

JUNETEENTH FREEDOM DAY 1865



JUNETEENTH ART COMMISSION

Public Art Project Announcement

Chaffey  College

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www.chaffey.edu

ABOUT THE PROJECT

In September 2021, Chaffey College Superintendent/President Dr. Henry Shannon announced the college's embrace and commitment to the then-newly announced national holiday of Juneteenth. One of the goals was to commission a work of art that celebrates the joy and history of Juneteenth on the Rancho Cucamonga Campus. The artwork serves as a testament to the rich historical story of Juneteenth in America, and what the holiday means for our collective future. Since that time, the Wignall Museum staff have been working with leadership to facilitate this project. In spring 2024, artist Samuel Dunson was selected. Please find more about Dunson in this document including a statement about the painting he's creating for Chaffey College. The final home of the work has been identified as the Library/Learning Commons building Rancho Cucamonga campus, part of the Bond P project. The Library/Learning Commons building is estimated for completion fall 2025. The final work of art will be placed on the wall identified in the architect's renderings located below.



Library/Learning Commons, forthcoming (fall 2025) is the future home of the Juneteenth Art Commission. The space identified is the wall located in this image identified with an arrow and dotted lines, and is 8 x 45 feet.

ABOUT THE PAINTING

When Samuel Dunson was chosen to create a large mural to honor Juneteenth's history and legacy, he was tasked with integrating four key themes: Celebration, Education, Reflection, and Empowerment. This mural will be installed in the new Library/Learning Commons (LLC) building. Both the artwork and the building are scheduled for completion in fall 2025.

Rather than simply depicting a historical commemoration, Dunson's painting invites viewers to engage with Juneteenth as an influential source of empowerment. He is crafting a large, multi-panel piece that incorporates the concept of Sankofa—a principle from the Akan people of Ghana, symbolizing the importance of reflecting on the past to shape the future. The term 'Sankofa' translates to "go back and get it," signifying that it is not taboo to revisit and reclaim what has been forgotten or left behind.

In his composition, Dunson represents the journey from darkness to light, evoking the historical context of slavery in the U.S. through figures that appear to move from shadow into illumination. The backdrop merges diverse landscapes—a savannah, a wheat field, and the mountains surrounding the Chaffey College Rancho Cucamonga campus—symbolizing a shared future. The artwork features figures coming together, echoing the African American tradition of family reunions celebrated during Juneteenth.

Dunson's design weaves together elements from different eras and cultures in an Afrofuturist style, transcending linear time. He views Juneteenth not just as a historical event but as an enduring symbol of freedom. According to Dunson, "Embracing Juneteenth as a concept of freedom means breaking free from the constraints of time. The past influences the present, and the future is shaped by our actions today."

In the mural, Dunson will include text—names, phrases, lyrics, and proverbs crucial to Black culture's survival. These elements will appear only when illuminated from specific angles, subtly referencing the coded language used during enslavement to communicate, resist, and survive. The mural invites viewers to connect with their ancestors and descendants, acknowledging the collective influence each of us has on shaping our shared journey and contributing to a stronger nation.

Juneteenth embodies Sankofa, bridging the past and future in a continuous pursuit of freedom and unity.

THE ARTIST

SAMUEL DUNSON

Courtesy of the Artist.



Portrait of Samuel Dunson.

The arts have played a major role in Samuel Dunson's life. Even as a youth in Dayton, OH, he was surrounded by creativity. His venture into fine art began due to a chance meeting with an Art Professor at Tennessee State University. After a brief conversation, Dunson's art professor encouraged him to take a drawing course. That chance meeting has influenced his creative life ever since. Early in his academic and artistic pursuit, he chose to concentrate on 3D works,

but soon thereafter, he moved towards painting and drawing. Upon receiving a BS in Studio Art in 1992, he searched and found gallery representation in Nashville, TN, where he lived after college. For nearly six years he built a favorable exhibition record and in 1997, he made the decision to pursue an MFA. In 1998 Dunson was accepted into the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) under a Presidential Fellowship Award. After receiving his MFA in painting, he accepted an offer to teach at his undergraduate alma mater, Tennessee State University. Though Dunson has taught for over two decades, he continues to exhibit and pursue creative endeavors that challenge his intellect and skill. Presently, his work tends to deal with comprehending the many changes that occur throughout life. His paintings, sculptures, and videos have become a coping mechanism that allows him to express his feelings and emotions through artistic means. Dunson's work is deeply personal, yet it resonates universally in its understanding.



(Top Left)
Samuel Dunson, *Affirmative Actions*, 2022, Mixed media, 65 x 37 x 3.5 inches. Courtesy of the Artist.

(Top Right)
Samuel Dunson, *The Welfare of Mama's Hands*, 2021. Mixed media pigments, faux flowers, collage, and vinyl on a hand-crafted textile support. Approximately 43 X 35 inches. Courtesy of the Artist.



(Left)
Samuel Dunson, *Nova Gazer*, 2024. Mixed media pigments and vinyl on a hand-crafted textile support. Approximately 8 X 8.5 inches. Courtesy of the Artist.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Join the Community!

WHEN YOU ARE PART OF UMOJA, YOU ARE PART OF OUR VILLAGE.

UMOJA: A Kiswahili word meaning unity

Umoja is a community of learners and educators committed to the academic success, personal growth and self-actualization of African American and other students. The Chaffey College Umoja Program seeks to educate the whole student—mind, body, and spirit. The Umoja Program actively serves and promotes student success through a curriculum that is responsive to the legacy of the African and African American Diasporas and culture(s).

Students enrolled in the Umoja Program gain:

- Academic support (Umoja Learning Community courses, textbook support, and school supplies)
- A full calendar of events that uplift and celebrate the Black/African American experience
- Holistic support, based on an ethic of love
- A solid community
- Personalized educational planning (including degree/certificate planning)
- Culturally-responsive professors
- Transfer resources to UCs, CSUs, Private Schools and HBCUs
- Leadership opportunities on campus and in the community

STUDENTS ARE OUR HIGHEST PRIORITY.



Scan QR code for
more information



Contact: Brent.McLaren@chaffey.edu

Vision

Improving lives through education.

Mission Statement

Chaffey College improves lives and our communities through education with a steadfast commitment to equity and innovation to empower our diverse students who learn and thrive through excellent career, transfer, and workforce education programs that advance economic and social mobility for all.



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