

# A Call to the Ancestors



Our hearts go out to the souls at Lincoln Memorial Park and the ancestors who watch over us.

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### ABOUT OUR COLLECTION

This exhibition that premiered in Little Haiti, Miami in September 2023 and fills the following pages is steeped in both respect for the past with gratitude toward The Ancestors and unyielding commitment to the present and determined optimism for the future.

It is never the past alone. Curator Carl-Philippe Juste has created an experience for audiences that uplifts all who came before us and shines the spotlight on the buried histories so crucial for our lives in the contemporary moment. Without this knowledge, our present-past and future are grim indeed.

A Call to the Ancestors centers the story of the Lincoln Memorial Park Cemetery in Miami's Brownsville neighborhood, an institution that bears witness to the profound impact of segregation – both in life and in death – natural disasters, and human-initiated actions. Essays, photographs, and art pieces adorn the walls (and now pages), weaving a collective narrative that showcases the cemetery's historic significance as a final resting place for Black Americans, including war veterans, lynching victims, and influential figures who shaped Miami's history.

Beyond the poignant stories of loss and displacement due to natural disaster and human hands, A Call to the Ancestors celebrates the resilience and unity inherent in cultural and religious practices throughout the Global Caribbean, including Miami, that mark the transition from this life to the next. The exhibition honors traditions from Haitian, Central and South American, Caribbean, African American and Native American communities, offering a poignant reminder of the transformative power of transition rituals in fostering reconciliation and healing, even as narratives get misshapen, and tides continue to rise.

This show is a collaboration in the truest sense. Not only did it bring us together for the first time, Iris PhotoCollective (IPC) and the Wolfsonian Public Humanities Lab-Florida International University (WPHL-FIU), but it is also a partnership that includes the Haitian Cultural Arts Alliance, the Little Haiti Cultural Complex, the Extreme Events Institute-FIU, and supported by FIU's Mellon-funded project Commons for Justice: Race, Risk, Resilience. The show itself, a creative collective of written word, still image, video, and mixed-media art and sculpture, asks each artist, each writer, each viewer to call their ancestors, honor them and remember them through words and images. It is this embrace of the temporal arc, the human life cycle, from birth to death to the beyond, that gives A Call to the Ancestors its power.

Your open hearts bridge us to our ancestors.

Carl-Philippe Juste and Rebecca Friedman, PhD

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## Overview

### The Ancestors: Active in Past, Present and Future

BY ELISA TURNER

They are defiant. They are resilient. They are spirits of the disappeared and displaced, once forgotten by many in Miami, now reclaimed by ambitious events and exhibit in "A Call to the Ancestors." It spotlights the fate of historically throughout this nocturnal scene, stripped of tropical colors. Black cemetery Lincoln Memorial Park. Founded nearly a century ago in Brownsville, for decades Lincoln bore scars of immense neglect. It's now cleaned and groomed, reclaiming places where enslaved Blacks and Indigenous peoples and honoring those spirits from its storied past.

As Leonard Pitts, Jr. writes, Lincoln is where "lynching victims and millionaires alike" rest together in cramped company, in segregated witness to the vicious, murderous lim Crow era. Honoring this memory matters more than ever, as we now witness calls to diminish Black history, to erase past terror and triumph.

C. Isaiah Smalls II underscores the urgent lesson of Lincoln. He writes, "Black history—and places like Lincoln—cannot be exterminated—for they hold the key to a better future." He calls us to act in response to these attacks on American history. Without question, they imperil our democracy.

Looking beyond Lincoln Memorial Park, "A Call to the Ancestors" explores how we remember and honor our ancestors for a better future. We're invited to share rituals in the Glass." What can be salvaged, she answers, is shaping our past, present and future moments in Miami. These mirror Miami's crossroads identity, perched at the edge of rising, at-risk waters. It's where cultures spanning the Caribbean, Central and South America, Africa and other regions collide and embrace.

This sometimes bittersweet embrace can produce welcome moments of risk-defying joy and healing for Miami's multiple communities, suffering twin assaults on civil rights and natural resources. In these Little Haiti galleries, defiance and resilience, beauty and respect meet in art and words.

