

PRESS CONTACTS:

For Mural Arts Philadelphia:

Cari Feiler Bender, Relief Communications, LLC
610-416-1216 or cari@reliefcomm.com

For Fair and Just Prosecution:

Miriam Krinsky, Executive Director
818-416-5218 or krinskym@krinsky.la

For District Attorney Krasner's Office:

Jane Roh, Director of Communications
215-686-8711 or Jane.Roh@phila.gov

***POINTS OF CONNECTION PORTRAIT COLLECTION BY FORMERLY-
INCARCERATED ARTIST LAUNCHES FOR PUBLIC VIEWING
Artist Residency in the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office Culminates***

PHILADELPHIA – [Mural Arts Philadelphia](#) and [Fair and Just Prosecution](#)

**announce the public exhibition of the groundbreaking Artist-in-Residence
program at the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office (DAO) featuring the**

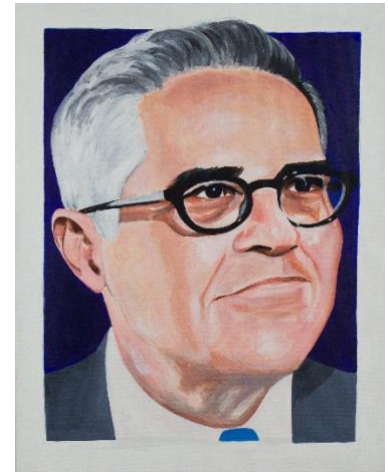
creations of artist James "Yaya" Hough. The 10-month
residency culminates with works of public art that explore the
human toll of incarceration and highlight the importance of creating
alternatives to a punitive and incarceration-driven justice system.
Hough's exhibition, *Points of Connection*, will be on display across
the city, offering the public a chance to engage in direct dialogue on
criminal justice reform issues. This unique project is one of the
Activating Art and Advocacy projects funded by generous support
from [Art for Justice](#).



*Points of Connection portrait of
Tahira Fortune by James "Yaya"
Hough. Photo by Akeil Robertson.*

“Our efforts to remake the criminal justice system – the most powerful and opaque of
American institutions – require us to recognize the humanity of all people, including people
who are involved in the system,” said **Larry Krasner, District Attorney of Philadelphia**.
“For many years, Mr. Hough has looked at a system that broke lives and communities more
often than it repaired harm and trauma. Art has a unique ability to reveal the complexities of
the human experience. It is my hope that Mr. Hough's past work, work here, and work in the
future will inspire us to seek and lift up the humanity in everyone – an endeavor that is more
urgently needed than ever.”

Artist James “Yaya” Hough was the inaugural Artist-in-Residence at the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office (DAO), working to humanize the people who populate the criminal legal system by cultivating relationships and connections through his artmaking. To commemorate the residency, Hough’s portraits will be displayed in several contexts that underscore the theme of reimagining justice and the accessibility of the arts. All of the portraits are incorporated into a single large-scale vinyl print installed on the windows of the DAO. Smaller printed keepsake versions of the portraits will be packaged as a portable exhibition, available for free at special events and by postal mail, and



Points of Connection portrait of Larry Krasner by James “Yaya” Hough. Photo by Akeil Robertson.

delivered to municipal offices, criminal justice sites and selected schools throughout Philadelphia. Additionally, several of the physical painted portraits will be installed at sites of art and justice throughout Philadelphia as a gesture to remind viewers of the power of storytelling and coalitions to change the way justice and art connect. The public is encouraged to engage with Hough’s paintings at several locations in Philadelphia, where possible:

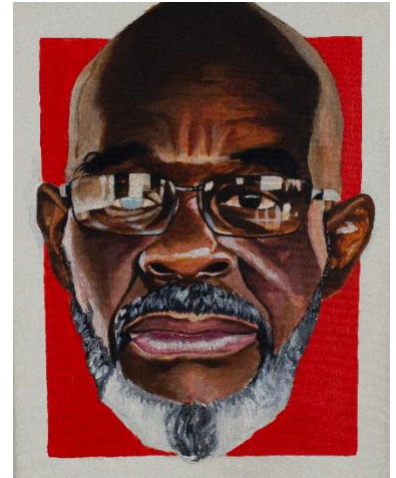
- District Attorney’s office: window vinyl at 3 South Penn Square, across from City Hall
- City Hall (Outside Mayor’s Office): 1400 John F. Kennedy Blvd. (limited public access)
- Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts: 128 North Broad Street
- Eastern State Penitentiary: 2027 Fairmount Avenue (admission required)
- Beckett Life Center: 1410 North 16th Street

“At Mural Arts Philadelphia, we are committed to telling stories from all perspectives, in many different communities,” said **Jane Golden, Executive Director of Mural Arts Philadelphia**. “Yaya has done incredible work, even during the era of COVID, to spotlight all aspects of the criminal legal system. We look forward to showing the world his powerful work.”

