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Women of Color Quilters Network and Textile Center announce call for quilts to be part of *We Are the Story*, a multi-site initiative of quilt exhibits and community events in the Twin Cities later this summer, curated by Carolyn Mazloomi

Exhibitions will build upon symbols of liberation, resistance and empowerment, offering a visually compelling account of the breadth of experiences and struggles that comprise Black history in an honest and critical way

(Minneapolis) – With Minneapolis at the epicenter of the nationwide protest movement against police brutality and racism in America following the death of George Floyd, the Women of Color Quilters Network (WCQN) and Textile Center announce plans to present a series of six quilt exhibitions and related community events in the Twin Cities later this summer. The initiative titled *We Are the Story* is being created under the curatorial direction of Carolyn Mazloomi, WCQN founder and a member of Textile Center’s National Artist Advisory Council.

“George Floyd’s cry to his Mama for maternal help, mirrors a symbolic guttural cry for help from the belly of our nation,” Carolyn says. “Our citizens are crying out for protection, comfort, and education. In response to that cry, and to help educate the public on brutality, inequities, and racism in America, Textile Center and the Women of Color Quilters Network (WCQN) and Friends, together, are sponsoring a series of art quilt exhibitions. Collectively the exhibition quilts will tell the unsung stories that affect our understanding and inspire our resolve to end this unholy trinity of societal ills. The series will be organized around the following themes: remembering those lost to police brutality, history of civil rights, and racism in America.”

Today Carolyn announces a call for submissions from quilters around the nation and the world for the two juried shows:

- ***Gone but Never Forgotten: Remembering Those Lost to Police Brutality*** – a national juried exhibition that honors those whose lives were violently ended due to police negligence and brutality and critiques the targeting and criminalization of Black bodies throughout history.

- ***Racism: In the Face of Hate We Resist*** – An international juried exhibition builds on these narratives by sharing the stories of resistance and fortitude that have been integral to the survival of Black people in America.

The calls for entries are open to all artists regardless of age, color, national origin, citizenship status, race, religion, creed, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity. There is no fee for participating in the call for entries, and the deadline is July 31, 2020. For details, visit textilecentermn.org/wearethestory.

Additional exhibitions will include: *We Who Believe in Freedom* (WCQN exhibit); *Sacred Invocations* (Quilts by Sylvia Hernandez, Brooklyn, NY); *The Protest Series* (Quilts by Penny Mateer, Pittsburgh, PA); and *Freedom Rising: I Am the Story* (Quilts by L'Merchie Frazier, Boston, MA).

“In recent years Carolyn Mazloomi has been a most valued advisor to Textile Center, a national center for fiber art that is based in Minneapolis,” says Executive Director Karl Reichert. “Following George Floyd’s death two weeks ago, she and I started discussing the role quilt exhibitions could play presented at Textile Center and throughout our community to address police brutality, racism, and inequity in our community. Carolyn and her vast network of artists and friends in the WCQN are mobilizing to present our hurting community with an extraordinary gift.”

While artists work to create new quilts for exhibition in the weeks ahead, **Textile Center will be seeking galleries, as well as arts and community organizations across the Twin Cities to join the *We Are the Story* initiative as exhibition and program partners.** Those interested in joining the collaboration are invited to contact Karl at kreichert@textilecentermn.org.

“Throughout history, Black liberation movements have been deeply influenced by our cultural gifts and have often birthed new and beautiful forms of creative expression,” Carolyn says. “Artistic production, as seen throughout the Civil Rights, Black Arts, and Black Power movements, has operated as a vehicle for change and consciousness raising alongside the protests and organizing efforts employed by Black communities across the U.S.

“We at WCQN feel compelled to follow the blueprint of our ancestors, using the work of our hands as tools for storytelling and social change,” adds Carolyn, who founded WCQN in 1985. “Quilting has long served as an act of self-determination and community support within African American history. The creativity and support manifested by enslaved women through quilting directly informed the work of the quilting bees of the 60s and 70s whose work funneled social, financial and education resources into the fight for freedom and civil rights. As cultural stewards in today’s fight for justice, our mission is no different.”

While the final dates and locations have yet to be determined, *We Are the Story* events and exhibitions will include:

- ***We Are the Story: Let's Talk about Race:*** A community event sponsored by Textile Center, WCQN and Friends to help educate the public on police brutality, racism, and inequities in America in support of Black Lives Matter.