Morel Doucet creates porcelain ceramic skulls for "Bones to Belonging: Skulls as Markers of Resilience and Identity." He explains that the skulls are painted with patterns from various cultures including Mexican, Haitian, and Australian Aboriginal. Such skulls recall exuberantly decorated sugar skulls exchanged during Mexico's Day of the Dead gatherings as well as European memento mori traditions. afterlife, reminding the living that earthbound life is finite.

commands metaphorical power in Edouard Duval-Carrié's connections active and alive.

painting "Beast of Burden." After surviving Middle Passage horrors, millions of enslaved Blacks died prematurely on these plantations. Silver glitter sparkles like sugar A naked Black man gingerly crawls forward despite certain death ahead. Behind him is a cave, reminiscent of secretive gathered for rites bridging passage from their terrestrial world to places beyond. On his back is a mandala bearing a constellation of circular forms. It opens to a non-Western spiritual space transcending the cruelty of colonialism.

Muralist Lionel Milton paints "strange fruit" dangling from branches of a broadly brushed tree, it's trunk emblazoned with the face of a Black person who seems to possess a "third eye," signifying spiritual enlightenment in Hindu and Buddhist beliefs. Here, this "third eye" may suggest that the lynching victims are rising beyond their bodily desecration on earth. Dominating the tree's canopy are five oversize heads or masks, outlined in rapid strokes to evoke Black larger-than-life spirit guides.

"What do we salvage from the past? Of the lives of the dead?" asks novelist Ana Menéndez in "Vidrio: The Face recognizing how ancestors continue to shape the present. For Ana, the face in the glass belongs to her and her late maternal grandmother Manuela, to whom she bears a nearperfect likeness. A piercing childhood memory still haunting the novelist is her grandmother's cry of "Vidrio!" This was a worried admonition to avoid stepping on shattered, fractured glass. Manuela was born to Lebanese immigrants in Cuba in 1926 and later immigrated to the United States. She was her family's gifted seamstress and storyteller. In conversations, she stitched together tales of daily life burnished by precisely observed details. Hampered by insular, fracturing anxieties of exile, her grandmother. Ana believes, lives a second life through her own published storytelling. Ana became the novelist her grandmother was meant to be.

Inviting reflections on dignity restored to once severely neglected Lincoln Park Memorial Cemetery, "A Call to the Ancestors" is curated by Carl-Philippe Juste, directed by Rebecca Friedman and Juste. It casts a wide net throughout These skulls honor and celebrate those departed for the diverse communities and creatives, revealing multiple ways to bid farewell and still hold close ancestors during their passage through the universe. In these galleries, sugar Sugar, and its back-breaking production by enslaved skulls and shattered glass, secretive caves and strange laborers on deadly lucrative Caribbean sugar plantations, fruit are just some of the conduits for keeping ancestral



