



Regional Arts & Culture Council

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February 4, 2021

To: City of Portland Historic Landmarks Commission

From: Madison Cario, Executive Director

Kristin Calhoun, Director of Public Art

Subject: South Park Blocks National Register of Historic Places Nomination

Dear Commissioners:

We respectfully request that the current nomination for National Register of Historic Places status for Portland's South Park Blocks not include the recently removed *Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider* and *Abraham Lincoln* sculptures as character-defining features.

Portland, like many cities across the country, has an obligation and an opportunity to revisit how public space and monuments reflect its values and represents its communities. The recent removal of the Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt monuments Portland's South Park Blocks, and the many others that are being removed around the country and internationally, illustrate that art is an integral part of society, not something neutral or removed from it. Art represents who we are and what we value. We must tell the stories of our past with honesty, putting this history into context, in order for true systemic change to occur. Over time, values regarding the treatment of Black, Indigenous and People of Color within this country have undergone needed change, but continual work remains. Portland and Oregon have an opportunity to be more representative of the stories of all communities.

As a long-time partner and collaborator with the City of Portland and the Parks Bureau specifically, RACC has worked not only to reflect the City's values, but to advocate for stronger community voice and influence in the city's services, investments and decision-making. We provide stewardship of the city's public art collection and continue to actively expand the point of view, background, and lived experience of artists and communities represented in that collection.

Again, we respectfully request that the current nomination for National Register of Historic Places status for Portland's South Park Blocks not include the recently removed *Theodore Roosevelt Rough Rider* and *Abraham Lincoln* sculptures as character-defining features.