

April 11, 2014

TO: Honorable Mayor James Ardis and the Peoria City Council
FROM: Howard Johnson, African American Hall of Fame Museum
RE: Placement of Richard Pryor Cast Bronze Sculpture

The African American Hall of Fame Museum proposes that its cast bronze sculpture of Richard Pryor be placed in the Warehouse District at the northeast corner of Washington and State Streets, in the “pocket park” that is currently being constructed as part of the Washington Street improvements. This pocket park was specifically designed to incorporate public art in the generously sized, specially paved area on the corner. Attractive landscaping and benches are all part of the work on this corner, to be completed by summer 2014.

Richard Pryor was a world-class comedian and social critic—“the Picasso of our profession”, according to Jerry Seinfeld. He used his art to break down stereotypes and reflect on racism and other social issues. Against impossible odds, he achieved massive success on a global scale, and he is arguably the most famous Peorian of all.

“He struck a chord...with America, forcing it to look at large social questions of race and the more tragicomic aspects of the human condition”, said Lawrence J. Wilker of the Kennedy Center upon awarding him the first Mark Twain Prize for American Humor in 1998. “Though uncompromising in his wit, Pryor, like Twain, projects a generosity of spirit that unites us. They were both trenchant social critics who spoke the truth, however outrageous.”



The sculpture is being created by Preston Jackson, shown here with his seven-foot clay model of the Richard Pryor sculpture. Preston, who lives and works in Peoria, is Professor Emeritus at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, and is well known for his figurative sculpture throughout the U.S.

The sculpture, including its base, plaque and lighting, is being funded through the efforts of the African American Hall of Fame Museum and would be on long-term loan to the City of Peoria, with any maintenance or repair costs covered by AAHFM. Any repairs would be done by Preston Jackson's studio or the foundry which casts the work, depending on the nature of the repairs.

We propose that the sculpture would be placed on a concrete base approximately four feet in height on the newly created concrete pad at the northeast corner of Washington and State. Uplighting would be provided by three spotlights flush with the concrete pad. Our hope is to install the piece prior to December 1, 2014, Richard Pryor's birthday.

The only request we would make of the City of Peoria is to carry standard liability insurance on the sculpture. Thank you for your consideration of this request.