# The Ancestors: Active in Past, Present and Future

BY ELISA TURNER

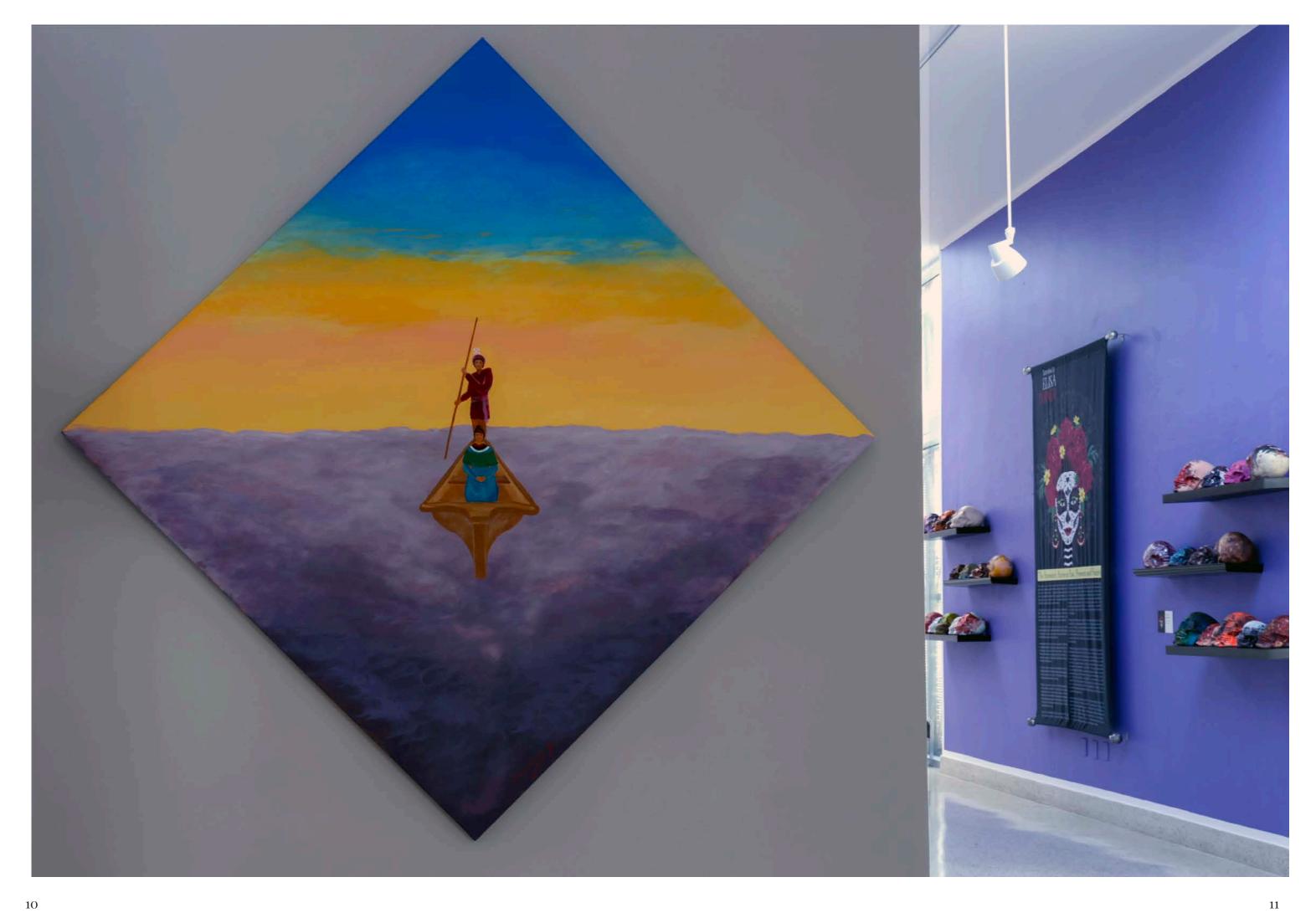






Morel Doucet
From Bones to Belonging: Skulls as Markers of
Resilience and Identity, 2023
Miami, FL
Slip-casted Porcelain Ceramics / Aerosol Paint
6.5" x 6.5 Width x 13" Length

Samuel Tommie
We Return, 2023
Big Cypress Seminole Reservation
Miccosukee / Seminole
Acrylic on canvas
Displayed 7' x 7'





**Lionel Milton** *UBUNTU*, 2023
New Orleans, LA
Acrylic on canvas / Diptych
Displayed —14' x 7'



## The Parlor

Dr. Rebecca Friedman FIU PROFESSOR OF HISTORY

The Parlor, a place of memory, of home's embrace, invites you to sit, relax, breathe, ponder your own journey, and recall loved ones who have gone to be with the ancestors. The telephone in The Parlor summons you, if but for a moment, to (re)connect with souls who have left this earth. Please dial and make A Call to the Ancestors. Leave a message for someone who has transitioned out of this world and into the next. Within your words resides hope and resilience.

Here we read a portion of Edwidge Dandicat's "A Prayer Before Dying," where she meditates on her mother's experience of leaving this earth.

Dear Lord.

Please let this be my final prayer, my very final prayer. Let there be no more need for me to ask anything else of you and of this sometimes shaken and sometimes troubled but beautiful earth.

