

Celebrated Sculptor Carolyn Palmer Honors Two Trailblazing Women in Medicine with Statues at Upstate Medical University

Internationally recognized sculptor Carolyn D Palmer created larger-than-life-size bronze statues honoring Elizabeth Blackwell, MD, and Sarah Loguen Fraser, MD

SYRACUSE, NY, UNITED STATES, October 20, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In a powerful tribute to women who broke barriers in male-dominated professions, internationally acclaimed sculptor [Carolyn D Palmer](#) was selected by SUNY Upstate Medical University through a national competition to create two larger-than-life-size bronze statues honoring Elizabeth Blackwell, MD, and Sarah Loguen Fraser, MD—trailblazers in the history of American medicine. The statues will be officially unveiled on October 23rd in the courtyard outside Weiskotten Hall at the university.



One of the two bronze statues being installed at Upstate Medical University. Sculpture photos released following the unveiling.



Palmer herself is a woman who rose to prominence in the traditionally male field of monumental sculpture. Her work now immortalizes two women who paved the way for future generations of physicians—Blackwell, the first woman in the U.S. to earn a medical degree, and Loguen Fraser, one of the first African American female physicians and the first female doctor in the Dominican Republic.

"As a woman sculptor, I can only imagine how it must have felt to break into a man's world in medicine during the 1800s. They certainly had fortitude. Their stories were captivating, and it was an honor to immortalize their strength in bronze," Palmer said.

The two 6-foot-2-inch bronze statues, each weighing 375 pounds, flank the entrance to Upstate's main academic building. Together, they greet students, faculty, and visitors with a message of vision, compassion, and perseverance.

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Carolyn Palmer Sculptor

Palmer, who has several notable works permanently installed in prominent museums and public venues such as the four pope busts at the entrance to St Patrick's Cathedral along 5th Ave in Manhattan, Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt busts at entrance to the FDR Presidential Library and museum, the new and improved Lucille Ball sculpture for her hometown park in Celoron, NY as well as a life-size statue of Frank Sinatra that stands on the bank of the Hudson River with the backdrop of the

Manhattan Skyline, and many more... Palmer said she was inspired not only by the accomplishments of Blackwell and Loguen Fraser, but by their unyielding spirit.

“The knowledge of how these pioneering women broke into a man's profession guided me to create stronger, more powerful images of these amazing trailblazers,” Palmer added.

Elizabeth Blackwell, MD, graduated as valedictorian from Geneva College of Medicine (now part of SUNY Upstate) in 1849, becoming the first woman in the U.S. to earn a medical degree. She later founded the New York Infirmary for Women and Children. Sarah Loguen Fraser, MD, class of 1876, was the first black woman to graduate from SUNY Upstate University and went on to become the first female doctor in the Dominican Republic and the fourth African American female physician in the United States.

Palmer's vision for the installation was to create a narrative in Upstate University's entrance courtyard. Dr. Sarah Loguen Fraser is on the right, gently extending a hand of welcome along the walkway, a medical bag in the other hand. Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, on the left, stands closer to the building entrance, raising her arm as if guiding students through the doorway—three books tucked under her arm to represent her enduring commitment to education and medicine.

The statues are filled with subtle symbolism. A monaural stethoscope in Blackwell's coat pocket reflects the tools of her time, as well as her work in gynecology. Palmer said the main challenge was not only in sculpting accurate likenesses—especially with limited reference photos—but in conveying the essence of each woman's character.

“With Dr. Loguen Fraser, I tilted her head slightly to show compassion; from one angle, she's serious and determined, from another, soft and receptive. Blackwell, on the other hand, gazes intently toward the university, her brow furrowed, revealing her visionary nature towards the future of medical education.

Palmer's installation adds a permanent, visual representation of the university's mission to prepare future leaders in medicine and to honor those who forged the path.

Together, this project stands as a testament to three women—a sculptor and two physicians—who, in their own eras, challenged the status quo and redefined what was possible for women in their fields.

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