

★ Roll Call Number  
07-674

Agenda Item Number  
41

Date April 9, 2007

Request from Council Member Christine Hensley to speak regarding use of property at the Des Moines Police Station for display of public art.

Moved by Hensley to receive, file and refer to the City Manager for review and recommendation in 60 days, regarding the Iowa National Bar Association Public Art Project.

COUNCIL ACTION	YEAS	NAYS	PASS	ABSENT
COWNIE	✓			
COLEMAN	✓			
HENSLEY	✓			
KIERNAN	✓			
MAHAFFEY	✓			
MEYER	✓			
VLASSIS	✓			
TOTAL	7			

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVED

**CERTIFICATE**

I, DIANE RAUH, City Clerk of said City hereby certify that at a meeting of the City Council of said City of Des Moines, held on the above date, among other proceedings the above was adopted.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed my seal the day and year first above written.

\_\_\_\_\_ Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_ City Clerk

07-67441

IOWA NATIONAL BAR ASSOCIATION  
PUBLIC ART PROJECT

APRIL 9, 2007

REQUEST TO DES MOINES CITY COUNCIL

PUBLIC ART SITE LOCATION

# national bar association

## A PUBLIC ART **SCULPTURE** PROJECT

The Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation was contacted in early 2006 by Polk County Associate Judge Odell McGhee contacted the Foundation about an idea to create a monument in honor of a group of Des Moines African-American attorneys who founded the *National Bar Association [NBA]*, in 1929.

Judge McGhee's concept is to commission an artist to conceptualize, fabricate, and install a large-scale monument to celebrate the founders of the NBA. They were attorneys who, being denied admittance into the American Bar Association because of race created a parallel organization in 1925 that today has over 30,000 members.

The project is gaining momentum, with the initiation of a Steering Committee and appointment of individuals to serve on an artist selection panel. The Foundation has agreed, in principle, to assist in the artist selection process and provide financial support at an amount to be determined later in the process.

McGhee described his vision of the work as a monumental sculpture that features a "Speaker's Platform", at its base to accommodate anyone seeking a forum in which to express their views. This element is similar to the *Speaker's Corner in London's Hyde Park*; considered one of the best places in the world to exercise freedom of speech, and is one of the most famous locations symbolizing democratic rights in the world.

The projected cost will likely be in the range of \$750,000 - \$1 million, most of which will come from private donations. The Greater Des Moines Community Foundation has agreed to serve as fiscal agent for the project.

### **LOCATION**

One of the first and most important steps in beginning a public art project is to identify and secure an appropriate location for the artwork. It has been determined that the Principal Riverwalk, in front of the Police Station, is an ideal site at which to install the work.

As such, the Project Steering Committee and the Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation request that the City Council approve the desired location for this important public art project.

## PUBLIC ART MEMORIALS & CIVIL RIGHTS

### CIVIL RIGHTS MEMORIAL, MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA

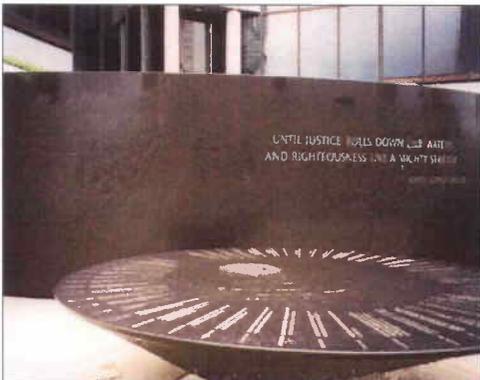
The Southern Poverty Law Center was founded in 1971 as a small civil rights law firm. Today, the Center is internationally known for its tolerance education programs, its legal victories against white supremacists and its tracking of hate groups.

Located in Montgomery, Alabama – the birthplace of the Civil Rights Movement – the Center was founded by Morris Dees and Joe Levin, two local lawyers who shared a commitment to racial equality. Its first president was civil rights activist Julian Bond.

The circular fountain provides a timeline of important events in the civil rights movement, beginning in 1954 with the Supreme Court decision to integrate American schools (*Brown vs. the Board of Education*) and ending with Dr. King's murder in 1968. It also records the names of 40 men, women, and children who lost their lives working for social justice. A thin pool of water flows over this circular "table," an effect that Lin hoped was soothing.

The Civil Rights Memorial honors the achievements and memory of those who lost their lives during the Civil Rights Movement, a period framed by the momentous *Brown v. Board* decision in 1954 and the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in 1968.

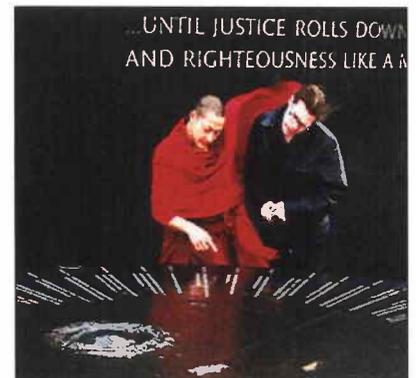
Created by Vietnam Veterans Memorial designer Maya Lin, the striking black granite memorial is located across the street from the Southern Poverty Law Center's office building in Montgomery, Alabama, a city rich with civil rights history.



