSAN DUNNE

Every summer, for one week-end, small filmmaking crews fan out across Connecticut to compete in 48-Hour Film Project New Haven. Their challenge is to write, shoot, edit and release a short film in just two days.

Last year, Josh Therriault made the 7-minute thriller "Freedom" in Bristol, with his 17-person cast and crew. The film had fight scenes, a wedding scene, scenes of bodies being dragged around. It being 2019, these characters had never heard of social

distancing.

The 10th annual 48-Hour Film Project New Haven is scheduled to go on, from July 31 to Aug. 2, with 28 teams competing. This year's competition has a new twist. Due to the coronavirus pandemic, filmmakers have to think of ways to make their films without putting their cast and crew members, or any passersby, in danger of COVID-19 exposure.

"It'll be harder to film on location probably. A lot of people will either be outside or in their own homes," said Trish Clark, producer of 48-Hour Film Project New Haven.

Therriault – whose film last year won the contest and went on to compete at Filmopalooza in Rotterdam in the Netherlands – is

taking that challenge and getting creative with it.

His contest team, called Get a Grip, has figured out a way to make the movie remotely, with the cast and crew in separate locations. Therriault and three partners will be in editing bays far apart from each other at his home in Bristol.

"Actors are all going to be remote. We will be reading scripts via Zoom. They will record on devices we are sending out to them and they will Dropbox me the files," he said.

For 48-Hour Film Project New Haven, teams will be assigned a genre at the virtual kickoff event Friday. Each team draws two

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JOSH THERRIAULT

Josh Therriault, holding the camera, filmed "Freedom" in Bristol last year for the 48-Hour Film Project New Haven. This year, all of the competing film crews must make their movies in ways that do not expose their casts and crews to coronavirus contamination.

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embraces Black Lives Matter in her abstracted works.

Among the artists are inmates from Garner Correctional Institution in Newtown, who offer both visual and written works. One writer, identified only as N. Gaines, wrote a poem:

*Strip me of my cover, my skin
See I for what I am
Look to discover and you will find
One mind, one body, one soul
Colorless as the transparent sky
Defined by the speech of my words
And intent of my actions
I'm an individual
Bounded not by group or race*

The title of Patrick Martinez's artwork gets straight to the point of the exhibit: "Racism Doesn't Rest During a Pandemic."

Seeing progress

Stanwyck Cromwell of Bloomfield contributed two pieces. "My Soul Says Yes" is named after a gospel song and depicts an aged Black person staring out over a collage of pieces of the U.S. Constitution.

"This person of color has lived a long time and has weathered many racial storms and is seeing progress," Cromwell said. "I put the pieces of the Constitution together like a puzzle, something you have to piece together. It asks, does the Constitution apply to everybody or just a chosen few?"

