

## **Elsewhere Museum Creative Catalyst Fellow April Parker Transitions to Arts Administrator In Residence Role and Plans Annual Black Creatives Revival April 2, 2021 -- Greensboro, North Carolina**

Greensboro-based artist, activist, and radical librarian, April Parker, has transitioned roles with [Elsewhere](#), a “living” museum and artist residency, where she has been involved for a decade. Culminating her work as the inaugural *Creative Catalyst Fellow* in 2020, she co-created and took on the new role of *Arts Administrator In Residence (AAIR)*. This newly created arts administration residency supports racial equity in the arts by working with individuals to translate their significant lived and professional experience to arts administration and challenging norms within the organization and the field. As AAIR, Parker is helping to shape organizational strategy and the development of new and expanded programs, currently organizing a group of Black artist leaders in the Triad to develop an annual Black Creatives Revival for Black artists to take place in May 2021. An intimate ceremony was held in late February, led by fellow Greensboro artist, Karen Archia, to mark this significant transition and to celebrate Parker’s many accomplishments as the Creative Catalyst Fellow.

On February 24th, 2021, at 4PM, a ceremony took place in Elsewhere’s garden to celebrate April’s “Unveiling Monuments” series and mark her transition from Creative Catalyst Fellow to Arts Administrator In Residence. The ceremony was led by artist Karen Archia ([karenarchia.com](http://karenarchia.com), the Creative Director of [Public Art Practice](#), former owner of People’s Perk) who had been inspired by April’s work. After a few words, Archia led a libation ceremony to honor her and April’s ancestors. Parker was given flowers, followed by two original artworks by Archia. Elsewhere Executive Director, Matthew Giddings, had reached out to Archia to create the artworks based on the African principle of “Sankofa,” which Parker references often in her life and practices. Serendipitously, Archia had only recently been moved by seeing the photo of Parker seated powerfully on the confederate monument base on the [cover of Triad City Beat](#). Archia wrote in an accompanying narrative that she read at the ceremony -- here is an excerpt: *“I had a deep, visceral reaction when I saw her photo for the cover story in Triad City Beat for ‘Unveiling Monuments’: an instant, undeniable feeling of admiration from a soon-to-be elder for her younger sibling’s ability to proclaim the many truths she embodied. I felt seen and heard, and my spirit was lifted. There was a fullness in my response: April held my trauma and my joys, my fears and my resiliency, and stood as a potent, stately and gentle expression of the beauty of Black womxnhood.”*

Parker moved to Greensboro in 2010 and began volunteering with Elsewhere a year later while completing her MA in Library and Information Sciences. She began by volunteering to sweep the museum floors and help wherever needed. She later worked with a team to catalog the library collection at the museum. In 2013, Parker took over leadership of Elsewhere’s queer teen writing program, Queerlab, and, one year later, co-founded the Gate City Chapter of Black Lives Matter, utilizing the museum as its home base. She was critical in pushing the organization to be more outspoken and active in racial justice.

April became Elsewhere's inaugural Creative Catalyst Fellow in July of 2020 through the [Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts Creative Catalyst program](#) at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts, with full funding from [The Tremaine Foundation](#). The role coincided with the uprisings in the wake of George Floyd's murder and Parker quickly returned to an organizer role after a 2-year hiatus. She developed a number of innovative forms of protest that were safe during COVID. [The Mourning Drive](#) was a funerary procession through downtown Greensboro leading to the burial marker of the five murdered in the Greensboro Massacre. By officially being a funerary procession, it circumvented any police presence. She organized a [benefit concert for The Historic Magnolia House](#), gathering young Black musicians who hadn't performed publicly since the pandemic began. She also blocked traffic on Elm St. to be photographed with Black women of all ages on the Black Lives Matter street mural and posed on the toppled confederate monument base in the Greensboro cemetery. The resulting documentation formed a new body of work titled "[Unveiling Monuments](#)," which can now be seen online at [unveilingmonuments.com](#). Parker has given artist talks and lectures about the work through at Ohio State University and University of Georgia. Parker's work has been vital in keeping the organization active and visible while the museum was closed due to the public.

Within Elsewhere, Parker has been a change agent, prompting critical dialogue that has led to ongoing work with equity consultant Dolores Chandler of Build from the Heart, review of board development and bylaws, improved hiring practices, and the creation of a racial equity plan. She and new Executive Director, Matthew Giddings, describe having a co-mentoring relationship that is both supportive and productively challenging.

Parker is now using her extensive organizing experience to gather a cohort of regional Black artist leaders to develop a new annual convening called the Black Creatives Revival (BCR) (registration here). Taking inspiration from the [Black Artists Retreat](#) initiated by Theaster Gates and Eliza Myrie in Chicago in 2013, as well as the current efforts of the [North Carolina Black Artists for Liberation](#), the gathering celebrates Black artistic expression and fosters radical and visionary solutions through a series of critical conversations. The event will take place the Friday through Sunday of the first weekend in May (4/30-5/2) and will take a hybrid approach with a mix of in-person and virtual sessions. While the event is specifically for Black artists and creatives, a related concurrent session will be held for other POC and white allies.

The opportunity to build upon the Creative Catalyst fellowship by creating the Arts Administrator In Residence came through support provided by a program grant from the [VF Foundation](#) specifically proposed to foster Black leadership throughout the organization. In addition to creating and organizing the [Black Creatives Revival](#), Parker is co-producing a new youth workforce development program for the museum and is integrally involved in upcoming strategic hiring.

Witnesses to the ceremony included Matthew Giddings and his children, Golden (age 7) and Juliana (age 4); Jess Hoyle, Elsewhere Programs Manager; Ivan Cutler, Carolina Peacemaker photographer; and Rae Red and Christian Lee, Elsewhere "Shelter Elsewhere" Fellows and resident artists. The ceremony was filmed by Jess Hoyle can be viewed here:

<https://youtu.be/aMJiTqD8PdQ>. Karen Archia's artworks now adorn the walls of Parker's new condo in downtown Greensboro.

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