

Application to the  
Philadelphia Mural Arts Program  
for a mural of

**William Edward Burghardt Du Bois**

in the Old Seventh Ward that he studied for his 1899 classic book,  
*The Philadelphia Negro*



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**PLEASE DESCRIBE YOUR ORGANIZATION BRIEFLY. STATE MISSION, NUMBER OF MEMBERS OR PEOPLE SERVED, FOUNDING DATE, PROUDEST ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY.**

*“As you live, believe in life! Always human beings will live and progress to greater, broader and fuller life.”*  
–W.E.B. Du Bois

Mapping the Du Bois Philadelphia Negro is project of the School of Design at the University of Pennsylvania that began in the spring of 2006. We currently have funding from the National Endowment for Humanities to develop teaching, research, and community outreach materials relating to W.E.B. Du Bois’ classic 1899 book, *The Philadelphia Negro*. Du Bois conducted a door-to-door survey of the Old Seventh Ward, an area bounded by 7<sup>th</sup> Street, the Schuylkill River, Spruce, and South Streets, at a time when it was home to the greatest concentration of blacks in Philadelphia, which was, in turn, home to more blacks than any other city in the North. The Mapping Du Bois project will recreate Du Bois’ foot survey using geographic information systems (GIS) and historical census, health, and crime data, photographs, and other primary sources. We will construct an interactive mapping system on our website along with various assignments aimed at engaging high school and college students who are reading the book ([www.mappingdubois.com](http://www.mappingdubois.com), still under construction). While we are currently focused on recreating the 1896 survey, we hope to extend our data collection and mapping to the present time.

We are interested in engaging the broader public in this important history and a discussion about race and neighborhood change. We intend to do this through walking tours (guided by PDAs with wireless and GPS technology so tourists can view our digital data and the neighborhood at the same time), oral history interviews, and tools on the website that allow community members to contribute their own data (such as family photographs). We see a mural of Du Bois in the neighborhood that he studied as an important part of this public outreach work.

To date, our proudest accomplishments include:

- Involving over twenty high school, undergraduate, and graduate students in this project. This includes students from Masterman High School and Eastern Camden County Regional High School, Haverford College, as well as the students from Penn’s urban studies, social work, city planning, urban spatial analytics, historic preservation, and digital media and design programs. We are proud that half of the students who have been involved so far are people of color.
- Organized an open house attended by over 60 people at the University of Pennsylvania to tell them about our research project and have them feel invested in what we are

doing. We believe in using home-made baked goods to help organize and look forward to turning these skills toward broader public outreach efforts.

- Collecting an amazing range of historical material about the Old Seventh Ward, including 1900 census data on the 4,500 households, newspaper articles about drunk census takers and anti-spitting campaigns, historical photographs of kids playing in Starr Playground and a “friendly rent collector” posing with a black family, address records of everyone who had Scarlet Fever and “consumption” (tuberculosis) in 1897, mug shots of criminals, and extensive records on black churches in that area.

Our hope is that high school and college students as well as the public will learn from historical events in order to become leaders of social change in the future. The number of people we serve has no limit because all of our resources will be available on the Internet. Philadelphia public high school students are our primary audience at this point because they are required to take an African and African American history class, but we have no intention of stopping there.

#### **WHO IN THE ORGANIZATION WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR WORKING WITH THE MURAL ARTS PROGRAMS ON THE MURAL PROJECT? WHAT IS THERE ROLE IN THE ORGANIZATION?**

Amy Hillier is an assistant professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning at Penn’s School of Design. She is the project director and oversees all aspects of the education, research, and outreach programming.

Anne Garcia is a 2<sup>nd</sup> year master of social work student at Penn’s School of Social Policy & Practice and the public outreach coordinator for the project for the 2006-2007 school year. She is taking the lead on organizing the mural effort, but because she is only in the office Monday – Wednesday, Professor Hillier is the best contact for the Mural Arts Program.