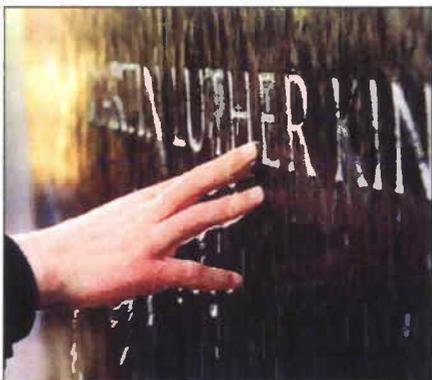
The Memorial is just around the corner from the church where Dr. King served as pastor during the Montgomery Bus Boycott in 1955-1956, and the capitol steps where the Selma-to-Montgomery voting rights march ended in 1965.

The Memorial is located on an open plaza accessible to visitors 24 hours a day, every day of the week. There is no admission fee. The plaza is a contemplative area — a place to remember the

Movement, to honor those killed during the struggle, to appreciate how far the country has come in its quest for equality and consider how far it has to go.

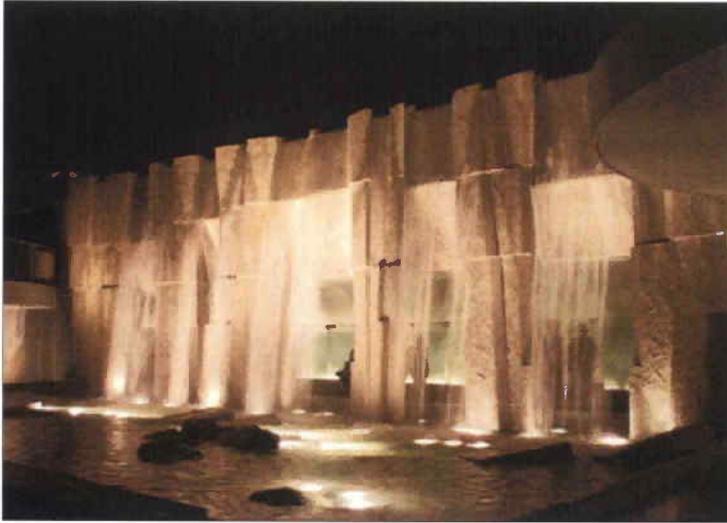


ARTIST: MAYA LIN  
TITLE: "CIVIL RIGHTS MEMORIAL"



## MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. MEMORIAL, ATLANTA, GEORGIA

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial is situated behind a majestic waterfall fifty (50) feet high and twenty (20) feet wide which cascades over Sierra granite. The memorial includes backlit photos from the civil rights movement and twelve shimmering glass panels set in granite and inscribed with Dr. King's inspiring words. The poems are translated into the languages of San Francisco's thirteen (13) international sister cities, as well as African and Arabic dialects.



The memorial is anchored at one end with a carved image of Dr. King and at the other with an image of San Francisco's community leaders during the 20th anniversary of the March in Golden Gate Park. The Memorial embraces Dr. King's vision of peace and international unity, and is the second largest Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in the United States next to the King Center in Atlanta, GA.

*Artists: Sculptor Houston Conwill, Poet Estella Majoza, and Architect Joseph De Pace  
"The Memorial is "a sacred space ... meant to be experienced as a cultural pilgrimage and a journey of transformation."*

## Hyde Park Speaker's Corner, London, England



Speaker's Corner is one of Britain's most famous places for public debate and discussion. Often it is seen as a shining symbol of Britain's entry into liberal democracy. The official story of the origins of Speakers' Corner is by now a familiar one. An act of Parliament passed in 1872 (The Royal Parks and Gardens Regulation Act) allowed a space in the northeastern corner of Hyde Park to be given over for public speaking.

*Speaker's Corner in London's Hyde Park is one of the best places to let off steam in London. It is one of the most famous locations symbolizing democratic rights in the world*

A considerable debt for the eventual passing of the 1872 act is owed to the activities of the Reform League. The Reform League had pushed the question of the right to speak freely in Hyde Park. This was part of their campaign for a reform of the franchise, in particular their hostility to the Liberal government's proposed Second Reform Bill which they believed offered too little. Thousands turned up to one such meeting on 23 July 1866. When they found their access to the Park blocked by 1 700 police, they broke through police ranks and managed to debate and discuss political issues. Following these disturbances, deliberations ensued in Parliament over Hyde Park and the right to free speech there.

## NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY AND SPEAKERS' CORNER, NEW YORK, NEW YORK

Situated on the corner of W. 135th Street and Lenox Avenue, the Harlem branch of the New York Public Library was more than a repository of books. It was the cultural and intellectual center for the community. Librarian Ernestine Rose held frequent poetry readings and book discussions for literature enthusiasts, with Jessie Fauset (*Crisis* editor), Ethel Nance (secretary of W. E. B. Du Bois), and poets Countee Cullen and Gwendolyn Bennett among her featured presenters.



The library was selected as the exhibition space for The Harmon Foundation's first juried show of paintings and sculptures by black artists and regularly featured the work of visual artists. Notable among the library's permanent collection was the mural *Aspects of Negro Life* (1934), by Aaron Douglas.

Just outside the library was the infamous "SPEAKERS' CORNER", where anyone could stand and extemporize about issues of the day; it was here that civil rights leader Marcus Garvey delivered his views on race politics.

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