



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 8, 2024

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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Charlotte Forten Memorial Dedication & Celebration

SALEM, MA – On behalf of the City of Salem’s Public Art Commission and the Charlotte Forten Memorial Project Advisory Group, Mayor Dominick Pangallo is honored to invite you to join the dedication ceremony and celebration event for the *The Moving Spirit of Love*, a life-size bronze memorial in honor of Charlotte Forten Grimké, created for our community by artist Ai Qiu Hopen of Humanity Memorial Inc.

Guided by community input gathered at every phase of the process over the last five years, from naming the park to what shape the memorial should take, the winning design was selected via a robust review process with deep community involvement. The resulting statue is a true to life representation intended to celebrate and elevate the incredible life and legacy Charlotte Forten Grimké, as well as her time spent in Salem.

Please join us on Saturday, November 16, 2024 at 1:00pm in Charlotte Forten Park, 289 Derby St, Salem MA, as we come together to celebrate this incredible historic moment for Salem, the North Shore and beyond. (Rain date: Sunday, Nov. 17, 2024 at 1pm.)

Watch a teaser for our documentary on the project created by Steven Foley Media Productions here:
<https://player.vimeo.com/video/1015870129?h=bf3af75304>

Below is an outline of the agenda for the day followed by acknowledgements for our project partners.

Event Agenda

Sweet Soul Sounds Mini Performance
Welcome & Land Acknowledgement
Project Acknowledgments
Unveiling
Poem from ‘Charlotte’
Speakers Program

- Mayor Dominick Pangallo
- Lt. Governor Kimberley Driscoll
- State Representative Manny Cruz
- Dr. Nate Bryant; Advisory Group Member & former Vice President of Student Success at SSU

- Gwendolyn Rosemond; Charlotte Forten Historian, SSU Professor Emeritus, & Advisory Group Member
- Regina Zaragoza Frey; City of Salem Director of Diversity Equity & Inclusion
- Michael Corley; Mayor's Office Constituent Services/Special Projects Assistant & Advisory Group Member
- Monieke McNeil; Advisory Group Member & Salem State University Alumni
- Annis Sengupta; Director of Arts & Culture, Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Poem & Comments by artist Ai Qiu Hopen of Humanity Memorial Inc.

More Readings & Poems from 'Charlotte'

Sweet Soul Sounds Mini Performance

The City of Salem, Salem Public Art Commission and the Arts & Culture Program would like to extend their deepest gratitude to all those who helped envision this Memorial:

Lt. Governor Kimberley Driscoll for her vision and foresight that set us on this path.

Our Project Advisory Group Members (listed below in alpha order by first name) who led the charge on everything from identifying the specific elements of Charlotte's Story to highlight, to drafting the Call for Artist, designing our community input process, reviewing and incorporating community feedback, evaluating artist proposals, reviewing final designs for the artwork and interpretive signage, selecting Charlottes's place in the park and everything in between...

Alphonse Wright, Salem Human Rights Coalition Chair

Beth Bower, Charlotte Forten Historian & Professor at SSU

Claudia Paraschiv, Studioful Design

Dean Rubin, Salem Redevelopment Authority

Giovanni Alabiso, Salem Historical Tours

Gwendolyn Rosemond, Charlotte Forten Historian, & Professor Emeritus SSU

Ken Reker, Sculptor & Professor of Art at SSU

Mel Isidor, Isidor Studios

Michael Corley, Constituent Services and Special Projects Assistant, Office of the Mayor & Advisory Group Member

Monieke McNeil, Advisory Group Member & Salem State University Alumni

Dr. Nate Bryant, former Vice President of Student Success at SSU

Shawn Newton, Associate Vice President and Dean of Students at SSU

Regina Zaragoza Frey, Director of Diversity Equity & Inclusion City of Salem

Yinette Guzman, El Punto Project Manager North Shore CDC

Our Technical Team

Ray Jodoin, Director & Katherine Nieman, Deputy Director Department of Public Services City of Salem