Please let this be the last time I think of you, before we see each other face-to-face, light-to-light, or wind-to-wind, or sky-to-sky, or however we will be.

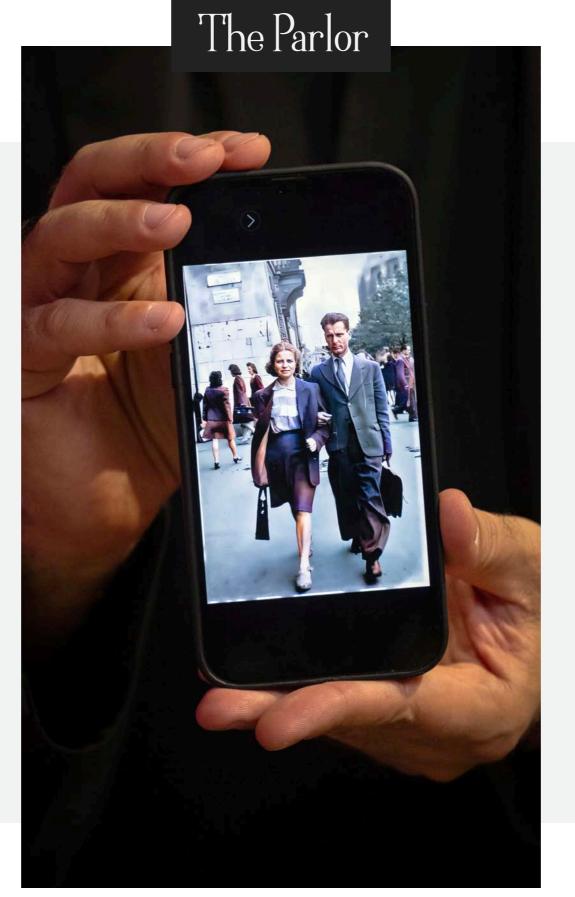
I can't wait. I can't wait to see what I will be: what colors, what shade, what light pillar, what rainbow, what moonbow, what sunbow, what glory, or what new sky.

Please let me now accept all of this. As I have already accepted this world and all that it is and has been."

"My prayer is inspired by my mother. It is the prayer I imagined her saying in her head during her final moments on this earth, during those final minutes when she couldn't speak anymore but could still hear a little bit, as she was drifting away."























# Edouard Duval-Carrié The Beast of Burden, 2021 Miami, FL Aluminum, acrylic, and glitter glue 96" x 96 "

Alon Skuy Happy Birthday, 2022 Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL Digital Archival 40" x 30"

## Necessary Amnesia

### Leonard Pitts, Jr.

Down a forgotten street in a forgotten neighborhood sits a forgotten place.

Granted, those who live and work in Brownsville, who have loved ones interred at Lincoln Memorial Park Cemetery, would protest that they have forgotten nothing. It's a fair point. But so is this. In the condo towers downtown where construction cranes perch like giant metallic grasshoppers, on the sparkling bay where motorboats and Jet Skis duel incoming waves, in all the showcase places that signify in the public mind all that Miami is, one would likely be hard pressed to find anyone who knows anything about this broken-down graveyard signifying all that Miami was: a segregated Southern town where black people lived largely unseen, and where the racial mores of the Jim Crow era were enforced by the law, the fist and the gun.

Lincoln is the final resting place for an estimated 10,000 to 30,000 African Americans, lynching victims and millionaires alike, pressed together in the equality of their legal inequality. Nearly a hundred years after its first burials, the graveyard is a misbegotten jumble of tombs, the names of occupants scrubbed away by years of sun and storm.

The people buried at Lincoln are not, to be sure, the only ones denied memory. There are other urban cemeteries in South Florida — indeed, across the country — where the only caretaker is neglect, and African Americans lie in forgotten repose.

America forgets them because they are easy to forget. And because they are necessary to forget, because they give the lie to our national mythology. America has to forget them because otherwise, how can you gaze upon the construction cranes, how can you feel the Jet Ski spray, in quite the same innocent and oblivious way?

