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# In the galleries: BLACK HISTORY IS AMERICAN HISTORY

By Mark Jenkins



"Anika" by Christopher Malone incorporates an African motif. (Zenith Community Arts Foundation)



Kristine Mays's "All Power to the People" was inspired by the Black Power movement of the 1960s. (Zenith Community Arts Foundation)



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## Black History Is American History

Combining sculpture, mosaic and doll-making, local artist Chris Malone constructs exuberant figurines that frequently incorporate African motifs. There are several such creations in "Black History Is American History," a seven-artist show at Zenith Gallery's 1111 Sculpture Space. But one Malone piece, while similarly colorful, has a darker outlook: "Runaway Is Hiding in the Garden" depicts an escapee from enslavement as a furtive face nearly camouflaged by foliage.

Not all of the pieces refer so directly to history, or to American experience. Nigeria-born painter Doba Afolabi's striking expressionist portrait is titled "Youth of Sudan." Bernie Houston's painted sculptures depict aspects of African American culture by ingeniously transforming gnarled driftwood into a dancer's body or a bass guitar.

Curtis Woody's collage-paintings, which include reproductions of 19th-century documents, directly invoke historic struggles for racial justice. But Kristine Mays's black-wire rendering of five clenched fists, although inspired by the Black Power movement, doesn't merely recall the 1960s. Like the artist's "Freedom," in which red-wire flowers bloom, the sculpture feels entirely contemporary.

**Black History Is American History** Through April 17 at [Zenith Gallery](#)'s 1111 Sculpture Space, 1111 Pennsylvania Ave. NW. Doors are locked, but guards will admit art viewers.