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JAMAICA PLAIN

## A message of many colors: Funds for a diversity mural

The Boston Globe

January 21, 2007

With Mozart Park as his canvas, Jesús Gerena , a community organizer at the Hyde Square Task Force , is planning to pick up where residents left off more than a decade ago with a youth-designed mural promoting peace and celebrating the cultural diversity of the neighborhood .

Last month , the National Endowment for the Arts presented the program with a \$10,000 grant .

The mural "works toward our mission here, which is to create as many opportunities for young people to be engaged and express themselves as much as possible," said Gerena .

For the past three years , Gerena has worked with city officials to generate support for the group's Youth Community Muralists program , which painted similar displays at the Jackson Square MBTA station as a way of raising social consciousness after a young girl was stabbed there in 2004 .

His latest undertaking will be to touch up an existing mural at the park as a way of both maintaining and contributing to a piece of the neighborhood's history.

Gerena says the funding provides "an excellent opportunity at one of the places where we've had our deepest roots." Numerous summer camps and children's activities have been held at the site since the early 1990s.

The youths will be led by Roberto Chao , an internationally recognized muralist who has worked with the group in the past .

"You'd be amazed at how many people stop and say 'thank you' to the kids or try to find out more about how it started or continues," Gerena said . "It creates a lot of curiosity, a lot of conversation."

RICHARD THOMPSON ■

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