But to forget a thing is not to make it disappear. So here, then, is Lincoln Memorial Park Cemetery, final resting place to the millionaire and the lynching victim alike. Here, a shopping cart sits abandoned in the weeds. Here, the fence sags under the weight of its years. But here, too, fresh bouquets of red and gold flowers adorn a few of the tombs. And small American flags hang limply in the posts of that tired fence, their faded colors barely stirred by the breeze.









Carl-Philippe Juste
The Cleansing, 2018
Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL
Digital Archival
54" x 36"



Carl-Philippe Juste
Frayed Glory, 2018
Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL
Digital Archival
54" x 36"







C. W. Griffin

Markers, 2018

Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL

Digital Archival

30" x 40"

C. W. Griffin

Day Break, 2018

Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL

Digital Archival

36" x 54"

C. W. Griffin

Elyn - The Legacy, 1995

Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL

Digital Archival

36" x 36"

Lincoln Memorial Portrait Series



Carl-Philippe Juste
The Cross, 2018
Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL
Digital Archival
36" x 54"

Carl-Philippe Juste Johnsons, 2018 Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL Digital Archival 40" x 30"



# Buried History

# The War Outside by Claude Isaiah Smalls II



Against history. Against Black history. Against American history.

But this war didn't just start in 2023. Not in 2020. Not in 2016, either. It's inherent to the history of this country. A constant reminder reflected in the facade of our national mythology. In Lincoln Memorial Cemetery, we see the danger of letting our history waste away. For as much as Henry Flagler and Julia Tuttle are credited with finding Miami, many of those interred at Lincoln should be credited with giving democracy in Miami a living chance.

Names like D.A. Dorsey (the first Black millionaire in Miami), Gwen Cherry (the first Black woman elected to the Legislature), to H.E.S. Reeves (the founder of the Miami Times) and Kelsey Pharr (the first Black mortician in Miami) hold power. As does Spelman Kemp, a 14-year-old boy whom a white police officer murdered in cold blood for stealing eggs.

What we often fail to realize is history doesn't just live in the past: it influences the present and the future. The power of the past can be seen all around us. In the neighborhoods in which we live. In the decisions our elected officials make. In the schools we attend. Any attempt to obscure said history hurts not just me but all of us. Even worse, it makes a mockery of the ancestors who fought to make this world a better place.

Which is why what happened to Lincoln particularly stings. Buried there are some of Black Miami's most influential figures, yet their final resting place was allowed to waste away as if it didn't even matter. Lincoln, however, is not an aberration. Rather, it's the physical manifestation of a disregard for Black

history that has permeated this country's existence for centuries

If you noticed the parallels between Lincoln's descent into disrepair and Florida's attempts to whitewash Black history, you are not alone. This is the state in which we live. Florida is, contrary to popular belief, the South. Miami, by default, is the South. No amount of marketing and rebranding can change the fact that bodies once hung from the trees in Homestead. That the Ku Klux Klan would march through Overtown to dissuade residents from voting. That the police used to disappear Black men accused of the most insignificant crimes.

With Lincoln, we now have the opportunity to do something that has eluded this country since its inception: learn from our past.

As the great Dr. Carter G. Woodson wrote in his seminal work The Mis-Education of the Negro, a race with no history "becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated." Black history – and places like Lincoln – cannot be exterminated for they hold the key to a better future.

So, when I say there's a war going on outside, it's not an attempt to scaremonger. Instead, it's a call to action, one rooted in the fact that if American democracy didn't emerge until after the Voting Rights Act of 1965, this country is still in its infancy. Debates about America's true history are to be expected as its democracy continues to take shape. But if the Cherrys, the Dorsey and the Pharrs taught us anything, it's the importance of fighting for truth. The real question, however, is what are YOU going to do about it?