- ***We Are the Story Exhibitions:***
 - *Gone, but Never Forgotten: Remembering Those Lost to Police Violence* (National juried exhibit)
 - *Racism: In the Face of Hate We Resist* (International juried exhibit)
 - *We Who Believe in Freedom* (WCQN exhibit)
 - *Sacred Invocations* (Quilts by Sylvia Hernandez, Brooklyn, NY)
 - *The Protest Series* (Quilts by Penny Mateer, Pittsburgh, PA)
 - *Freedom Rising: I Am the Story* (Quilts by L'Merchie Frazier, Boston, MA)

ABOUT THE WOMEN OF COLOR QUILTERS NETWORK (WCQN)

For African American women quilts have always been at the core of artistic expression, taking form in the social, economic, and spiritual lives of the women who make them. Founded by Carolyn Mazloomi in 1985, WCQN is a non-profit national organization whose mission is to educate, preserve, exhibit, promote and document quilts made by African Americans. WCQN showcases the work of its members through critically acclaimed traveling exhibitions that tour museums throughout the United States, including the Smithsonian. WCQN has exhibited quilts in Japan, England, South Africa, Italy and Australia as part of art programs sponsored by the United States Department of State. For more information, visit: wcqn.org.

ABOUT CAROLYN MAZLOOMI

Historian, curator, author, lecturer, artist, mentor, founder, and facilitator — the remarkable and tireless Carolyn Mazloomi has left her mark on many lives. Trained as an aerospace engineer, she turned her sites and tireless efforts in the 1980s to bring the many unrecognized contributions of African American quilt artists to the attention of the American people as well as the international art communities. From the founding of the African-American Quilt Guild of Los Angeles in 1981 to the 1985 founding of the WCQN, Carolyn has been at the forefront of educating the public about the diversity of interpretation, styles and techniques among African American quilters as well as educating a younger generation of African Americans about their own history through the quilts the WCQN members create.

A major force as an artist in her own right, Carolyn's quilts can be found in private collections around the world as well in distinguished museum collections in the United States. To date she has published 12 books highlighting African American-made quilts. Her artistic work, as well as her defense of solid research, has disrupted long-standing myths about African American quilts, myths much debated among quilt historians and quilters alike, and thus moved the conversation about African American quilt history forward to more a solid academic footing. For more information, visit: carolynmazloomi.com.

ABOUT L'MERCHIE FRAZIER

L'Merchie Frazier, a public fiber artist, quilter, historian, innovator, poet and holographer, has served the artistic community for more than 25 years nationally and internationally with visual and performance art residencies in Boston, Brazil, Taiwan, Costa Rica, Africa, France, and Cuba. A public lecturer and community workshop presenter, her spatial and social justice artistic work activates youth and adults in a co-design model that reflects the participants as creative actors and their occupancy in democratizing the socio-economic political landscape. L'Merchie is a quilting member of WCQN. Currently she is Director of Creative Engagement of Transformative Action Project/Violence Transformed for the Public Health Advocacy Institute initiative at Northeastern University.

ABOUT SYLVIA HERNANDEZ

Sylvia Hernandez is a celebrated and self-taught master quilter, and she creates timeless, handcrafted works that address community and human right issues. Sylvia is currently the president of the Quilters of Color Network of NYC, co-president of the Brooklyn Quilters Guild, and she is a member of the WCQN. She teaches at El Puente Academy of Peace and Justice, MS 50 and has worked with AgitArte, a social justice group that has led community educational and art programs in marginalized communities in Puerto Rico and locally. She works out of her home studio in Brooklyn, NY, where she currently resides with her husband Miguel.

ABOUT PENNY MATEER

Penny Mateer, artist/activist, works with textiles and recycled materials. Her art is rooted in quilting and embroidery, traditionally thought of as "women's work." Drawing from this rich history of creating functional objects intended to provide warmth and comfort, she chooses fabric as her primary material to establish connection through shared experience and spark discussion around current events. Her social practice centers on a community-made public art project to promote voting. Mateer lives in Pittsburgh, PA. For more information, visit: pennymateer.com.

ABOUT TEXTILE CENTER

Textile Center is unique as America's national center for fiber art, with a mission to honor textile traditions, promote excellence and innovation, and inspire widespread participation in fiber arts. The Center's resources include exceptional fiber art exhibitions, an artisan shop, a professional-grade dye lab, a natural dye plant garden, and one of the nation's largest circulating textile libraries open to the public. Textile Center produces more than 200 classes a year for all ages and skill levels through its youth, adult, older adult, and outreach programs. A dynamic hub of fiber activity for 25 years, Textile Center brings people together in community to learn, create, share, and be inspired by fiber art. For more information, visit: textilecentermn.org.