

COMMUNITY

Selma one of six cities in the country chosen to display virtual art piece

Queen City chosen because of history pushing for Democracy, voting rights

BY CINDY FISHER
Selma Sun Staff

Selma is one of six cities in the nation to host a virtual art piece made in honor of historic importance to cities that played an important role in establishing liberty.

On July 4, artist Nancy Baker Cahill unveiled "Liberty Bell," a new public art project that uses augmented reality in Selma, Philadelphia, Boston, Washington, D.C., Charleston, S.C., and Rockaway, NY. It will be on display for a year.

Selma's art piece is visible at the foot of the Edmund Pettus Bridge at Songs of Selma Park and is located there to honor Selma's role in fighting for democracy and voting rights.

The Art Production Fund partnered with Selma and Dallas County Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Information and the Brown Chapel AME Church for the

Selma iteration of the Liberty Bell project. The fund gave Brown Chapel iPads so member of the community with limited access to smartphone technology can experience the work.

To see the art piece, viewers need to download the free 4th Wall App and the viewing location is at the foot of the bridge in Songs of Selma Park.

The art project was commissioned by Art Production Fund, in partnership with 7G Foundation and the Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy, a project of the Fund for the City of New York. Liberty Bell is an animated augmented reality drawing in 360 degrees that is geolocated at a series of sites. This project was two years in the making and comes at a good time when social distancing is required due to COVID-19.

"From its origins in American history, 'liberty' was only available to a certain

demographic and came at great expense to others. You can't have a conversation about freedom and not talk about the history of slavery and inequality in the United States. A bell can be a warning or a celebration; something spiritual or a wordless means of communication. In an age of pandemic, surveillance, injustice and disinformation, who is actually free? That's the conversation we need to have," Nancy Baker Cahill said in a statement.

The artist said this about choosing Selma:

In Selma, Liberty Bell floats above the Alabama River, best seen from Songs of Selma Park, at the foot of the historic Edmund Pettus Bridge. This location is essential to the project, which aims to address voting rights and the ongoing fight for civil rights. The Songs of Selma Park was selected for its proximity to the Voting Rights Museum, the Edmund

Pettus Bridge and the Selma to Montgomery National Historic Trail. The historic trail marks the three Voting Rights marches led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1965 to end discriminatory voting practices targeting Black Americans. The Edmund Pettus Bridge is a National Historic Landmark marking the brutal Bloody Sunday beatings of civil rights marchers during the first march. Liberty Bell invites viewers to consider discriminatory practices today that prevent certain Americans from exercising their right to vote, denying access to an established national freedom. The project hopes to provoke an awareness of gerrymandering, hacking, misinformation-- all of which inhibit citizens from exercising their civic rights. Liberty Bell embodies our current cleft political and cultural reality, heightened by increased polarization and the consequences of inequality.



National artist Nancy Baker Cahill created a virtual art piece in six cities with liberty as its background, including Selma. It can be seen at Songs of Selma Park. Photo by Columbus Mitchell, courtesy of Art Production Fund

Black Belt Community Foundation and partners offer \$10K scholarship for civic-minded high school seniors

BY DONNA COPE
Alabama NewsCenter

For years, Dr. Arthur Dunning has seen a worrisome tendency among youth in Alabama's Black Belt region: the best and brightest leave.

That's a trend that Dunning, former president of Albany State University (ASU) in Georgia, seeks to change. To that end, Dunning and Taylor Jones are partnering with the Black Belt Community Foundation (BBCF) to create the William Curry Scholarship for Academic and Community Leadership.

"Thinking about this scholarship, Alabama lost a lot of talented people who left and gave their talents and intellect to other places," said Dunning, ASU president from 2013 to 2018. "This is something we want to prevent in the future, because we must build up our people, our industries and the economy."

The winner will be a student who meets the BBCF's "two-dimensional expectation": he or she will excel in school, will volunteer in projects to benefit the community and be civically engaged.

The BBCF is assembling a scholarship committee that will meet twice yearly to select and present a \$10,000 scholarship to a worthy student, who will invest his or her skills and talents back into the community, said BBCF President Felecia

Lucky. The BBCF requests nominations by high school principals and guidance counselors from throughout the Black Belt.

