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## UNIVERSITY MURAL PROJECT, ARTIST RAFAEL BLANCO PAINTS TWO MURALS TO SUPPORT INCLUSION ON CAMPUS

[EMILIE RODRIGUEZ — JUNE 21, 2020](#)

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*Photo Courtesy of Tamara Scronce* A mural stands on the east-facing side of Sierra Hall. The mural, painted by Rafael Blanco, will be connected to the Black Lives Matter movement and contain themes of diversity, equity and inclusion.

Art is a very big part of Reno’s culture, and the University of Nevada, Reno is adding to it. With Artown and Burning Man being some of the most notable events where sculptures and other art pieces are seen, UNR will have public murals of their own to show.

The two murals will be painted by artist [Rafael Blanco](#). Blanco is originally from Spain. Upon moving to the United States he completed his Master of Fine Arts degree at UNR in 2013. He is now a working art professor in Chicago with exhibits of his art in galleries and museums. Blanco has been commissioned for a growing number of murals, in which two of these beautiful paintings will be featured at UNR.

“It is truly an honor to be back at the University in this capacity,” Blanco said in a press release on Wednesday, June 17. “I really appreciate the opportunity to be at the forefront of this important visual statement as a result of student initiatives.”

Blanco’s murals will be connected to the Black Lives Matter movement and contain themes of diversity, equity and inclusion.

With both murals to be completed in July, Blanco’s first mural on the east facing façade of Sierra Hall will include multiple people of all different races, ethnicities, religions, and genders. Blanco will also include a quote, and while the words have not been finalized, he’s considering passages from Martin Luther King, Jr., and Audre Lorde.

“The mural on the Ansari Business Building auditorium will include six full portraits of University students,” the press release said. “As with the first mural, each person will appear with bright colors in the background to portray a powerful message of diversity.”

University student SaMoura Horsley has been chosen to provide a quote for the Ansari mural. Horsley identifies as a Black woman and uses her poetry to spread awareness for Black women and Black voices. Her words will be a powerful addition to the mural project.

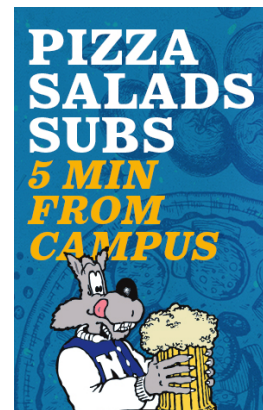
This mural project was two years in the making, with proposals submitted by multiple students. These students expressed their concern for the lack of proper representation for minorities and students of color. This mural project, while not answering all of these concerns, will aid in the conversation about diversity, equity and inclusion at UNR. Ultimately, the University students, administration and community hope these murals will advance anti-racism and act as a start to social justice.

This project is being directed by the School of the Arts on behalf of the students, and School of the Arts director Tamara Scronce. In the press release, Scronce noted that the University was very supportive of this mural project and the message it represents.

“We want to be clear to the campus community and our community at large that we are using artistic expression and our platform for speaking out and to elevate voices that need to be heard,” Scronce said.

In February 2018, UNR students [produced a mural](#), which is located in the Church Fine Arts building. This mural done by students was in honor of Black History Month, and portrays characters from the movie *Black Panther*. The artist group, calling themselves “Khan” wanted to spread a similar message of inclusion.

“There’s a severe lack of representation on campus,” Khan said. “We’re definitely planning on spreading out to more people of color. It was a great opportunity and area to be able to represent that.”



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artist expression to him.

The mural is expected to be wrapped by Friday, July 17 and pedestrians around the two areas are advised to exercise caution when in the vicinity of aerial lift equipment and crews and are not to enter barricaded areas.

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