Carl-Philippe Juste

R.I.P (Rest in Place), 2018

Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL

Digital Archival

40" x 30"



**C. W. Griffin**Jessica Williams, The Heir, 2018

Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL Digital Archival 36" x 36" Lincoln Memorial Portrait Series



C. W. Griffin
Arthur Kennedy, The Sexton, 2018
Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL
Digital Archival
36" x 36" Lincoln Memorial Portrait Series



C. W. Griffin Marvin Dunn, The Educator, 2018 Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL Digital Archival 36" x 36" Lincoln Memorial Portrait Series



C. W. Griffin
Enid Pinkney, The Historian, 2018
Lincoln Memorial Park — Miami, FL
Digital Archival
36" x 36" Lincoln Memorial Portrait Series

# VIDRIO: The Face in the Glass An essay by Ana Menéndez



Recently, I met a woman who had been friends with my grandmother in their youth. She stopped, stared at my face. When finally she took my hands in hers, she whispered, "Oh, but you look so much like our dear Kika."

I am used to this. By some quirk of genetics, my features were cast in a near-perfect mold of my maternal grandmother. Manuela, affectionately known as Kika, was born the sixth of eight children to Lebanese immigrants in Cuba in 1926. My father endlessly tells the story of how, right after I was born, he took a single look at my face and sighed. Carajo, es cagadita a Manuela.

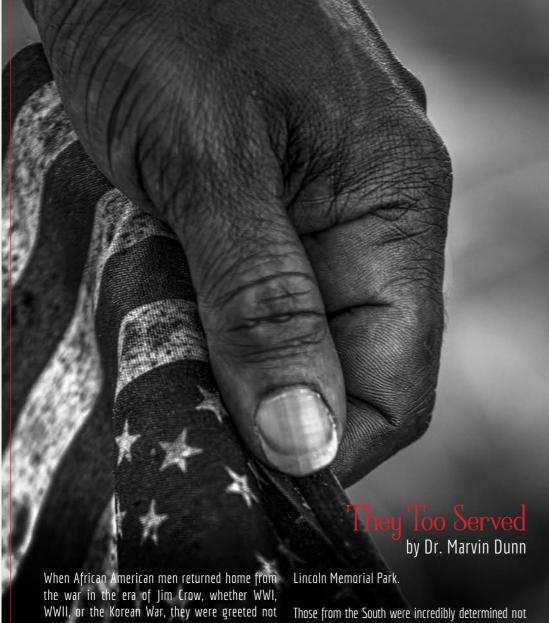
My grandmother died on May 24, 2010. The following day, I learned I was pregnant with my son. Eleven years later, walking past a wall of photographs in my parents' home, my son stops before a portrait of Kika. "That lady," he says, "she looks just like you."

"You are a continuation of me," my grandmother always told me. She felt that, through me, she lived a second chance, tasting opportunities she never enjoyed as a young woman in a conservative culture caught in turbulent times. Abuela Manuela was a storyteller of the highest quality, with such a keen eye for detail that she could return from a 10-minute trip to the grocery store with a story that took half an hour to recount.

With few outlets for her imagination, Abuela spun mostly anxieties. The list of things she feared could fill a book: roaches, dogs, driving, flying, open curtains, the dark, death. She was terrified of inadvertently causing harm. Whenever she sewed a piece of clothing for us and she was a gifted seamstress – she would check and re-check and re-check for stray pins that might prick us. She was especially afraid of broken glass. Vidrio! she would shout in panic, warning us away. Me voy! she'd cry, fleeing, when one of the children was doing something dangerous. And she would watch, in awe, as I grew up to do dangerous things: travelling to Afghanistan and Sri Lanka to report on civil war; watching shells light the night in Kashmir. She watched me become witness to conflict, to the violence she and her parents had fled and whose scars lived on in her. a continuation.

I became the storyteller Kika wanted to be. In my new novel, I write: We are our own ghosts, dragging our mournful pasts. Exile is a country haunted not just by the dead, but by the selves we might have lived in those other lands, now forsaken. As I grow older, more and more I meet Abuela Manuela in the looking glass. She calls to me again when someone breaks a dish. She is with me whenever I sense danger – when tyrants rise in my own country – and I hear her whisper, Me voy.