#### **WHY IS YOUR ORGANIZATION REQUESTING THIS MURAL?**

For anyone visiting South Street or living in the neighborhood Du Bois surveyed, there are few signs that this neighborhood was once home to a mix of American-born whites, northern blacks, black southern migrants, and European immigrants. A few of the major black institutions, including Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, remain, but more typical is the Institute for Colored Youth, now upscale condominiums. In Philadelphia, we celebrate our heroes with murals. We would like W.E.B. Du Bois to join the pantheon of great African American leaders celebrated by murals alongside Paul Robeson, Malcom X, Jackie Robinson, Sonia Sanchez, Grover Washington, Aretha Franklin, and others. There is a historical marker noting Du Bois’ research in Philadelphia near the desired location for this mural, but we feel that there should be a more visible representation to honor him. A mural is the most visible and exciting way we know to celebrate Du Bois’ role in Philadelphia, and a mural of Du Bois at the edge of the neighborhood he studied 100 years ago is a way of generating interest and discussion about this largely ignored history.

**HAVE YOU TALKED WITH ANY RESIDENTS OR BUSINESS IN IMMEDIATE VIEW OF THE WALL? ARE THEY SUPPORTIVE OF THE MURAL? ARE THEY WILLING TO ATTEND A COMMUNITY MEETING TO DISCUSS THE MURAL?**

In order to organize support for the Du Bois mural, we have taken the following steps:

1. Contacted the four neighborhood associations in the area. The location we have in mind is technically in the Bella Vista neighborhood, but it is on a block at the intersection of Society Hill, Queen Village, and Washington Square West neighborhoods. We also contacted the South Street Head House District because of their proximity. None of the association leaders expressed any concerns.
2. Over the summer, the project director met with two members of Washington Square West Association to discuss the project. An article about the project, including mention of a possible mural, was included in the association's newsletter.
3. We contacted ODUNDE, Inc., Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church, and the African American Museum of Philadelphia about our plans. We met nothing but enthusiasm.
4. We organized a preliminary community meeting to begin a discussion among these groups on November 13<sup>th</sup> at Mother Bethel church. There were representatives from all four neighborhood associations in attendance and they showed real enthusiasm for the project.

**SECTION 2: APPLICANT'S COMMITMENT TO HELP ORGANIZE AND PARTICIPATE IN AT LEAST TWO COMMUNITY MEETINGS WITH MURAL ARTS PROGRAM STAFF, MURAL ARTIST, AND NEIGHBORS TO THE WALL.**

**ARE YOU COMMITTED TO ORGANIZING AT LEAST 2 COMMUNITY MEETINGS PRIOR TO THE START OF THE MEETING?**

We are committed and even enthusiastic about organizing two more public meetings. We would like to follow up on our preliminary organizing meeting of November 13<sup>th</sup> with two public meetings as soon as our application is approved by the Mural Arts Program. Specifically, we would like to involve community residents in the design of the mural. We have spoken with Mother Bethel church (6<sup>th</sup> & Lombard) and Whole Foods (10<sup>th</sup> & South), both of which are willing to host community meetings. We will publicize the meetings via the neighborhood associations and other possible partners listed above and also hand-deliver flyers to the businesses along South Street and all the residents within a two block area. At the suggestion of a resident, we will also work with the local newspapers to try to include articles about the history of the Seventh Ward and Settlement House. Finally, we would like to offer walking tours to share the history of the neighborhood with residents.

### SECTION 3: AVAILABILITY OF SUITABLE WALL

The best wall we have found for a Du Bois mural is located outdoors at 609-611 South Street. The property extends back to Rodman Street, and it is the eastern-facing wall visible from 6<sup>th</sup> and Rodman Street that interests us. The property is owned by Gold-men Associates which has an off-property address: 25 North Easton Road, Warrington PA, 18976-2515. The front of the building is a commercial property while the rear (fronting Rodman Street) is a residential rental property. We sent the owner a letter in September and received a telephone voice message from Mr. Guy Berger confirming that he had no objections to a mural at that location.



The plaster wall does not appear to have any substantial damage. There appears to be some minor water damage, as visible in the photo above, but we have not been on the property to inspect this.

