



## Exhibit Visit Activity Guide for *ReEnvisioned: Portraits of Our Black Ancestors*

### **Exhibit Summary:**

The ReEnvisioned exhibit presents portraits of Black pioneers, painted by artist Jeremy Okai Davis. These portraits of seminal Black historical figures were created to emphasize that Black ancestors have always been a prominent part of Oregon's history, even though their stories have long been overlooked. Each painting is accompanied by a summary of the subject's life, bringing their stories and contributions out of the background and to the center of the visitor's attention.

The exhibit features portraits of the following individuals.

Letitia Carson  
Rose Jackson  
Ben Johnson  
Louis Southworth  
America Waldo Bogle  
Louisa Sewell  
Roscoe Dixon  
Sybil Harber  
Thomas King  
Beatrice Cannady

Biographical summaries of these individuals can be found in the digital copy of this exhibit [here](#).

### **Activity Guide Purpose:**

- Use the ReEnvisioned Exhibit to introduce students to significant Black pioneers in Oregon's history.
- Inspire research into each figure's life and contributions to history.
- Communicate the historical importance of art, specifically portraiture.

### **Learning Objectives:**

- Learn about the lives and contributions of these historical figures.

- Become aware of the anti-Black policies historically held in Oregon.
- Examine how and why history purposefully excludes the stories of some people, and not others.
- Practice working as a group to compile a summary of information.
- Practice presenting information as a group to their peers.

### **Before Your Visit:**

1. Divide your students into groups and assign each group one of the people featured in the exhibit to research.
2. Students can research these individuals on their own using online resources, OR by using the biographical summaries created by the Salem Art Association that are available in the digital copy of this exhibit [here](#).
  - \* If you choose to have your students do their research using online resources, we recommend focusing on Letita Carson, Rose Jackson, Ben Johnson, Louis Southworth, Americal Waldo Bogle and Beatrice Cannady, as their stories are the most accessible through online research.
  - \* If your students have trouble finding information on any of these figures, have them try adding “Oregon” to the search terms to narrow the field of responses.
3. Each group member should contribute to a summary of their designated person’s life. The summary could include:
  - a. A short section on their early life.
  - b. How they came to Oregon.
  - c. Their contributions to Oregon’s development.
  - d. Their impact on significant cultural/social movements in America.
4. Have each group finish their summaries before coming to the museum.
  - \* We recommend not sharing the portraits from the ReEnvisioned exhibit with students prior to their museum visit, so that the artwork may be discovered and experienced in person.

### **At the Museum:**

5. Have each group study the portrait of their designated Black pioneer and read the summary included in the exhibit. They should decide if their summaries are accurate compared to those in the exhibit or if they are finding new information.

6. Move through the exhibit and have each group introduce the Black pioneer they researched, with the class gathered in front of that person's portrait.
7. After each group has presented, use the Guiding Questions worksheet (included at the bottom of this document) to examine the portraits further. We recommend either:
  - a. Having students work independently or in pairs to fill out this worksheet for a portrait of a person that they did not research.
  - b. Using the worksheet to guide a full class discussion about one or two portraits while gathered together in the exhibit.

**Back in the Classroom:**

8. Discuss the worksheet the students filled out in the exhibit halls. Have the students share out their thoughts and answers.
9. Explore the ideas of racism, resistance and remembrance throughout your discussion.
10. You can further explore these topics using curriculums from various Oregon organizations linked below.

[Oregon Black Pioneers Curriculum](#)

[Oregon Historical Society Black Pioneers Traveling Trunk](#)

["Meet the Sewells" – High Desert Museum](#)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Guiding Questions for Exploring ReEnvisioned: Contemporary Portraits of Our Black Ancestors**

### **Directions:**

Each portrait in this collection represents a real person from Oregon's past — someone whose story helps us understand the state's history in a deeper, more complete way. Use these questions to learn more about these individuals and to take a deeper look at the way they are represented in these paintings.

1. Select two portraits to observe closely. How are the lives of these individuals similar? How are they different?
2. Can you find any similarities between the life of these individuals and your own life?
3. Describe how these two individuals were able to persist in the face of discrimination and live the lives they chose here in Oregon.
4. Examine one portrait, looking at the details, colors, or style of painting used by the artist. Identify something about the painting that you feel connects to the person's story? Describe how it connects?