

**General Edward O. Gourdin African American Veterans Memorial Park**

**Dedication of Art Work**

**Tuesday, August 1, 2023, 1 PM**

**Rachelle V. Browne**

**“Going Forward”**

**My friend and former colleague, Lonnie G. Bunch, wrote in his book, *A Fool’s Errand: Creating the National Museum of African American History and Culture*:**

**“One can tell a great deal about a country by what it remembers. By what graces the wall of its museums. And what monuments have privileged placement in parks or central traffic intersections. ...Yet one learns even more about a nation by what it forgets.”**

**The next phase of work for the Veterans and Friends of Gourdin Park is implementing an educational initiative on Massachusetts Black veterans ... to tell their story to a city, state and nation that not just forgot that rich, yet complex, history but never knew that history.**

**Working with a wider circle of funders, educators and other partners, including hopefully, many of you who are here today, our educational plans include:**

**First, installing in or near the park a kiosk for visitors to learn about the men and women represented by the ten bas reliefs and other Massachusetts veterans, to learn their names and about their challenges and successes, and to hear their own sentiments expressed in quotations about their war time and life experiences.**

**Second, developing curriculum for local schools and ROTC programs.**

**Third, training and hiring (or creating jobs and pathways for future careers for) teen docents to give tours and present history talks about the park.**

**Finally, presenting public programs in the way of panels and workshops, as we did in May 2022 with Dr. John Morrow, with the support of the Hutchins Center at Harvard University. We also envision that public programming as also including plays and media productions that will entertain while teaching this history.**

**We thank all our past donors for their faith in and support of this project.**

**Those donors include:**

**The Boston Foundation**

**Eastern Bank**

**Massachusetts Black Lawyers Association**

**Those donors also include many, many individuals with very modest gifts of \$25 to \$50 to gifts of \$1,500, 2,500 and \$5,000. And, each of these gifts matters and makes a difference.**

**To fund the educational initiative going forward, we plan to:**

**First, reach out to our past donors and seek out more corporations, more foundations and more individuals who understand the importance of lifting up the story behind this park and this art work.**

**Second, revive plans for our first fundraiser that had been derailed due to the pandemic. We hope that you will bring your dancing shoes when the final plans for that inaugural fundraisers are announced.**

**And, third, as you leave the park today, imagine seeing the name of your father, an uncle, an aunt or mother, or grandfather or great grandfather engraved in stone among a series of “memorial bricks.” Your purchase of a memorial brick, to be installed in the park or along the sidewalks surrounding the park, will not only help to fund our educational initiative but create a wonderful tribute to the veterans in your family.**

**Through sharing and disseminating this history, we hope to lift even greater Black joy *and* the spiritual and civic health of this city, this state and this country.**

**We need you in this battle and look forward to your continued support as we continue the work of, to paraphrase another colleague, “Planting seeds for the next seven generations .“**

**Thank you**