Dunning said that Curry personifies integrity, work ethic, service and a belief that youth can lead and become extraordinary contributors to improving the quality of life throughout the Black Belt.

"We want this to be a perpetual scholarship in honor of William Curry," said Dunning, who earned bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Alabama. "How do you celebrate a man's life at the highest level of civic engagement?"

"Mr. Curry's passion to uplift the youth of Marengo County was unwavering," Dunning added. "He never minced words when confronting some of our society's most challenging obstacles to success. We want to make his name, his work and his legacy remembered."

Curry was born in Linden, in Marengo County, and was the valedictorian at Linden Academy. During an era in which many Blacks migrated away from the South in search of better opportunities, Curry was a servant leader to Linden. After high school graduation, Curry entered the military, but returned to serve on the Linden City Council, the school board, as a little league coach and as a minister in A.M.E. Zion Church.

Once sought after for its rich



Celebrating the Black Belt Community Foundation's new scholarship, honoree William Curry (left) talks with friends Johnnie Perkins, Dr. Art Dunning and Taylor Jones, who are helping to propel a deserving Black Belt high school student onward to college and to future success in the community. Photo from Black Belt Community Foundation

soils, the Black Belt has become a region defined by its dire socioeconomic situation. Nine of the 10 poorest counties in Alabama are in the Black Belt.

Dunning said the area cannot move ahead without more investment.

"We've got to find a way of lift and nurture the community, and you do it by lifting the people," said Dunning, who, as an educator, has long been wary about the state's skills deficit. "We must keep the best and brightest in the community instead of going anywhere else."

He believes there must be serious discussion and strategic planning to help transition the work force in the Black Belt, to "bring businesses and industries to small-town Alabama and shift efforts from agricul-

ture to technology."

At a time when leadership and academic opportunities for youth in marginalized communities are a rare commodity, Lucky hopes that the scholarship will counterbalance the unfortunate norms.

"We are honored to carry forward the torch that was lit by Reverend Curry, Dr. Dunning and Mr. Jones," said Lucky, who has served the BBCF for 16 years. "We plan to work with several foundations nationwide to raise funds for an endowment."

"One of my favorite things to experience with the Black Belt Community Foundation is when someone approaches us with a passionate and inspiring idea of how to make the Black Belt better," Lucky said. "We were thrilled when Dr. Dunning

reached out to share his love of Reverend Curry and how he wanted to translate Reverend Curry's shining example into the reality of actively helping and encouraging students in the Black Belt."

Dunning and Jones seeded the BBCF scholarship program with a \$10,000 gift and will match an additional \$10,000 for contributions made during 2020.

"I plan to reach out to classmates and talk to foundations that I've engaged with for the

last 40 years," said Dunning, who is writing a book about the coming of age in the Alabama Black Belt, to be published by the University of Georgia Press.

Lucky said the new BBCF program will enhance the lives of youth in the Black Belt by rewarding scholarships, creating internships and opportunities for students to return to the Black Belt, and "continuing the legacy so brightly established by Reverend Curry."



Dallas County District Attorney Michael Jackson and the assistant district attorney recently gave Edgar W. Greene a plaque recognizing him for nearly 50 years of prosecution experience. It included recognition from the state Judicial System. His wife, Sandi Greene, was also in attendance. Greene has served as a city prosecutor, district attorney and attorney in Dallas County for 50 years. Photo submitted.

STEVE CEZAR General Contractor

Steve Cezar has 52 years of experience and operates with a crew that has over 500 years of combined experience.

- All work is guaranteed for three years Best Warranty in Alabama?
- We specialize in insurance claims. Preferred contractor with most insurance companies. Roofing, metal and shingles



Free estimates, call
334-349-2714

Licensed Contractor in the state of Alabama #205-4318

EVERY
ALABAMA
VOICE MUST
BE HEARD.
IT'S NOT
TOO LATE.

VISIT [MY2020CENSUS.GOV](https://my2020census.gov)

