

Howard Ramsby II (English L&L)

“Mixed Media Exhibits & Blog Posts Concerning African Americans & Urban Spaces: Black Consciousness and City Space”

GRANT APPLICATION SUBMITTED:

Proposal Information: Submitted to State Farm YAB – July 2014

Program East St. Louis Mixed Media Exhibit Series

Title

Requested Amount \$89,130.45

Amount

Summary The proposed “East St. Louis Mixed Media Exhibit Series” (the East St. Louis Series) is a year-long sequence of exhibits focusing on African American literature, artistic culture, and history. The series of exhibits will be displayed for students at the SIUE/East St. Louis Charter School. The exhibits will expose high school students to a broad range of information concerning African American artists, artifacts, and artistic compositions. The exhibits will utilize audio digital devices that will allow participants to listen to recordings of poems and commentary about materials in the exhibits. Overall, the project will encompass diverse auditory, visual, and reading experiences.

Curated by Howard Ramsby, a college professor, specialist in African American literary studies, and Coordinator of the East St. Louis Action Research Project, the project will also involve additional literature scholars and college students in the initial design of the exhibits. During the course of the project, the high school students will become more active participants in the production of each of the exhibits, providing assistance with the selection of materials and with the commentary. The organizers will coordinate questionnaires and interest survey forms before and after each exhibit that will target concerns, inquiries, and interests of the students. In order to stimulate local pride and knowledge, select panels in the exhibit will highlight aspects of East St. Louis, the hometown of the target participants. The panels will showcase maps, historic buildings and photographs, and creative writings related to the city. Given the paucity of educational and artistic compositions featuring East St. Louis, this aspect of the exhibit will be particularly important. The project provides college student exhibit contributors with an important service-learning opportunity that allows them to assist in the production of a useful educational project for high school students.

Intended Outcomes The East St. Louis Series concentrates on building awareness of African American literary, visual, and verbal arts among high school students and provides them with opportunities to experience artistic materials in an exhibit or gallery-style format. The students at the SIUE/East St. Louis Charter School have almost no access to up-to-date, mixed media arts and humanities projects that showcase African American literature, culture, and East St. Louis. Thus, the East St. Louis Series presents the students with a unique and notable sequence of humanities learning experiences.

The project is designed to make high school students more aware of the educational and intellectual benefits of examining artistic compositions, especially compositions associated with African American literature and visual art. Students will also become aware of the possibilities of envisioning aspects of their city in artistic terms as some selections in the series of exhibits will showcase East St. Louis. The project is also designed to prompt interest in studying the humanities and attending college as the high school students will be made aware that college students collaborated on the production the commentary for the series of exhibits. The East St. Louis Series intends to provide college students with a remarkable service-learning

experience. Few, if any, service-learning projects at the university allow students to participate in the production of humanities projects, especially projects focusing on African American literary art and East St. Louis. Consequently, this project will empower college students to serve high school students by providing commentary on artistic compositions and the history and culture of a distinct city with limited resources. By analyzing and producing exhibits based on the high school student surveys, the college students will also participate in useful learning experiences about the community that they are serving.