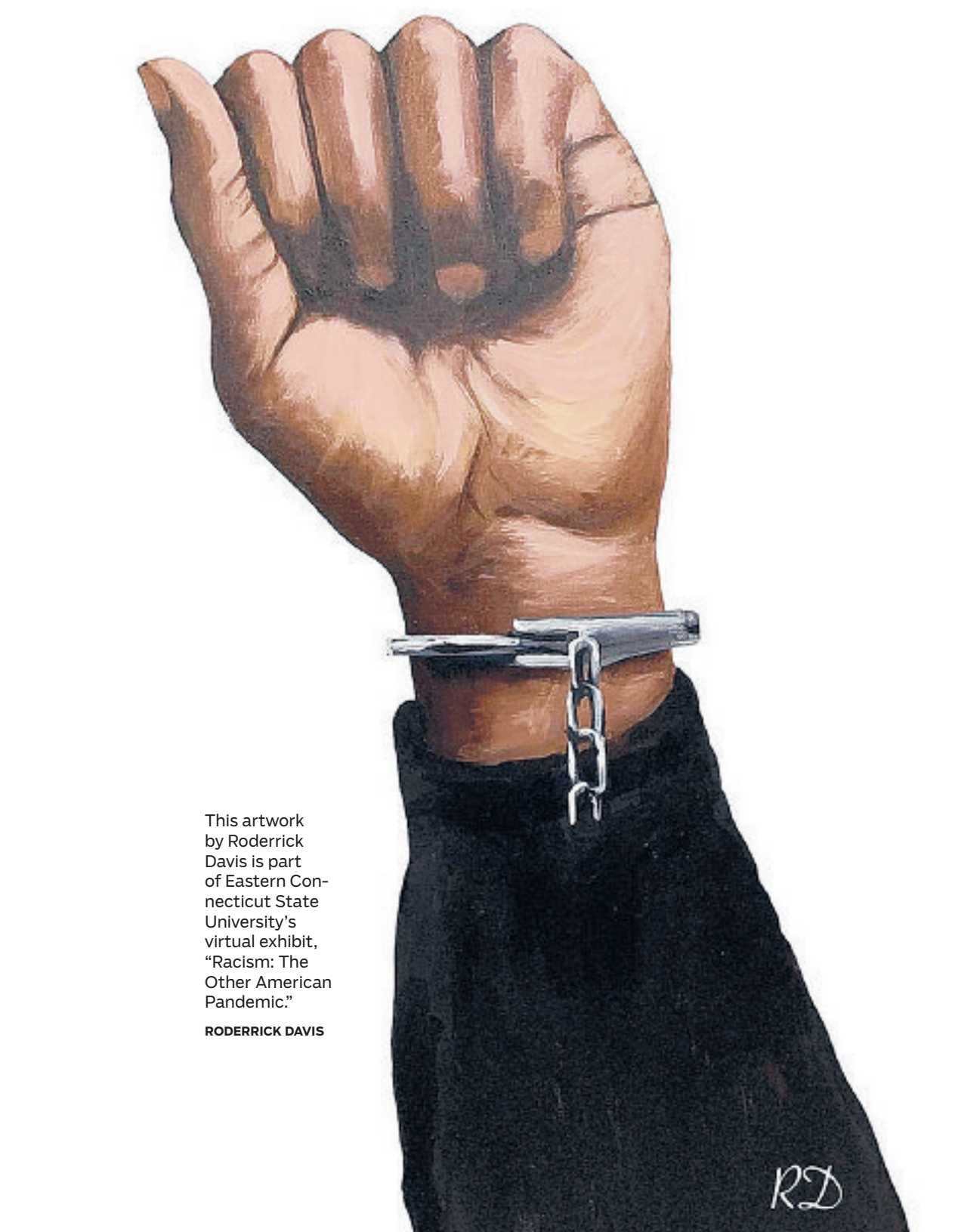
"My Message to You," is about voting rights, which mean a lot to the Guyanese-born artist. "When I became a naturalized American citizen and I appreciate that you can vote," he said. "If you don't vote, you don't have a voice and you shouldn't complain."

'The revolution is coming'

Roderrick Davis is an artist based in Townsend, Georgia, not far from where Ahmaud Arbery, an unarmed Black man, was gunned down by three white men on Feb. 23, 2020. Davis' piece is called "We went from shackles to handcuffs but now the revolution is coming." It depicts an arm with fist raised, with a handcuff on the wrist.

"I feel that the fist represents the struggle, everything we've been through throughout the years, not just recently, everything from slavery on to police brutality," Davis said. "I wanted the piece to have a sense of hope. We didn't begin here. We didn't begin as slaves. We began as kings and queens. We won't end here. I feel like in the future there's a lot for my people."

Davis said his title was inspired by the current mood of protest. "I feel like



This artwork by Roderrick Davis is part of Eastern Connecticut State University's virtual exhibit, "Racism: The Other American Pandemic."

RODERICK DAVIS



COURTESY PATRICK MARTINEZ/CHARLIE JAMES GALLERY
This artwork is part of Eastern Connecticut State University's "Racism: The Other American Pandemic."

we're at a place in America when everybody is waking up. We're starting to get more allies," he said. "The whole Black Lives Matter thing. When it first came out it was kind of taboo to say it or wear a t-shirt. But now it's being painted in the streets across America. It's no longer a Black vs. white thing. It's a right vs. wrong thing."

Repetitive protests

Nicky Enright, a Latinx

artist from the Bronx, contributed two pieces to the show. His mixed media-on-cardboard, "57 Years Ago," was inspired by a Gordon Parks photo taken at a protest in 1963.

"One thing that is so striking and upsetting to me is how these protests are ultimately repetitive. We're constantly protesting the same thing. You feel like it doesn't change," Enright said. "Here's this guy with a sign saying 'stop police brutality.' It was taken 57 years ago. That's longer than I've been alive."



Artist Nicky Enright is part of Eastern Connecticut State University's virtual exhibit.

Enright's second piece, "Security Blanket" is painted on a Mylar blanket similar to those given to immigrant children who are being detained at the border.

"When you are detaining adults you can say all sorts of things, that they are enemies, criminals. But there's no way you can in good faith say that a child is somehow your enemy," he said. "The minute you detain children, there's no way around it, you are a criminal."

Trapped in their bodies

Aisha Tandiwe Bell of New York makes artworks on wooden canvases, where flat images are dominated by a head emerging, in 3D, out of the space. Bell said the heads literally emerge because people are symbolically emerging, or trying to emerge, from societally imposed limitations.

