



Commissioner Rodney Ellis

Harris County Precinct One

PUBLIC SERVICE | FAIR OPPORTUNITY | EQUAL JUSTICE

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COMMISSIONER RODNEY ELLIS' STATEMENT REGARDING AFRICAN ART COLLECTION

I am grateful to the voters in Precinct One who have given me another opportunity to serve our communities and fight for lasting progressive change that will bring us closer to justice, fairness and opportunity for all people in Harris County. And thanks to the voters, I get to fight another day.

In the closing days of the Democratic primary, issues were raised regarding the African art collection stored at Reed Road. An initial collection was obtained by my office from Mr. Sam Njunuri via a two-year loan agreement with Harris County in January 2018 for fourteen (14) pieces. Sometime later in 2018, Mr. Njunuri offered to loan more pieces. The purpose of obtaining and storing this significant collection via a loan agreement was to develop a public display program to highlight the cultural and historical significance of African art in our vibrant, diverse community. This has always been part of Precinct One's broader public arts initiative. We learned just recently that the original agreement was not updated to properly reflect the size and scope of the collection.

It has always been my understanding, and still is my belief, that Mr. Njunuri owns all the art in question. However, others raised questions regarding who owns the art during the primary. To be clear, in no uncertain terms do I, nor anyone related to me, hold a financial interest in this art collection. Any suggestion to the contrary is political or presumes facts that simply do not exist.

I recently hired Cris Feldman of Feldman & Feldman to investigate this matter and am fully committed to providing the resources and support to him to ensure public confidence is maintained. I also retained Mr. Feldman to recommend any reforms to be implemented in the future both for Precinct One, and the County as a whole. I am committed to working with all involved to resolve these matters fully and transparently.