

For Freedoms Stages Art Installations Around Democratic National Convention in Chicago

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Carrie Mae Weems, *Democracy Hangs In The Balance*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF FOR FREEDOMS

Six artist billboards will be installed near this year's Democratic National Convention (DNC) in **Chicago** with the hope of increasing civic engagement ahead of the national election in November.

The featured artists on the billboards are **Carrie Mae Weems**, Christine Wong Yap, Ebony G. Patterson, Koyoltzintli Miranda-Rivadeneira, Slow and Steady Wins the Race, and Jake Troyli.

The billboard initiative is led by For Freedoms, an artist-run, nonpartisan organization founded in 2016. The billboard by Weems is being installed with the Movement Voter Fund, a voter mobilization network, while the other five are through a partnership with the civic and cultural agency Gertie. There will also be four photographs recreating the imagery of **Norman Rockwell's paintings of the four freedoms** as well as a permanent mural commission by Troyli.



A new permanent mural by Jake Troyli. Photo courtesy of For Freedoms.

The six billboards were installed on August 5 and will be on public view until the end of October, with the goal of maximizing visibility and engagement leading up to and during the DNC this week. A billboard featuring the artwork of Hank Willis Thomas was also installed in Milwaukee this year during the Republican National Convention.

“It’s important for us organizationally, but also ideologically, to stake out a position that is anti-partisan, against partisanship—not just middle-of-the-road, but really challenging notions of what partisanship means,” For Freedoms cofounder Eric Gottesman told *ARTnews*.

In addition to the artist billboards and photographs, there will be the **Into Action** art festival in the city from August 17 to 22, as well as “Heart + Craft on Lake,” an all-day community event presented by the youth visual arts center SkyArt on August 21.

“It’s not about directly being at the DNC. It’s more so thinking about: how do we infuse joy and play and community-building into these spaces?” For Freedoms associate director Taylor Brock said.

For Freedoms cofounder Michelle Woo said she had heard from people that artwork created by the organization in 2020 “changed their life or sparked a question or an inquiry

in them that didn't exist previously.... Those are the things that I remember that continue to inspire me as a leader of this organization to continue doing what we're doing."

Gottesman said the organization had hired firms to measure both how its work resonates across the country with commonly accepted demographics and helping reduce **the racial voting gap** in certain communities.

"Ultimately, I honestly believe you cannot measure the impact of art," he said.

"We're working on trying to encourage compassion, conversation, joy, community-building," said Brock. "We are definitely still on the journey of discovering and figuring out that the ways, because a lot of it's intangible. But there's got to be a way.""