

University of Chicago Arts

Student Creativity Grants (Winter 2017)

Monumental Women Project, Omonijo, Shae

Submitted: Jan 11 2017 4:13PM

Student Creativity Grant

1. Project Leader Name(s)

Shae Omonijo & Asya Akça

2. Project Leader Email Address(es)

3. Lead Applicant/Organization

Monumental Women Project

4. Nature of Lead Applicant/Organization (select the option that most closely corresponds to the nature of the lead applicant/organization)

Informal student group

5. Project Title

Dr. Georgiana Rose Simpson: Monumental Women Project

6. Project Summary (75 words)

The Monumental Women Project (MWP) works to honor influential women of the University of Chicago in the form of public art. Many women who have left a mark in history deserve to be heard and remembered on campus. Their legacies are what will continue to inspire the next generation of women, students, faculty, and visitors who pass through the halls of this great University. Currently, MWP is working to honor Dr. Georgiana Simpson and Dean Marion Talbot.

7. Proposed Date(s) of Project

Current-September 2017

8. Total Project Cost

33000.00

9. Amount Requested from the Student Creativity Grants

7500.00

10. Proposed Location of Activity

Reynolds Club

10.1. Has your use of this space been confirmed with the spaces' owners/managers?

Yes

11. Project Narrative (750 words)

The Monumental Women Project works to honor influential women of the University who have left a mark and whose stories deserve to be remembered. Their legacies are what will continue to inspire the next generation of women, students, faculty, and visitors who pass through the halls of this great University. The founders of the Monumental Women Project first met in their dorm during their freshman year at the University of Chicago. Asya Akca and Shae Omonijo, both third-year Political Science majors at the University, share a mutual passion for women's empowerment and a desire to honor underrepresented groups on campus.

During her first year at the University, Asya worked tirelessly in her role in Student Government to present the idea of bringing more monuments of women to campus. She was astonished that the University of Chicago had failed to recognize influential women in its history, a problem she had similarly sought to resolve several years before in her hometown of Louisville, Kentucky. On campus, she met with numerous students, administrators, and researchers at the University, which led her to discover the histories of influential, UChicago female leaders, like Dean Marion Talbot. In her first year, Asya applied for University funding for the project, unsuccessfully, but returned the next year with greater momentum after media coverage of the proposal during the summer of 2015.

Shae was simultaneously looking into the history of the University, specifically of her residential house. One day, an alumnus of their house shared a photo of a young Bernie Sanders (AB'64) sitting in a dorm room of what could be their house. This prompted Shae to search through the University's archives where she discovered the University's long history with housing discrimination and Bernie Sanders' fight to rectify it. The history became much deeper when she learned of University of Chicago alumna Dr. Georgiana Simpson, one of the first African-American women to graduate with a Ph.D. in the United States. Upon further examination of the University's history, they found that Dean Marion Talbot was a staunch supporter of Dr. Georgiana Simpson. Asya and Shae were both highly driven to bolster the presence of influential women on their campus. Together, they crafted a new proposal for their project, consulted more mentors and students, and applied to a second round of funding from a student funding committee, the Uncommon Fund. Monumental Women received the most support from the student body vote, and was funded \$9,500.

The founders have chosen to honor Dr. Georgiana Simpson through the installation of a bronze bust in Reynolds Club, an area once reserved for white men only, as the University's Men's Club. At the age of 55, Dr. Georgiana Simpson became one of the first African-American women to obtain a Ph.D. in the United States. When Georgiana Simpson left her job as a high school teacher in Washington DC, she left with a dream to expand her ability to teach students regardless of their race, class, or gender. She enrolled at the University of Chicago in 1907 and was immediately met with protest from white students who did not want an African-American living in the same dorm as them. Despite the attempts of the Dean of Women, Marion Talbot, to keep her in housing, President Harry Pratt Judson forced Simpson to leave campus. Georgiana Simpson did not allow this to deter her, so she completed her bachelor's degree through correspondence. Her voracious thirst for knowledge encouraged her to return to the University to pursue a PhD. After earning her historic degree, she went back to her hometown to teach at Dunbar High School, the first public high school for African-American students, and eventually at Howard University.

After leaping through the bureaucratic hoops of obtaining approval for the permanent location of the bust, as well as ensuring its security and maintenance, Asya and Shae are now able to turn their mission into a soon-to-be reality; however, they need more funding in order to support the costs of commissioning the bust. Georgiana Simpson did not allow her age, race or gender dictate how far she would go in life. With your support, when this complete monument is unveiled, it will be one of the first piece of public art in the City of Chicago that honors a woman for her own accomplishments.

