

# PRESS RELEASE DISTRIBUTION COVER SHEET



*TO:*

*DATE:*

*FROM: Opal M. Jones  
President & CEO,  
DOORWAYS*

*TOPIC: Recognizing Black History Month,  
Kehinde Wiley sculpture representing  
equity and empowerment for our clients  
specifically purchased for DOORWAYS  
by Gateway Foundation for placement  
as the cornerstone of our new campus  
in North St. Louis*

With excitement, I'm sending you the attached press release. Feel free to contact me directly to speak further about the importance of this statue in memorializing our agency mission by its prominent placement at our new campus and through its representation of strength and leadership. I've extracted a few of the most salient points below to paint the full picture of this exciting award:

1. DOORWAYS serves a **disenfranchised community**—those living in poverty, homelessness, plus battling HIV and other chronic illness associated with surviving in an under-resourced environment. Nearly 80% of our clients are African American, mirroring the demographics of the JeffVanderLou neighborhood that we will call home later this summer when our new campus opens its doors.
2. Famous equestrian statues in the U.S. that memorialize Confederate leaders have been recently criticized and many removed for perpetuating a message of white authority; however, artist **Kehinde Wiley** is widely known for recreating these Confederate monuments to **feature African Americans dressed in contemporary attire, changing the message from victimization to strength.**
3. We view this art provided by the Gateway Foundation as a visualization of the DOORWAYS mission of providing housing to stabilize health and resources to **improve equity, opportunities, and inclusion—embodying a message of progress and empowerment for African Americans and all those experiencing discrimination (such as those with HIV).**
4. The placement in North St. Louis breaks barriers, **bringing sculpture into an area typically overlooked for public displays of art.** Furthermore, this is the first equestrian sculpture in St. Louis to feature a Black man in the position of triumph and power normally accorded only to white males.
5. **Wiley is known to St. Louisans** for his exhibition in 2018/2019 at the St. Louis Art Museum of 11 large-scale oil paintings of contemporary African American St. Louis models in poses reminiscent of the grand traditions of European and American portraiture found in the Museum's collection. The works were his response to the 2017 Ferguson protests.

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After reading the release, please call me on my direct line (314-328-2701)  
or reach out to our communications manager listed on the attached.

*Opel M. J.*

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FMI on the sculpture or the Gateway Foundation:  
Paul Wagman, wagmanp@outlook.com M: 314-606-1283

FMI on DOORWAYS: Karen Carpentier, Communications Manager  
kcarpentier@doorwayshousing.org O: 314-328-2704 M: 314-406-2268



**DOORWAYS**  
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## **Major Sculpture by Renowned Artist Kehinde Wiley**

### **Coming to New DOORWAYS Campus**

*A Long-Term Loan from the Gateway Foundation*

St. Louis -- February 2022 -- DOORWAYS is thrilled to announce that a major work of sculpture by Kehinde Wiley, one of the nation's leading artists, will be permanently sited on our new Campus. The impressive work, titled *Rumors of War*, will make our new campus on the North Side of St. Louis a landmark in public art and social consciousness.

The work is a generous long-term loan to DOORWAYS from the St. Louis-based Gateway Foundation.

Wiley has been well recognized for his large-scale portrait paintings, which feature African American men and women wearing contemporary dress in poses based on well-known images of historical Western artworks — most often royals and generals. He garnered even more renown for painting the official Presidential portrait of President Barack Obama, which now hangs in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

*Rumors of War* reimagines traditional heroic equestrian sculptures. It features a man on a horse, with pose and posture modeled after the statue of Confederate Gen. J.E.B. Stuart that until recently stood on Monument Avenue in Richmond, VA. There are, however, several significant differences: The man on *this* horse is Black, wears a hoodie, jeans and high-top sneakers, and has his hair in dreadlocks. Wiley's work is meant as a direct response to Confederate monuments by reimagining a new hero and protagonist.

*Rumors of War* will be sited at the entrance plaza just outside the new headquarters building, at 1101 North Jefferson Avenue, northwest of its intersection with Dr. Martin Luther King Drive. The bronze sculpture, which will be placed on a stone pedestal, measures 53 inches high x 64 inches wide x 24 inches deep. It is one of nine smaller versions, or "editions," of a larger sculpture that Wiley made for placement in Richmond. The new piece is scheduled to be installed in the summer of 2022, when work at the new campus is completed.

