

Stokely Carmichael and Michelle Obama, by Panhandle Slim

art selection and comment by [Lil Copan](#) in the [October 21, 2020](#) issue



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If you live in Savannah, Georgia, you know Panhandle Slim. His signature work appears on billboards and on schools, in homes, barbershops, and community centers. Recently four of his paintings were collected as part of a church fundraising auction, including one of Jesus and one of Kurt Vonnegut, complete with smart, barbed, life-honoring quotes. Panhandle Slim's work with community activists and his ethic around what he calls "art for folk" draw from wisdom built from the days of his skateboarding career—when his joy diminished as he watched his brand become a high-end commodity. As writer Joshua Peacock succinctly puts it, Panhandle Slim "has learned to navigate the murky waters of art commodification through a simple yet profound notion that art is for everybody." His work is collected by celebrities and Savannah locals alike; he sells it using a pay-what-you-can-afford model. It blesses, inhabits, informs, tests, and challenges the spaces in which it is placed. Panhandle Slim's art for folk includes paintings of the Emanuel Nine, John Lewis, Amy Winehouse, Johnny Cash, Fred Rogers, Jackie Robinson, Colin Kaepernick, Jimmy Carter, Dolly Parton, Malcolm X, and others.