

# Black art show in Redlands not just a first, it's a sign of 'freedom'

Jina Imani, the show's curator, also helped write the city's 2021 Black History Month proclamation



Redlands artist Jina Imani loved the eyes on “Residue” by Inland Empire artist Mariah Green, who used residual art supplies, at The Artlands in Redlands on Thursday, February 11, 2021. Imani helped Councilwoman Denise Davis draft the 2021 Black History Month proclamation for the city, issued on Feb. 2. (Photo by Cindy Yamanaka, The Press-Enterprise/SCNG)

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For Redlands artist Jina Imani, curator of what she calls the city's first Black art show, the installation is about more than just celebrating [Black History Month](#), though that is meaningful, as well.

"I think it's important to focus on all of the members of the community, highlighting all of our different aspects of creativity," she said. "I also wanted to do this show because I think it's very important to support people and give people a space to voice their creativity."

To her, it's "freedom."

And it's long overdue.

In Redlands, she said, "there's not really a space for Black artists, they're not really on the walls anywhere, so I thought it was very important to have that opportunity for people like myself."

Imani and others helped Councilmember Denise Davis draft a Black History Month proclamation, which the City Council unanimously approved on Feb. 2.

The proclamation is not the first such document in Redlands, but this year's updates include the recognition of the creation of NextGenUnited – The Black Initiative, which [influenced local agencies to declare racism a public health crisis](#) in 2020.

Also honored was [Paulette Brown-Hinds](#), publisher of Black Voice News, and her team at Esri that started the Mapping Black California initiative to better understand the data and histories of Black communities in the state.

The proclamation also recognized local pioneer [Israel Beal](#); [Second Baptist Church of Redlands](#), founded in 1891 as the first African American church in the San Bernardino Valley; and the founders and writers of the [Colored Citizen](#) periodical that published from 1905 to 1906 in Redlands.

"It is a great opportunity to recognize the contributions of Black community members in the city of Redlands," Davis said at the Feb. 2 meeting. "As we continue to fight for racial justice it is important to commemorate and celebrate Black history every day, not just in the month of February."

The proclamation is significant in some of the same ways the art show is, Imani said.

“I just think it’s very important that everybody in a community be highlighted and shown appreciation for their contributions, and Black people have contributed a lot to Redlands, but it’s kind of not known, so I thought if we highlight people who had the first newspaper, or had 57 acres (like Israel Beal), then the people who live here now could see that we are a part of the community.”

The proclamation makes it “official,” she added.

“With that recognition, I’m hoping we can come together more as a community,” Imani said, “and see that it’s not just one race that lives here. We’re made up of all different races and all of those races are important.”

A copy of the document is on display at The Artlands, where the art show will be on the walls through the end of the month.

The installation, “Black Futures, Featuring Artists from the Diaspora,” spotlights the work of Inland-area artists, about half of whom are from Redlands.

The paintings, photography, candles, poetry and clothing items featured are from artists including Alexandra Yvonne, Jay McCrary, A’Kailah Byrd-Greene, Lee Lee Jackson, Yaylor, Mariah Green, [Duan Kellum](#), Jasmine Smith, Leila A., Julian Lucas, Johnny Bryan, KC Lauren, Awesum, L. Akinyi and Alicia Mosley.

The Artlands is at 18 E. Vine St. in Redlands.

Information and hours: [theartlandsca@gmail.com](mailto:theartlandsca@gmail.com), [@theartlands](#) on Instagram or [theartlands.org](http://theartlands.org).

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**Jennifer Iyer |**  
Reporter



Jennifer Iyer graduated cum laude from UC Riverside in 2000 with a bachelor's in creative writing

and started working at The Press-Enterprise newspaper that year. After stints as night metro editor, assistant features editor, videographer, community reporter and other roles, she transferred to sister paper the Redlands Daily Facts in March 2018. Jennifer has covered wildfires, war games, courtrooms and blimp rides, been sprayed with fire retardant, and covered in bees (in a protective suit). She has interviewed celebrities on the red carpet at the Palm Springs Film Festival and homeless people in the rain. A nature enthusiast, Jennifer sold some of her nature photography prints to raise money for local nature centers and collaborated with her mother on the book "Wildflowers and Important Native Plants of the Inland Empire" by the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District.

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