DOORWAYS is immensely grateful to the Gateway Foundation for this fascinating and stirring artwork. It will immediately establish our campus as a landmark for contemporary art, not only in North St. Louis but in the entire St. Louis region and beyond.

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Currently, St. Louis features at least five equestrian sculptures—including the majestic *Apotheosis of St. Louis* on Art Hill in Forest Park; a sculpture of the Union General Franz Siegel, also in Forest Park; and *Man on Horse*, by Fernando Botero, on Wydown Boulevard near Hanley Road in Clayton. As Tarrell R. Campbell, Ph.D., assistant dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Washington University, observes in his essay, [Rumors of War: A More Inclusive Northside](#), the first two equestrian monuments represent white, male figures in powerful, triumphant poses, whereas Botero's rider reflects an "everyman." Wiley's *Rumors of War*, Campbell notes, represents a major departure from all three of these pieces in a number of ways.

One, of course, is the sculpture itself, which places a young Black man in the position of triumph and power normally accorded only to white males. In fact, "Wiley's young African American male rider holds his own when juxtaposed with *Apotheosis of St. Louis*," Campbell writes.

Another is the placement of the sculpture in North St. Louis, which until now has been "historically ignored and not considered 'worthy' of this kind of power and importance."

The site is also significant for its proximity to another landmark of Black American culture, the Scott Joplin House, at 2658 Delmar. It's also within a few blocks of three schools—Carr Lane Visual and Performing Arts Middle School, La Salle Public Charter Middle School, and Gateway Science, Technology, Engineering and Math High School—whose students can be heartened and inspired by the new work.

Wiley cast two editions of *Rumors of War* in different sizes. The first large-scale version was unveiled in 2019 in New York's Times Square. Later that year it traveled to Richmond, where it was temporarily sited right on Monument Avenue among the Confederate monuments. In a *New York Times* story about the unveiling, Wiley recalled how he had conceived the sculpture after seeing the statues of Stuart and other Confederate generals in Richmond and feeling "a sense of dread and fear."

The *Times* quoted Wiley as saying, "Today we say yes to something that looks like us. We say yes to inclusivity. We say yes to broader notions of what it means to be an American."

As it turned out, Richmond removed the statues of Confederate generals from Monument Avenue after the protests against the death of George Floyd in 2020. Wiley's sculpture, however, remains nearby on the grounds of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts.

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Wiley is a native of Los Angeles who earned a Bachelor's in Fine Arts degree from the San Francisco Art Institute and a Master's in Fine Arts from the School of Art at Yale University. He is also already well-known to St. Louisans. In 2017, three years after the death of Michael Brown and the protests in Ferguson, he visited North St. Louis and invited residents he met in Ferguson and Florissant to pose for him. The result was an exhibition from late 2018 to early 2019 at the Saint Louis Art Museum in which Wiley presented 11 large-scale oil paintings of contemporary African American St. Louis models in poses reminiscent of the grand traditions of European and American portraiture found in the Museum's collection.

These works, the Art Museum noted, "address the politics of race and power in art, drawing attention to the pervasive lack of representation of people of color in the art world." And Dereck Conrad Murray, an arts professor at the University of California Santa Cruz, commented: The paintings, like *Rumors of War*, "envision ... blackness beyond abjection and racial trauma." They suggest "welcoming entry-points into the worlds of prestige, clout, power, wealth, and influence" that are usually unavailable.

The mission of the Gateway Foundation is to enrich life and culture in St. Louis by supporting efforts to acquire, create and improve tangible and durable art and urban design. The foundation is best known for its Citygarden in downtown St. Louis, but it has also placed more than 30 other sculptures in public locations in St. Louis and St. Louis County. In addition, the foundation has been responsible for the outdoor lighting of the Gateway Arch, Civil Courts Building, City Hall, and many other iconic St. Louis structures.

Gateway purchased "Rumors of War" specifically for our site. The foundation will also finance the cost of the design and construction of the sculpture entry plaza, as well as the costs associated with the installation and lighting of the new piece of artwork. As we seek to complete the fundraising for our \$35 million new campus, we do hope the generosity Gateway has shown us will inspire other donors to join in our support.

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For further reading, a link to *Rumors of War: A More Inclusive Northside* by Tarrell R. Campbell, Ph.D., can be found on his website at <https://www.tarrellrodneycampbell.com/blog/rumors-of-war-a-more-inclusive-northside>.

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