



Looking Glass Alliance

Contributions by Kyng Rhodes



Kyng Rhodes

In response to *Little Brown Girl*



Little Brown Girl

1927

John Wesley Hardrick (American, 1891–1968)

Oil on canvas

29.40

© John Wesley Hardrick

Gift of a Group of African-American Citizens of Indianapolis, April 16, 1929



Big White System

2022

Kyng Rhodes (American, b. 1993)

Acrylic and charcoal on canvas

TR12445/2

© Kyng Rhodes

On loan from the artist

This artwork contains references to racial violence and the Klu Klux Klan.

John Wesley Hardrick's *Little Brown Girl* depicts ten-year-old Nellie Henderson looking out from a bright, colorful, lush background. When Kyng Rhodes looked at this painting, he wondered, "What was the reality of Nellie's experiences—beyond the painted backdrop?"

Rhodes created this artwork to depict what he sees as a reality Nellie faced as a little brown girl in the early 1900s: A system built to keep her confined or absent altogether from the joys that a little white child would experience. A system built on atrocities committed to people who look like her. A system that Rhodes, who was a little brown boy in the 2000s, continues to bear witness to today.

Historical Note and Resources

Kyng Rhodes's artwork encourages viewers to confront historic legacies and current experiences of racism, racial violence, and trauma. Two years after John Wesley Hardrick painted *Little Brown Girl* in 1927, a group of African American citizens of Indianapolis purchased and donated the work to the Art Association of Indianapolis (now the IMA at Newfields). This group was part of the growing African American population building thriving communities in Indianapolis during the 1920s.

Also during the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan was experiencing a resurgence in Indiana—at least one-quarter or more of the state's native-born white men, as well as thousands of women, were members. The Klan used masked robes, burning crosses, intimidating letters, vigilante law enforcement, and threats and acts of physical violence to target African Americans, as well as Jews, Catholics, and immigrants from eastern and southern Europe.

Although Indiana's Klan infrastructure collapsed in the late 1920s, John Hardrick, Nellie Henderson, and others continued to live in a society shaped by systemic racism and threats of violence, factors which continue to shape experiences in America today.

See below for a list of resources to support ongoing conversations around these themes.

Rhodes also encourages guests to explore Newfields' gardens, in which he finds inspiration and rejuvenation.

List of resources

Books

James Allen, ed. [*Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America*](#). Santa Fe, NM: Twin Palms Press, 2000.

Eduardo Bonillo-Silva. [*Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*](#). 4th ed. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013.

Jeff Chang. [*Who We Be: The Colorization of America*](#). New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014.

Elizabeth Kai Hinton. [*America on Fire: The Untold History of Police Violence and Black Rebellion Since the 1960s*](#). New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2021.

James Madison. [*The Ku Klux Klan in the Heartland*](#). Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020.

Isabel Wilkerson. [*Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*](#). New York: Random House, 2020.

Reports

Jelani Cobb and Matthew Guariglia, ed. [*The Essential Kerner Commission Report, United States. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*](#). New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2021.

[*Klanwatch Project of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Ku Klux Klan: A History of Racism*](#). 6th ed. Montgomery, AL: The Southern Poverty Law Center, 2011.

Walter Howard Smith, Jr. "[The Impact of Racial Trauma on African Americans](#)." African American Men and Boys Advisory Board. The Heinz Endowments (February 16, 2010).

Articles and Websites

Black Lives Matter. "[Resources](#)." Includes Healing Action Toolkit, Healing Justice Toolkit, #TalkAbout Trayvon: A Toolkit for White People, #TrayvonTaughtMe Toolkit: For Black and Non-Black POC Organizers, among others.

Campaign Zero. "[Mapping Police Violence](#)."

Ta-Nehisi Coates. "[The Case for Reparations](#)." *The Atlantic* (June 2014).

Cheryl Corley. "[Coping While Black: A Season of Traumatic News Takes a Psychological Toll](#)." *Code Switch* NPR (July 2, 2015).

"[Media portrayals of black men contribute to police violence, Rutgers study says](#)." Eurekalert.org (November 29, 2018).

NAACP. "[The Origins of Modern Day Policing](#)."

For Teens and Kids

Susan Campbell Bartoletti. [*They Called Themselves the K.K.K.: the Birth of An American Terrorist Group*](#). Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2010.

Zetta Elliott. [*Say Her Name*](#). Los Angeles: Disney/Jump at the Sun, 2020.

Crystal M. Fleming. [*Rise Up! How You Can Join the Fight Against White Supremacy*](#). New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2021.

Breanna J. McDaniel. [*Hands Up!*](#) New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2019.

Jason Reynolds and Ibram X. Kendi. [*Stamped: Racism, Antiracism, and You*](#). New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2020.

Angie Thomas. [*The Hate U Give*](#). New York: Balzer + Bray, 2017.

In response to *Dr. Kool*



Dr. Kool

1973

Barkley Hendricks (American, 1945–2017)

Oil on canvas

TR12207

© Barkley L. Hendricks, Courtesy of the Artist and Jack Shainman

Gallery, New York

Anonymous Loan



Red Handed

2022

Kyng Rhodes (American, b. 1993)

Acrylic and charcoal on canvas with plastic caution tape

TR12445/1

© Kyng Rhodes

On loan from the artist

Kyng Rhodes felt an immediate connection with *Dr. Kool*. But he also saw something missing in Hendrick's portrait. Rhodes created this work to shine a light on what is not depicted in *Dr. Kool*—what happens to Black men who are seen as a threat for how they look.

The figure in Rhodes's painting has been caught "red handed" being Black. Rather than being stoic, as *Dr. Kool* appears, or afraid, as one might be if targeted by police, the figure is self-assured. Rhodes uses a vibrant peacock feather to symbolize the man's pride in his Black identity. Feathers, as aides for flying, also represent ways Black Americans have adapted to American society, in particular developing strategies to flee from danger.

He's dressed well but could also be dressed for his funeral. For those who ask, "What has this man done to be targeted?" Rhodes responds, "That is a question for America."

Work in Progress: Conversations about American Art