12. Prior Experience/Coursework

Over the past year, Jennifer Kennedy, Associate Director Community Development and Operations Reynolds Club, has overseen both Asya and Shae's work on the Monumental Women Project as its primary advisor. From choosing a permanent location for the bust of Dr. Simpson to overseeing the artist selection phase of the process, Ms. Kennedy can testify to the founders' abilities to work through a plan diligently. Both Asya and Shae are also heavily involved on campus in a variety of different activities, ranging from student leadership programs at the Institute of Politics to research positions, and service opportunities. Shae has led multiple RSOs with operating budgets ranging from 5,000 to 10,000 dollars and large scale projects in coordination with the Board of Trustees and administrators at the University of Chicago. All of these are examples of their abilities to stay focused and work towards achieving a goal-- qualities that they applied to the Monumental Women Project.

13. Who is your intended audience?

Since this will be the first piece of public art to honor a woman for her own accomplishments, we want the general public to be a part of experiencing this piece of art. With approval of the Department of facilities, the art piece will be open to tourists, visiting students and parents, the uchicago community and the general chicao community.

14. Promotion Plan (150 words)

The Monumental Women Project is excited to expand our outreach strategies. Previously, we have been featured in various media outlets such as the Tab, WBEZ, the Chicago Maroon where we discussed the importance of honoring women through public works of art. Similarly, we have written op-eds underscoring why now is the time for women to take on my leaderships roles and receive recognition for their accomplishments. Currently, we are partnering with the Alumni Relations Department to raise awareness about our project to alumni. In January of 2017, we will be launching our website (monumentalwomen.uchicago.edu) and facebook page where we will discuss the project and share progress updates. We will also be solidifying partnerships with OMSA, the Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture, the Center for Gender and Sexuality Studies, the Black Metropolis Research Center, and the Diversity Advisory Council in order to make sure the campus community is a part of the historical occasion.

15. Have you applied to other grants for this project? (Check all that apply)

N/A - have not applied to other grants

16. Please list any other funding sources to which you plan to apply

None

17. Has the lead applicant or organization received support from the Student Creativity Grants or Student Fine Arts Fund in the last 12 months?

No

18. What are your plans for this project in the event that you do not receive Student Creativity funding?

In the event that we are not awarded, we will continue to work with alumni and other UChicago stakeholders to raise the additional funds we need to complete this historic project.

MONUMENTAL WOMEN PROJECT: DR. GEORGIANA R. SIMPSON**SHAE OMONIJO & ASYA AKCA****Proposed Budget**

* = Funding requested from the Student Creativity Grants (add asterisk to all relevant items)

Please add additional categories as necessary

EXPENSES

[ARTIST FEES/ACCESSORIES]	COST PER ITEM	#	TOTAL
Artist Design Fee and Clay Modeling	8,000.00	1	8,000.00
Plaque describing the art piece	2,000.00	1	2,000.00
Pedestal for Bronze Bust	3,000.00	1	3,000.00
TOTAL			13,000.00

[Bronze Bust MATERIALS AND SERVICES]	COST PER ITEM	#	TOTAL
* Silicone Rubber Molds and Reinforced Plaster Mold	3,500.00	1	3,500.00
* Creation of Wax Pattern, Preparation for Foundry	3,000.00	1	3,000.00
* Administrative Services, Research and Project Coordination, Insurance	500.00	1	500.00
* Transportation and Shipping	500.00	1	500.00
Clay, Wax, Plaster, Silicone and other Materials	2,000.00	1	2,000.00
Casting and Foundry Costs including all Materials and Welding	8,500.00	1	8,500.00
Patination, Waxing and Preparation for Mounting	2,000.00		2,000.00
TOTAL [CATEGORY B]			20,000

TOTAL PROJECT COST	33,000.00
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OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

OTHER FUNDING	ITEM FUNDED	TOTAL
Student Government Uncommon Fund Grant	Artist Design fee & a portion of the pedestal fee	9,500.00
PENDING: Alumni Relations Crowdfunding Platform	Patination, etc.	15,000.00
TOTAL FUNDING FROM OTHER SOURCES		24,500.00

Please verify that the total amount requested from the Student Creativity Grants matches the total cost of the expenses you have marked with a red asterisk

TOTAL REQUESTED FROM STUDENT CREATIVITY GRANTS	7,500.00
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Please verify that the total amount requested from the Student Creativity Grants matches the total cost of the expenses you have marked with a red asterisk

Artist Biography: Preston Jackson



As an artist, Preston Jackson specializes in bronze and steel sculpture and painting. Best known for his work with bronze castings, Jackson has also created two-dimensional pieces and large monuments. Jackson is recipient of five state public art commissions through the state's Capital Development Board. His works include a life size bronze Jean Baptiste Point du Sable in Peoria; bronze façade and doors for the Cahokia Mounds Museum; a Martin Luther King memorial bust for Danville, Illinois; among others. We invite you to learn more about Preston [here](#).