“The power of art transcends the divides between us and lifts up the voices of individuals who too often go unheard,” said **Miriam Krinsky, Executive Director of Fair and Just Prosecution**. “Yaya’s artwork has done just that by bringing people together and providing a new lens on the justice system, as well as the weighty impact of the decisions made every day by prosecutors. The works he created will launch countless conversations throughout the city of Philadelphia and beyond and inspire prosecutors across the country to work to create a more fair and compassionate justice system.”

For his residency with the District Attorney's Office, despite the COVID distances and shutdowns, Hough built meaningful relationships with individuals from several overlapping circles – formerly incarcerated returning citizens, victims' advocates, and members of the District Attorney's office – to paint them in portraits and discuss together what justice means to them. These portraits, and the resulting conversations in one-on-ones and small groups, provided a window into the larger system and an opportunity to approach criminal justice from perspectives of transformation, repair, and growth.

Formerly incarcerated returning citizens included in Hough's work are Michael "Smokey" Wilson, John Pace, and Donnell "Nell" Drinks, alongside victims' advocates Tahira Fortune, Dorothy Johnson-Speight, and Stanley Crawford, as well as Philadelphia District Attorney's Office prosecutors Ebony Wortham of the Juvenile Unit, Patricia Cummings of the Conviction Integrity Unit, First Assistant District Attorney Judge Carolyn Temin, along with District Attorney Krasner.



Points of Connection portrait of Michael Smokey Wilson by James "Yaya" Hough. Photo by Akeil Robertson.

About the Artist

James "Yaya" Hough, a renowned painter, developed and augmented his artistic talents while serving a once-life sentence at Pennsylvania's Graterford State Correctional Institution. While incarcerated, from the age of 17 in 1992, he took art classes and contributed to over 50 murals outside of the walls of the prison through Mural Arts' Restorative Justice program. After the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that life sentences for juvenile offenders were unconstitutional in 2012, Hough was resentenced and released in 2019. Since his release and coming home to his native Pittsburgh, Hough's work has been featured in museum exhibitions at MoMA PS1 and the African American Museum in Philadelphia. He also is committed to being a part of changing the prison system in Pennsylvania and abolishing life without parole through organizations Decarcerate PA! and Project LifeLines.



About the Partners and Funder

Fair and Just Prosecution (FJP) is a national network of elected prosecutors working towards common-sense, compassionate criminal justice reforms. To learn more about FJP's work, visit the [website](#) or follow on Facebook [@FairAndJustProsecution](#) and Twitter [@fjp_org](#).

Larry Krasner and the Philadelphia District Attorney's Office – As Philadelphia's 26th District Attorney, Larry Krasner has garnered national acclaim for his ambitious and progressive efforts to reform Philadelphia's criminal justice system, working fearlessly to shift the goals and dialogue around criminal justice toward a system that seeks to do justice, enhance accountability, and promote alternatives to incarceration and punitive responses.

Points of Connection is funded by the [Art for Justice Fund](#), which is disrupting mass incarceration by funding artists and advocates working together to reform our criminal justice system. It makes direct grants to artists and advocates focused on safely reducing the prison population, promoting justice reinvestment and creating art that changes the narrative around mass incarceration. This groundbreaking project will be one of the Activating Art and Advocacy projects funded by Art for Justice.

Mural Arts Philadelphia is the nation's largest public art program, dedicated to the belief that art ignites change. For more than 35 years, Mural Arts has united artists and communities through a collaborative and equitable process, creating nearly 4,000 artworks that have transformed public spaces and individual lives. Mural Arts aims to empower people, stimulate dialogue, and build bridges to understanding with projects that attract artists from Philadelphia and around the world, and programs that focus on youth education, restorative justice, mental health and wellness, and public art and its preservation. Popular mural tours offer a firsthand glimpse into the inspiring stories behind Mural Arts' iconic and unparalleled collection, which has earned Philadelphia worldwide recognition as the "City of Murals." For more information, call 215-685-0750 or visit [muralarts.org](#). Follow us on social media: [@muralarts](#) on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), [MuralArtsPhiladelphia](#) on Facebook, and [phillymuralarts](#) on YouTube.

###

Photograph of James "Yaya" Hough by Eddie Einbender-Luks for Mural Arts Philadelphia

EDITOR'S NOTE: high-resolution images of the artist's work are available in the Mural Arts Philadelphia press room at <http://bit.ly/MuralArtsPressKit>.