

NEWS

# What's Next for Black Lives Matter Murals in Downtown San Jose?

By [Adhiti Bandlamudi](#) Jun 27



Artists in the South Bay have been painting murals of solidarity on the wooden panels outside closed businesses in downtown San Jose. This mural painted by Sam Dominguez @samdominguezart and @force129 stands outside The Barbers Inc Barbershop.

During the Black Lives Matter protests, numerous businesses covered their windows with plywood to protect against potential vandalism. San Jose State student Miko Baker saw that plywood as a blank canvas.

She contacted the Latino-owned, local franchise of **Cinnaholic** to ask if they'd be open to an artist putting up a mural.

"I just messaged them on Instagram, nothing super formal, just like, 'Hey! Can I come paint your shop and help you out?' And they were like, 'Sure,'" Baker said.

In a similar fashion, artists from all over San Jose volunteered to paint murals in solidarity with the protests. "Instead of us reaching out to shops, they were reaching out to us," Baker said.

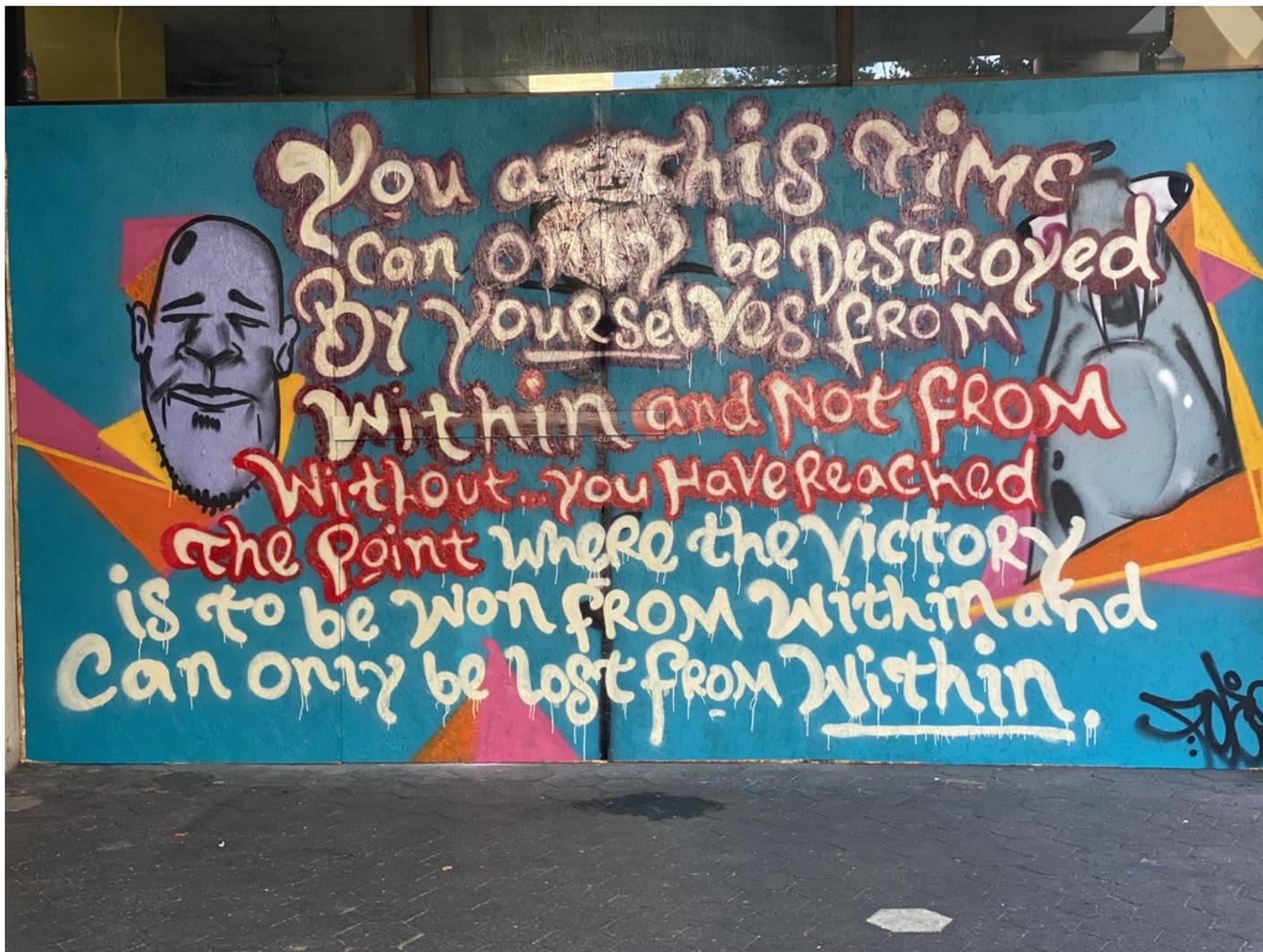
She soon turned her community project into **Stories for Solidarity**, originally called **Storefront Stories**, an organization linking businesses and local artists to collaborate on mural projects. Baker is still filling out paperwork to become an official non-profit.

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In the meantime, she's also organized mural projects with artists in **Sacramento**, and begun talking with artists in Redwood City, Oakland and Bakersfield to start similar movements in their communities.

**Andrew "Andy" Gonzales** painted a mural outside of Philz Coffee, a background of blue featuring a quote from Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey.



Andrew "Andy" Gonzales was one of the first artists to paint a mural in downtown San Jose as part of the "Stories for Solidarity" project. He painted a quote from Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey, which can be seen outside Philz Coffee in downtown San Jose.

Gonzales said he can't afford therapy, so he paints to grapple with his emotions and stress. "All this stuff I have inside of me — there it goes. Lemme put it on a wall," he said.

Gonzales reached out to other artists in the South Bay to contribute to the murals around downtown. He feels this movement gave many non-white, male artists a platform they didn't have before.

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"I wanted to get a lot of female artists, a lot of Black and brown artists out there, just doing their thing, just to shine some light on them" Gonzales said. "We might be underrepresented in the art community, at least as far as public art and galleries."

But now that stores are starting to reopen, the plywood boards are coming down. Cinnaholic liked their mural so much, it is moving the mural inside the bakery for display. Other stores are auctioning the pieces and giving the proceeds back to the artist.

"Or [the artist] can donate it to our organization where we can, hopefully, get an event space," Baker said. Baker would like to see the art be displayed in galleries for everyone to be able to see this aspect of San Jose history.

Gonzales doesn't know what will happen to his art, but he's not attached to it. He thinks of it like the Tibetan Buddhist mandalas made out of sand.

"These Buddhist monks spend hours, days just to create a beautiful piece of art out of sand and then, once it's done, they just destroy it," Gonzales said. "The act of creating the art was the art itself."

At the end of the summer, Gonzales and Baker are hoping to have a barbecue with the artists who participated in the mural project and showcase their work in an outdoor exhibition.

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