Deborah Duhamel, Director of Engineering City of Salem

Megan Tomkins, CBA Landscape Architects

The Beta Group

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council Project Team

Julie Barry, Senior Planner for Arts & Culture City of Salem

Beth Rennard, City Solicitor City of Salem

As well as the many additional stakeholders, advisors, and community members that supported the development of the project including but not limited to:

Barbara Brown, Chair of Hidden Brookline Committee & Boston Women's Heritage Trail Advisory Board

Dr. Brenda Stevenson, Professor and Nickoll Family Endowed Chair in History UCLA

Doneca Thurston, Executive Director of Lynn Museum/LynnArts

Doreen Wade, President Salem United
Dr. Kabria Baumgartner, Dean's Associate Professor of History and Africana Studies Northeastern University
Keshia DeLeon, Artist
L'Merchie Frazier, Visual Artist, Educator, and Consultant
Lucy Corchado, Salem State University and Salem Human Rights Commission
Sheila Zorrilla, North Shore Community Development Corporation
And the entire Salem State University Charlotte Forten Working Group for their discoveries, advocacy, and sharing of knowledge and images.

Artist Ai Qui Hopen & the Humanity Memorial Artist Team

Artist Mitch Ahern for the banner of Charlotte's Poetry

History Alive & actress Samantha Searles for their historically informed theatrical representation of Charlotte Forten and her writings, that can be explored further at www.historyalivesalem.com

Sweet Soul Sounds for providing musical accompaniment to the dedication event.

Our Funders & Supporters:

National Endowment for the Arts
New England Foundation for the Arts
Metropolitan Area Planning Council Technical Assistance Program
Salem Community Development Block Grant Program
Salem's ARPA Lost Revenue
Essex County Community Foundation Change Makers Grant
Salem Historical Tours

And the many Community Members who supported the memorial back in 2019:

Andrew J. Sheehan
Cara Berg Powers
Cassandra G. Murphy
Christine M. Ross
Hannah W Palmer
Jeffrey M Cohen
Jeffrey M. Gross
Julie E. Curtis
Kathleen H. Lique
Kathryn Frances Cohen
Marjorie L. Cowdery
Ragazza Restaurant/Bamboina
RIC Gengeri
Robert (Rod) Kessler
Robert Allen
Thomas Pineros-Shields
Wolfgang A Koch

Last but not least the City would like to thank the entire Salem Community for their participation, feedback, support and patience as we worked with diligence and intentionality to bring their vision to honor Charlotte into fruition. May this 'Moving Spirit of Love' Memorial and Charlotte's powerful legacy be an inspiration and source of encouragement and hope for generations to come.

Accompanying the sculpture, some of Charlotte’s writings will also be on display in the park in November via a hand-printed ‘banner’ created by artist Mitchel Ahern. Ahern is a Lynn-based letterpress printmaker and performing artist, whose work has appeared at the DeCordova Museum, Salem National Park Service Visitor Center, Endicott College, as well as many other venues, galleries and festivals. His piece “Charlotte Forten, Journals 1855 and 1864” is a 228-foot-long horizontal fabric scroll, printed on unbleached twill, using antique wood type on an 1830 Acorn Iron Hand Press at the Museum of Printing in Haverhill, MA. The quotes he chose to highlight are from Charlotte Forten’s Journals and showcase her work both as an abolitionist and as a teacher.

About Humanity Memorial & Lead Artist Ai Qiu Hopen:

As an Asian woman of Chinese descent, an immigrant, and a mother passionate about preserving humanity for all children, artist and sculptor Ai Qiu Hopen was inspired to create this memorial for the future guided by Charlotte’s vision of light and hope and invites us to consider the following quote:

“The long, dark night of the Past, with all its sorrows and its fears, was forgotten; and for the Future—the eyes of these freed children see no clouds in it. It is full of sunlight, they think, and they trust in it, perfectly” – Charlotte Forten Grimke.

