

# Women's History Month March 2018

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## SENATOR, *Sister* AND SURVIVOR: GERALDINE THOMPSON

BY DEVIN HEFLIN, TIMES STAFF WRITER

ORLANDO - She saw, she served and she situated herself within the seat of Florida politics. Born at the dawn of the Civil Rights movement and at the aftermath of the Groveland Four and the unjust execution of George Stinney, this Florida State Senator worked beyond the bounds of political boundaries which existed at the period, to place a comma and compound term within the sentence of Black polit-

ical progression.

Within education, she broke barriers for Black students, spent years in the classroom and later worked a historic tenure with Valencia Community College.

On both sides of the classroom desk, Geraldine Thompson created opportunities. Thompson elevated her prowess from the classroom to the legislature as she was elected to the Florida House of Representatives, thereafter the Florida State Senate and in the

interim as the founder of the Wells Built Museum in the Parramore community of Orlando.

Within the Parramore community, Thompson resurrected the contributions of early 1900s Orlando physician Dr. William Monroe Wells by introducing the Wells Built Museum, which provided this history to a younger audience.

Wells delivered four thousand Black babies in the Central Florida community and pioneered Black business culture within the City of Orlando.

Thompson and Wells, though generations apart, linked their destinies through the desire to tell this once lost history of Parramore to a new populace that had long left the early Industrial era.

She saw discrimination growing up, served in her seat to

SEE GERALDINE PAGE A3

## African American Women's History Month Project, Inc. Honors Central Florida Women



## ARTIST TO AUCTION SCULPTURE TO BENEFIT WELLS' BUILT MUSEUM

ORLANDO - When Orlando-based artist Joaquin Restrepo visited the Wells' Built Museum, he was struck by the importance of Orlando's African-American history and culture. But even more so, he was inspired.

Now, Restrepo is making sure others can have the same experience at the museum in the most fitting way possible. A sculpture Restrepo created after his visit to the museum will be auctioned off on April 5, and the proceeds will be donated to help support the institution.

Restrepo's piece is titled "Yemoja." The mixed-media work depicts the mother spirit of the Yoruba culture. Yemoja is the patron spirit of women, especially pregnant women. She is also the patron of the Ogun River in Nigeria, but she is associated with many bodies of water.

The piece depicts two halves of a face, which can be viewed different ways, playing with positive and negative space, as well as form and color.

The piece will be auctioned off at 5:30 p.m. Thursday, April 5, at the Wells' Built Museum, 511 W. South St., Orlando.

"The proceeds to be shared from the auction of this fantastic sculpture will assist the Wells' Built to digitally preserve and share some of the archival material stored

at the Museum," said Elizabeth Thompson, the museum's executive director.

Restrepo is a painter and a sculptor. He has participated in group and solo exhibitions in the U.S., China, Mexico and Colombia. His pieces have also been sold by Christie's in New York.

Restrepo recently exhibited in China and was invited by the Chinese government to create a sculpture along the World's Longest Urban Greenway. His pieces have also been displayed at the Orlando Museum of Art, the Appleton Museum of Art in Ocala and at the Boca Raton Museum of Art.

"Joaquin Restrepo is one of the most wonderful contemporary artists in this moment," said American artist Mateo Blanco, Restrepo's friend. "Whoever buys this piece will not only be getting a beautiful work of art, but they'll also be doing good and supporting this amazing museum."

**For more information about the Wells' Built Museum, visit [www.wellsbuiltmuseum.com](http://www.wellsbuiltmuseum.com). For more information about Restrepo, visit [joaquinrestrepo.com](http://joaquinrestrepo.com).**