Ana Menéndez Abuela Manuela, 2020 Mixed Media 8" x 10"



with gratitude for bravely serving their country but rather with hatred, injustice, and violence, many of these soldiers experienced first-hand alternative understandings of race and equity while abroad during wartime. They could not abide by the Negroes' knew how to use weapons. Some of them indignities they suffered at home. They could not serve as second-class citizens when they returned home. Many had found themselves in the homes of white allies while abroad; they had eaten in white establishments, slept in white hotels, and dated white women.

The segregated and violent structures of race in the United States could not go unnoticed by these men. As depicted in the documentary film *Strange* Victory, amidst the high hopes of the post-World War II economic and baby boom, a probing question emerged about the vast distances between the ideals of the allied victory and the persistent racism in the U.S. The film asks audiences to consider the question: "Why are the loser's ideas still alive in the land of the winner?" It is precisely this question that haunts the memory of the soldiers buried in at Lincoln Memorial Park is so important.

to return to the old ways of segregation, economic exploitation, racial violence, and political impotence. They were called the "New Negroes," and many Southerners resented them deeply. These "New had killed white men in war. That idea terrorized some whites, although there are no known incidents in which Black veterans attacked whites.

The fear and resentment of returning African American men ran so deep in the South that some communities did not allow Black service members to wear their uniforms publicly. Even more hurtful was that there was virtually no recognition of these men's contributions on the battlefield, especially in the Great War. It was as if white men had only fought and won the War to End All Wars. Many of these Black veterans lie in unmarked graves in unknown cemeteries in unremarkable places throughout the South. The imperative to honor their valor and sacrifice is just one reason that the restorative work





C. W. Griffin Ritual, 2019 Miami, FL Digital Archival 40" x 30"





The Fete of Transition Festival celebrates the food, music and traditional rituals of the Caribbean, Indigenous and Latin American traditions.

The event took place at the Little Haiti Cultural Complex Plaza, Miami, FL on Friday, October 27, 2023.

Fête of Transition Event Poster — 30" x 40" Graphic Design by Jenny Babot-Romney

## Thank You

Memory. Connection. Joy. Love. As we look around this room our eyes gaze across cultures, generations; we see creation and disintegration. Birth. Death. Transition. Rebirth. The Beast of Burden carries the weight of an unjust world, and the skulls of our ancestors inspire new life.

Joy Harjo, the twenty-third Poet Laureate of the United States, of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation, reminds us that the end of the world arrives while we all sit around the kitchen table:

"The world begins at the kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live...

This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrell in the sun.

Wars have begun and ended at this table.

It is a place to hide in the shadow of terror. A place to celebrate terrible victory...

At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse.

We give thanks. ..."

Perhaps the World Ends Here from The Woman Who Fell From the Sky by Joy Harjo (1994).

Thanks, gratitude is a collective endeavor. A process. A daily practice. It insists on the invocation of many. Our ancestors who came before us. The artists, writers, supporters who are now with us. And those who are yet to arrive.

We owe our deepest thanks to the contributors of this exhibition: Woosler Delisfort, Edouard Duval-Carrié, Morel Doucet, Marvin Dunn, C.W. Griffin, Ana Menéndez, Lionel Milton, Leonard Pitts, Alon Skuy, C. Isaiah Smalls II, Samuel Tommie, Elisa Turner. Your artistry bridges us to our ancestors.

Behind the scenes, Joanne Hyppolite, Thaly Marcu, Valerie Bleus, Kervin Simms, Enrique Rosell and Malcolm Lauredo have been instrumental. Jenny Babot Romney's designs have been pivotal. Jessica Williams and Arthur Kennedy, your stewardship is invaluable.

We're grateful to FIU and the Mellon Foundation, Dr. Richard Olson, Dr. Marcie Washington, the Haitian Cultural Arts Alliance, the Little Haiti Cultural Complex, and the Coral Gables Museum for their unwavering support and belief in this project. Additional gratitude for the Miami Herald and its forethought in shining a light on America's troubled past. Thanks too to Lincoln Memorial Park for allowing us to bear witness to past injustice and contemporary resilience.

Lastly, our hearts go out to the souls at Lincoln Memorial Park and the ancestors who watch over us.

With deepest gratitude, Carl-Philippe Juste and Rebecca Friedman









### COMMONSFORJUSTICE