"My work is about the traps of race, sex and class. ... People are trapped in their bodies, in their place

in quote unquote society, in the skin they're placed in," she said. "Some people are always finding ways of negotiating and climbing out of those spaces."

Bell contributed two pieces, with poetic titles. "drip sweat sweet candy cane stripes like blood or prison," is a red-and-white striped figure, with Bell playing with multiple interpretations of stripes.

The second work is titled "My fist have been punching the air so long / a moment these rays thought waves." "This character looks like a person putting a fist in the air. But you could also see the fist across the head. I can look at it as a protest piece. Also I can look at it as laying back and the rays cascading on skin," she said. "It's that in-between moment. That space between change and stillness."

A nebulous sadness

New York artist Marvin Toure's sculpture, "Big Cry," is an anguished man, made of pieces of action figures, covered with black dripping paint. The work is from Toure's series Black Bile. In Medieval medicine, black bile was believed to cause melancholy, a subject Toure knows well.

"It's based on my journey with anxiety and dealing with depression at times. What does it mean to have a nebulous sadness without any specific cause?" Toure said.

Toure says the Black community often hesitates to seek medical or psychological help. "There is a lack of trust in the institution of medicine," he said. "It has a historical precedent with some of the more heinous acts committed against Blacks."

The hesitance goes deeper than that, he adds. "There are cultural things about keeping certain business in-house, and a heavy religious influence, telling people just go to the church and talk to a pastor instead," he said.

Toure wants his work to deal with serious issues like this by using the "objects of innocence," such as toys, to make the topics more accessible. "I want to create a threshold where people can engage with complex and charged ideas," Toure said.

Other artists in the show are Joyce Kozloff, Nate Lewis, Vincent Valdez, Ruben Natal-San Miguel, Shirien Damra, Courtney Ahn, Cecile Chong, Nick Cave-Bob Faust, Josh Weber, Phoebe Godfrey, Juanita Lanzo, Angela Siao, Dominique Roberts, Dane Adrian Smith, Viviane Rombaldi Seppey, Suzanne Brouhgel, Beatrice Coron, Edra Soto, Helina Metaferia, Felandus Thames and Gail Gelburd.

The timely exhibit "Racism: The Other American Pandemic" can be seen virtually at easternct.edu/art-gallery/racism-an-american-pandemic.html until Sept. 8.

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Film

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genres. They can choose one of them. The genres are action/adventure, comedy, dark comedy, cop, drama, fantasy, "film de femme" (female-centric), horror, musical, mystery, romance, school, sci-fi, thriller, Western, animal, buddy, climate issues, family, fish-out-of-water, generation gap, mockumentary, period, politics, road movie, silent film, slapstick, sports, spy and vacation/holiday.

Also, each film must include three specific plot elements, which filmmakers don't know until the kickoff. This prevents films from being made in advance of the competition weekend.

Therriault said he isn't worried that his carefully prepared approach won't work with the genre he gets.

"Regardless of what it is, we constantly are saying, 'I don't think this is gonna



BRIAN KUENN
Brian Kuenn, holding the camera, filmed "Muse" in Norwich last year for the 48-Hour Film Project New Haven. This year, all of the competing film crews must make their movies in ways that do not expose their casts and crews to coronavirus contamination.

work," Therrien said of other film projects he has worked on. "No matter what type of film we're doing, you get the cast locked in and it's a scramble on that day."

Brian Kuenn of Stonington competed last year, too, making a film called "Muse" with his 13-member team, called Newbreed. They shot it inside

an office building in Norwich.

This year, Kuenn anticipates the whole film will be shot outdoors. "We've figured out our locations and eliminated any kind of restaurant, bar or coffee shop," Kuenn said. "We're talking about a farm, a marina, a boat if we wind up going that route."

Kuenn's crew will wear

masks and use hand sanitizer and will keep their distance from their actors. Kuenn came up with a clever casting idea in case he needs to film a close-contact scene with a couple.

"We have two couples who we might use. The actors are husband and wife and boyfriend and girlfriend," he said. "They're already together and living with each other. If it comes to a scene that they have to be in together, it'll be fine."

Clark said the traditional public screening of all the films will be outdoors this year, a drive-in event on Aug. 6 at 8 p.m. in the back parking lot at East Shore Field, 350 Woodward Ave. in New Haven.

"A big reason 48 is such a nice film competition is that the community gets together to network and interact," she said. "People unfortunately are kind of losing that."

Kuenn said he understands the need for this but is still "kinda bummed"

about it.

"My favorite part of the whole process is the ending process where you show everybody the film," he said. "If you do it drive-in style, you're not going to be sitting in a packed audience full of people, hearing them

talk about your film or gasp or laugh. They'll be in cars away from you."

For details and updates, visit 48hourfilm.com/en/new-haven-ct.

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