LIVE ON AIR All Things Considered: Hour 2

Morning Shift (/shows/morning-shift/22669fdb-ffef-42fa-910b-98490b8925da)

University Of Chicago To Get Its First Statue Of A Woman

October 4, 2016

PLAY 13 MIN

ADD TO QUEUE



Image courtesy of the University of Chicago

Three African American women earned PhDs at American universities in 1921; they were the first African American women to do so. Georgiana Simpson was one of them. A life long teacher, she earned her PhD in German Philology at the age of 55, becoming one of the first African American women to obtain a PhD in the United States.

Chicago will get one of its first statues of a notable woman in 2017 when a bronze bust of Georgiana Simpson — one of the first African-American women to receive a Ph.D. — is erected at the University of Chicago. It's the first monument of its kind on the campus as well.

"As you walk around any city in the U.S., it's very hard to see monuments that honor influential females," said Asya Akca, the U of C political science student who came up with the idea.

As WBEZ previously reported (<https://www.wbez.org/shows/morning-shift/chicago-parks-have-zero-statues-of-women-48-statues-of-men/b64e2275-11f4-4cee-822c-8efd1a9cdd63>), there are 48 statues of historically significant men in Chicago's public parks, including monuments to explorer Leif Ericson, president Abraham Lincoln and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. But there are no statues or busts of notable women. As the Washington Post (https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/why-the-dearth-of-statues-honoring-women-in-statuary-hall-and-elsewhere/2011/04/11/AFx8lgjD_story.html) pointed out a few years ago, less than eight percent of the public outdoor sculptures of individuals in the United States are of women.

The location of the bust coming to the University of Chicago campus has a bit of poetic justice. It will be located in the Reynolds Club (<https://leadership.uchicago.edu/reynolds-club>), a building that now acts serves as a kind of student union but was once a club specifically reserved for white men.

"I think it's very significant to have Dr. Georgiana Simpson's bust in that building to symbolize not only the different triumphs, but also to have a more unifying factor that Georgiana Simpson's history is as important as the other alumni that we honor," said Shae Omonijo, another U of C political science student working on bringing the sculpture to campus.

Simpson attended the University of Chicago as an undergraduate from 1907 to 1911 and earned a Ph.D. in German philology from the school in 1921.

As an African-American woman, she faced housing discrimination and racism as she pursued her degree.

“She was immediately met with a lot of criticism,” Omonijo said. “A lot of the students, specifically white students were not comfortable with having an African American woman living in the same room, dorm, building as them.”

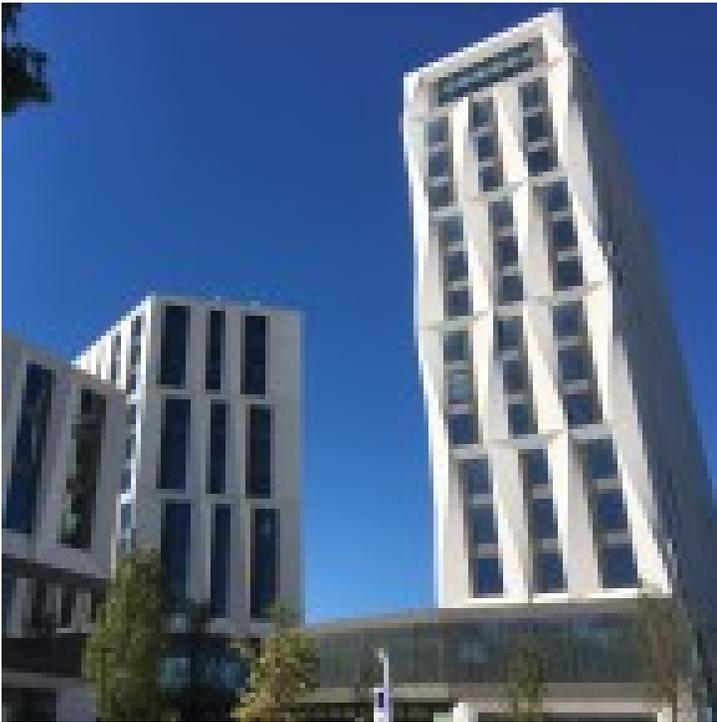
The bust will be installed in early 2017.

A previous version of this story misnamed the building that will house the new statue. It is called Reynolds Club.

#UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO (/TAGS/UNIVERSITY%20OF%20CHICAGO) #STATUES (/TAGS/STATUES) #STATUES OF WOMEN (/TAGS/STATUES%20OF%20WOMEN)

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