



## New Freedom Park Artwork

New Freedom Park, Colorado Parks for People's flagship park project welcomed a new art sculpture just in time for summer. On Thursday May 6, 2021 artist Robert Tully installed the long-awaited sculpture for New Freedom Park. New Freedom Park in the East Colfax neighborhood of Denver is a well-loved park in an international community that is home to hundreds of people and families who arrived to the United States as refugees from countries like Burundi, Somalia, Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Nepal. Led by The Trust for Public Land, the City and County of Denver, and Denver Urban Gardens, the park was designed by the community through a series of participatory design workshops in 2010. At the heart of the park was a large cottonwood tree and the park was designed with seating built around it creating a central gathering space for the community to enjoy. Unfortunately in 2016 the tree died and was removed, bringing the park's original "team of partners" back together to address the loss of the park's one and only shade tree. The project partners determined that an artful solution inspired by the community was appropriate to address the loss of this tree. The vision: to create a permanent sculpture that addresses the need for shade, while being culturally appropriate and reflective of the diverse international community it will serve.

The Trust for Public Land and Denver Urban Gardens, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts Art Works Grant, the Denver Foundation's Art Tank, the Gates Family Foundation, and individual supporters, hired local artist Robert Tully through a community selection panel. In 2019 Mr. Tully held several workshops with residents to get to know the community, their diverse cultures and the personal connection residents have with the park. He found that although the patrons of New Freedom Park are from all over the world, many of them share cultural symbols of love, protection, hope and growth, much like the shade tree represented to the community.

Tully created the sculpture *For the Children*, which is inspired by the blankets women wrap their babies in to carry them on their back and the stick fences the residents build in the New Freedom Park community garden, suggesting both the need to make-do with whatever is found and the inner spirit of the people. These two elements of the sculpture come together to represent the worldwide ancient custom of hanging cloth in sacred trees as a way of seeking connection and making wishes. The artwork is also evocative of a parent's difficult immigration journey to the US to start a life where their child can access education and a better future.

After five years, one pandemic, and multiple weather delays to the installation the community once again has a shaded central gathering place at New Freedom Park. In the shade of this one-of-a-kind sculpture mothers can watch their children play, kids can take a break from playing in the heat, hang out with their friends, and everyone can come together and enjoy New Freedom Park.