

GLADSTONE GALLERY

Valentina Di Liscia, "Carrie Mae Weems Takes Over Lincoln Center to Highlight COVID-19 Impact on Communities of Color," *Hyperallergic*, October 15, 2020

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News

Carrie Mae Weems Takes Over Lincoln Center to Highlight COVID-19 Impact on Communities of Color

Resist Covid / Take 6! pairs text with iconic photographs by Weems to underscore the importance of preventive measures, dispel myths about the virus, and thank essential workers.



Valentina Di Liscia October 15, 2020



Weems's installation on Amsterdam Avenue, part of her "*Resist Covid / Take 6!*" campaign, includes messages in English and Spanish (photo by James Wang)

Communities of color have been **disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic**, as inadequate access to healthcare, housing inequality, and economic disparities contribute to both increased exposure and a higher likelihood of becoming very ill. Because public health campaigns often **do not properly address or reach minority groups**, these risk factors are compounded by a lack of clear information and resources to battle the virus.

The statistics are glaring: one in 1,020 Black Americans have died from coronavirus. For Indigenous Americans and Latinx Americans, those numbers are one in 1,220 and one in 1,540, respectively. (Compared to one in 2,150 white Americans.)

With a new, sprawling public art installation opening today at Lincoln Center in New York City, the American artist Carrie Mae Weems wants to help educate BIPOC communities on the impact of the pandemic — and share the facts to prevent its spread. Titled *Resist Covid / Take 6!*, a reference to the six feet of social distancing recommended by health authorities, the outdoor exhibition includes banners facing Broadway Avenue as well as a 40-foot installation on Amsterdam Avenue with messages in English and Spanish.

In addition to the Lincoln Center presentation, *Resist Covid / Take 6!* installations are currently up at the Apollo Theater, BRIC, the Brooklyn Museum, and the New School in New York.



Weems's public art campaign "*Resist Covid / Take 6!*" presented at the Brooklyn Museum. (installation view of "Art on the Stoop: Sunset Screenings" at the Brooklyn Museum, September 09,2020- November 08,2020photoby Jonathan Dorado)

The banners at Lincoln Center pair text with iconic photographs by Weems to underscore the importance of preventive measures like social distancing; dispel dangerous myths about the virus, such as false cures; encourage public dialogue; and thank essential workers during the pandemic (more than 40% of whom are people of color.)

At the Brooklyn Museum, Weems created a site-specific text installation for its front plaza. Videos emulating public service announcements and featuring poetry by the Peace Poets are shown in conjunction with the museum's Art on the Stoop: Sunset Screenings through November 8.



Kiosks outside of Lincoln Center honor essential workers. (photo by James Wang)

“Our project is meant to be a public service awareness campaign that in some small way helps to save lives, as a constant reminder of what needs to be done as we push through this pandemic and its extraordinary effect on us,” Weems said in a statement.

Resist Covid / Take 6! was conceived by Weems this May during an artist residency at Syracuse University along with her close friend Pierre Loving. The campaign first took the form of a billboard takeover in targeted neighborhoods in Syracuse, followed by public service announcements on local radio and social media. Flyers and other materials were produced in English, Spanish, and Onondaga language.



A photograph from the campaign on the entrance to BRIC in Brooklyn (photo by James Wang, courtesy of The Office Arts and BRIC)

The project has since expanded to several cities across the US, including Atlanta, Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth, Detroit, Durham, Nashville, Philadelphia, Sarasota, and Savannah.

To reach such diverse communities, Weems and the organizers partnered with museums, food banks, universities, and health clinics; they employed a multiplicity of outreach strategies, from wheatpasting to buttons, pamphlets, and more.

“We needed lawn signs; we needed posters to go into business windows; we used newspaper advertising circulars to deliver messaging directly into the home; we used grocery bags, shopping bags, paper and reusable bags that we could give to food banks and pantries,” Weems said.

At the core of the initiative is the fact that COVID-19 is not an equal opportunity virus. Instead, it’s a “double tragedy for people of color,” says the project’s website, which offers [downloadable graphics and flyers](#). One gif displays the shocking number of coronavirus deaths among African American populations in various US states. The flashing numbers are followed by a disturbing and deep-rooted truth that has only become more evident this year: “Inequality is killing us.”

Weems’s Lincoln Center installation is on view starting today, October 15, and through the end of the year.