Ai Qiu Chen Hopen grew up in poverty in rural China. As a child she created mud figures for the villages her family would travel to as migrant beekeepers following blossoming flowers. After studying Modern Art Design and Art Education in Shanghai at East China Normal University, Ai Qiu formed Humanity Memorial Inc., a team from diverse cultural backgrounds that values inclusive design, infuses its art with universal love and hope, and is grounded in an ethos for peace and equality, beyond gender, race, age, culture, or generation. The Humanity Memorial team has received national attention with notable installations, including figurative statues of prominent African American journalist Ida B. Wells in Washington D.C., as well as Nobel Peace Prize Winner Wangari Mathaai in Atchison, KS. Ai Qiu’s other notable commissions include WV State Capital project “Marching for Liberty” a woman suffrage memorial; and Birmingham Alabama’s “Gate of Freedom” in Kelly Ingram Park to honor 1963 foot-soldiers, which was designated as a National Monument by President Obama. Learn more about their work here: www.aiqiuhopen.com. An image of Hopen working on ‘Moving Spirit of Love’ monument attached.

Charlotte Forten Memorial Project Background:

Awarded artist was selected through a multi-round competitive process, where ultimately four talented artists were invited as semi-finalists to create original design proposals for the commission. Community members were invited to vote and comment on the semi-finalists’ proposals to guide selection decisions. Submission at all stages were reviewed by representatives from the project’s Advisory Group and Selection Committee, which is comprised of representation from artists, nonprofits, city departments, and Salem State University.

This project emerged after the site was redeveloped in 2017 and dedicated as Charlotte Forten Park in 2019. After years of engagement efforts around the park and proposals for a permanent memorial, a project advisory formed in fall of 2022 to assist with drafting the Call for Artists, which was released in June 2023, and 18 artists and artists teams responded to the Call for Artists. The [Call for Artists](#) was distributed locally and nationally, with intentional targeted outreach to artists identifying as female and artists of color.

Artists/artist teams were evaluated based on criteria that included reflections of their prior work, experience with commemorative artwork, and most critically their alignment with the project’s values, which were developed from broad reaching community input and articulated by the Charlotte Forten Project Advisors.

The awarded artist, Ai Qiu Hopen, worked closely with the Project Advisors on final design to ensure an accurate and appropriate, true-to-life likeness and representation of Charlotte Forten based on available historical photographs and documents.

To learn more about Charlotte Forten Grimke, this exciting initiative, and the awarded project, please visit our project website:

<https://www.salemma.gov/public-art-commission/pages/charlotte-forten-memorial-project>

About the Documentary & Steven Foley Media Productions:

The documentary is being produced and directed by local video producer and Salem State Alumni Steven Foley, of Steven Foley Media Productions, with support from Joe Garfi & Max Reid of Harvard Street Productions.

Foley has this to say about the project: “The docu team and I are beyond honored to be able to bring forth and present this incredible story of a woman who all of us in this nation and on the North Shore especially should have grown up learning about. Charlotte Forten’s story is a uniquely vibrant thread in the grand tapestry of the abolitionist movement spanning the Antebellum and Reconstruction eras of US history, and much of that thread is woven through Salem’s own history. The core theme of this mini-documentary project is one of people recognizing an injustice happening within their community, and come hell or high water, they will see it rectified. This of course applies to Charlotte’s story, but it also applies to Salem in this memorial effort between its city officials and its citizens collectively. And The Moving Spirit of Love aims to shine a light on both.”

About the Salem Public Art Commission

The Salem Public Art Commission (PAC) is committed to enriching and enlivening the urban environment through showcasing and commissioning innovative and transformative works of art in all media and modalities. With a focus on local artists, especially those historically underrepresented, and a global perspective of the art scene, PAC seeks to foster greater community awareness of and interaction with the arts, enhance the scope of Salem’s public art collection, and celebrate diversity in all its forms. The PAC feels Public Art in Salem should contribute to the community’s identity as the cultural hub of the North Shore and a center for creativity; foster community pride, ownership, and a sense of belonging; and enhance the quality of Salem’s built environment. Our goal is to nurture diversity and creativity and enhance the quality of life for all. Learn more at <https://www.salemma.gov/public-art-commission>. Follow us on FB & Instagram @SalemArtsCulture.

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