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Fred D. Gray Sculpture Selected for National Public Art Exhibition

The Fred D. Gray sculpture outside the Alabama State Bar has been selected to represent Alabama in *250: A Celebration of Public Art in the U.S.*, a national curated exhibition presented by CODAworx in commemoration of America's 250th Anniversary. The exhibition features one public artwork from each state, along with Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico.

Created by sculptor Steven Whyte, the life-size bronze statue was unveiled at the Alabama State Bar in April 2025 and honors Gray's extraordinary legacy as a civil rights attorney, former Alabama State Bar president, and lifelong champion of justice. The sculpture sits in the Fred D. Gray Courtyard outside the Bar's building on Dexter Avenue and features Gray seated on an Alabama-sourced limestone bench, holding a legal folio engraved with the words "Lawyers Render Service," a phrase he coined during his term as Bar president that later became the Bar's official motto.



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Honoring a Legal Giant: Fred D. Gray Statue Unveiled at Alabama State Bar

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Montgomery, Ala. – On April 24, 2025, the Alabama State Bar unveiled a life-size bronze statue of legendary civil rights attorney Fred D. Gray. The ceremony drew members of the legal community, public officials, and Gray's family and friends to celebrate a man whose career helped shape the course of American history.

Sculpted by nationally renowned artist Steven Whyte, the statue sits just outside the east side of the Bar's building on Dexter Avenue in the Fred D. Gray Courtyard – a space announced in his honor through a series of resolutions passed by the Board of Bar Commissioners in 2021.

"This is a special day – not just for our Bar, but for the entire legal profession and our state," said Alabama State Bar President Tom Perry.

Fred Gray, now 94, was as sharp as ever in his remarks. He reflected on his childhood in West Montgomery, his legal career, and the enduring influence of his

family and faith.

"Growing up in Montgomery on the west side, I never thought that one day my image would be in stone to honor my professional career," Gray said. "The system doesn't always deliver justice... but I will keep working until justice rolls down like water and righteousness like a stream."

Gray played a central role in many of the most significant legal battles of the Civil Rights Movement. He represented Rosa Parks, Claudette Colvin, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., John Lewis, and participants in the Selma-to-Montgomery marches.



The statue features Gray seated on an Alabama-sourced limestone bench, holding a legal folio engraved with the words "*Lawyers Render Service*" – a phrase he coined during his term as president of the Alabama State Bar in 2002. That phrase has since become the Bar's official motto, capturing Gray's lifelong belief that lawyers are meant to serve.

Executive Director Terri Lovell noted, "Mr. Gray became a lawyer because he believed lawyers help people. For more than seventy years, he's done just that. We are honored to celebrate his life, his work, and the difference he continues to make. It is a reminder of what it looks like to live a life of purpose and principle."

Gray used the occasion to recognize the countless unnamed individuals who stood alongside him in the pursuit of justice.



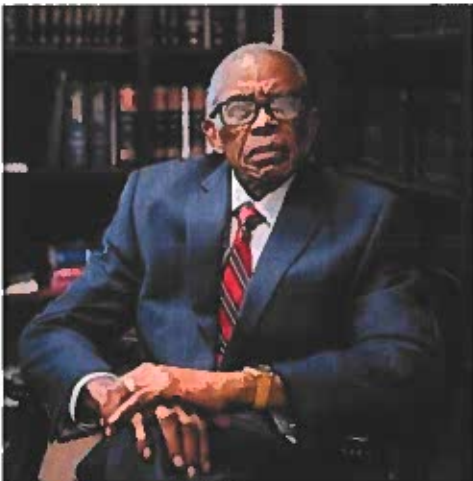
"I humbly accept this award for all those unknown heroes and clients whose names never appear in print media, whose faces never appear on television," he said. "They are the persons who laid the foundation so that you can honor me here today."



The Fred Gray Courtyard Committee, initially appointed in 2021 by Past President Bob Methvin, managed the task of vetting and selecting sculptors and stewarding the project to fruition. Committee Chair Cassandra Adams worked closely with the Gray family during this endeavor, alongside committee members Bob Methvin, Mark Debro, Walter McGowan, Elizabeth Smithart, Fred Helmsing, Jana Garner, and Tom Perry. Kim Mitchell of the Carnegie Visual Arts Center in Decatur lent her expertise and advice.



Alabama State Bar



About Fred Gray: *When Fred Gray became president of the state bar in 2002, he was described as one of the most influential African American trailblazers in Alabama's legal profession. Gray wanted to improve the image of lawyers to the public, who often do not realize the service lawyers provide to their community, state, and country, in both their professional and private lives. Upon assuming the office of president, he announced his theme: "Lawyers Render Service: Service to the Client,*

Service to the Public, and Service to the Profession." Gray was instrumental in establishing the Alabama Lawyers Hall of Fame to recognize those lawyers in Alabama who have made a positive difference. In 2003, the phrase "Lawyers Render Service" was approved by the Board of Bar Commissioners as the permanent motto of the Alabama State Bar.

Fred Gray served in the Alabama Legislature and was the first African American elected as president of the Alabama State Bar Association in 2002. He also served

as the 43rd president of the National Bar Association. Gray is the recipient of numerous honors, including the American Bar Association's Thurgood Marshall Award, the American Bar Association Medal, and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. In addition, his portrait is installed in the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery.



About Steven Whyte: One of today's leading figurative sculptors, Steven Whyte is the former vice president of the Royal Society of Portrait Sculptors, and has work featured in the Smithsonian Institution's National Portrait Gallery and Museum of African American History and Culture. He was named the 2016 Sports Artist of the Year and received the National Sculpture Society's Stanley Bleifeld Memorial Award in 2021.

Whyte's portfolio includes numerous public memorials with a strong connection to community including: The Aggie War Hymn Monument for Texas A&M University; The National Military Tribute for Bob Hope in San Diego; Jumbo the Elephant for Tufts University; A Monument to John Steinbeck's Cannery Row in California; and a three-times life-size bust of President Carter at the Carter Center in Atlanta. Whyte's Women's Column of Strength in San Francisco memorializes the "comfort women" – women forced into sexual slavery during World War II. The work was named one of the top monuments of the year in 2017 by Smithsonian Magazine. Whyte is committed to projects that represent the multiplicity and complexity of American stories. Of his seventy-seven public figures, thirty are non-Caucasian subjects and thirty are female subjects. He is ranked as #22 in the esteemed 'Top 50 Public Art Stars'.

Media Contact:

Melissa Warnke

Director of Communications, Alabama State Bar