The front of the stucco wall is at the edge of the fire station parking lot at 6<sup>th</sup> and South Streets. We have been in contact with the Captain and Lieutenant at that station. They expressed interest in the mural, noting that the fire station is proudly known as a historically black station. At their suggestion, we sent a letter (November 1<sup>st</sup>) to the commissioner of risk management at the Fire Department headquarters. Because any work crews would need access to the parking lot, we would need to have the permission of the Fire Department to work on public property. We have not heard back yet but do not anticipate any problems.

### SECTION 4: SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROJECT

We envision a dominant image of Du Bois as he was in 1896, a young man (30 years old) dressed in a formal suit and top hat, possibly in the process of conducting his survey (*please see photo on cover of application*). Perhaps his top hat could extend beyond the roofline. We would

also like to integrate a map image of the 7<sup>th</sup> ward and the College Settlement House in the background. We have not discussed the design with community residents yet, however, and would be happy to modify our own vision to meet their ideas. At our meeting on November 13<sup>th</sup>, someone suggested we incorporate the book, *The Philadelphia Negro*, into the image.

**WHY DO YOU WANT A MURAL AT THIS LOCATION? HOW WILL IT BENEFIT THE COMMUNITY, YOUTH AND/ OR THE CITY?**

This is an ideal site because it is just across Rodman Street from the former location of the College Settlement Association where Du Bois lived while conducting his study. The College Settlement Association commissioned the study of the Seventh Ward because of their concern about the black residents in the neighborhood they served through a wide range of educational and social programs. The historical marker commemorating the study is at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Rodman Streets. The wall is visible to vehicular traffic going south on 6<sup>th</sup> Street as well as the extensive foot traffic coming and going to South Street, the children playing at Starr Playground, and the residents of this vibrant neighborhood.

**WHAT IS THE SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS MURAL TO YOU? (PLEASE FEEL FREE TO ATTACH EXTRA PAGES, IF NECESSARY)**

This mural is significant because W.E.B. Du Bois was a leading intellectual and civil rights advocate in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He explored the societal problems that blacks encountered during that time period and his larger-than-life presence on a mural will serve as a reminder of the need for social change and the awareness of the past. His study of the “Negro problem” in Philadelphia goes beyond the history of African Americans because the same problems of discrimination that affected men, women and youth are still seen today. This mural can help Philadelphia honor a pioneer of social change and hold up the lessons learned from *The Philadelphia Negro* to be applied to today’s social problems such as the high murder rate that affects all Philadelphians regardless of race, gender and class.

**SECTION 5: CAPACITY AND COMMITMENT TO MAINTAIN PROPERTY AT THE BASE OF THE WALL**

The proposed wall is located next to a fire station and only those inside the gated parking lot would have access to the mural. This special location offers an unusual degree of protection from vandalism. Because the mural is located at the intersection of four neighborhood association areas, we are confident that we can call upon those groups as well as our large cadre of students working the Mapping Du Bois project with any necessary clean-up or maintenance.

**SECTION 6: INNOVATION**

Our larger Mapping Du Bois project is extremely innovative in its use of GIS, internet technology, and primary sources to engage students in learning about history. As exciting as this aspect is, however, we feel a physical and public representation of Du Bois is critical to

generating public conversation about the history of the Old Seventh Ward and the state of race relations in Philadelphia and beyond today.

It is our hope to involve children from Starr Playground programs and/or nearby McCall Elementary School in the design and creation of this mural. We have contacted Beth at Starr playground who expressed interest and noted that their after school program includes 19 children, ages 7-12. We also exchanged email (but have not been able to speak with) Carol Domb, the principal at McCall. She noted, "We are very interested in supporting the Mural Arts Program and our community. Please let me know any specific information that you need or any assistance that we can provide."

#### SECTION 7: PROJECT FUNDING

To date, we have secured \$225,000 from the National Endowment for Humanities and University of Pennsylvania Research Foundation to develop the website and teaching materials. We have not tried to fundraise specifically for a mural but would be willing to do so.

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Please sign below indicating that all the answers in this application are true and complete to the best of your knowledge. You will be **notified in writing** of our decision by May 15th for the March deadline and January 15th for the November deadline. **There is no waiting list.** If you are not selected you will have to apply again for your project to be reconsidered.

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Signature

Date