

Coming soon: Social Work Trailblazers artwork from New Orleans Artist Terrance Osborne

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This video trailer provides a sneak peek into the story and painting of the Tulane School of Social Work Trailblazers.

Celebrating individuals who have made Tulane University a more inclusive and diverse academic community is at the heart of Tulane's [Trailblazers](#) initiative, which was launched by President Michael Fitts in 2019.

For the Tulane School of Social Work (TSSW), honoring such trailblazers took a unique collaboration that created a vibrant result. It all started when School of Social Work Dean Patrick Bordnick found an artist capable of telling its story.

As the first African-American graduate students to earn degrees from the Tulane School of Social Work (TSSW) and among the first to graduate from Tulane, Gloria Bryant Banks ('64), Pearlie Hardin Elloie ('65), and Marilyn S. Piper ('64) serve as models for transcending tradition and breaking barriers.

Clinical Assistant Professor Reginald "Reggie" Parquet was one of the TSSW faculty members and alumni who provided input on whom to honor as part the University-wide initiative.

"I owe Ms. Banks, Ms. Elloie, and Ms. Piper a debt of gratitude for paving the way for me and other Black social workers to receive an education at TSSW," Parquet said. "Although they faced a multitude of challenges, they were successful due to their hard work, perseverance, courage and a keen awareness of the historical purpose of that moment."

The next step in the process was to select a medium and an artist to begin the work. “Because these three blazed a trail for generations and continue to have a profound impact on the social work profession, only a visually stunning painting could convey their story in a way that matches their enthusiasm and optimism,” Bordnick said.

The dean commissioned bold New Orleans artist Terrance Osborne. “We connected on the vision and Terrance was moved by their commitment. I knew he could paint the story of these women like no one else could,” Bordnick said.

Osborne immediately agreed to take on the project. In addition to connecting with their heritage, Osborne believes in their vocation. “A school social worker helped me learn that just because I was related to someone didn’t mean I had to allow him to cause me pain,” he said. “Social workers affirm what you are doing right and help you see what you may not be seeing on your own.”

What Ms. Banks, Ms. Elloie and Ms. Piper did to enter Tulane and then continue in the social work profession took perseverance, and that speaks to him, Osborne said. “We have to keep pressing on to do what’s in our hearts. I do my art in the way my heart guides me,” he said.

That leads Osborne to a better place, one where courage exists in bold colors. He will be bringing that vibrancy to this celebratory artwork. The large-scale, horizontal piece progresses through the women’s storyline in three stages. “Their courage, struggle and glory are what I hope to show,” he said.

“Few artists can capture the passion, the ethos and the drive of these trailblazers as Terrance Osborne has done,” Tulane President Michael Fitts said. “These pioneers made history and brought about lasting change. Now this monumental work of art will tell their story to generations of Tulanians in a visually stunning, evocative and unforgettable tribute.”

A documentary film will accompany the artwork, and both will be installed on the third floor of the School of Social Work at 127 Elk Place in downtown New Orleans.

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New Orleans artist Terrance Osborne