



Reflection on the King Boston Project

During this time when we as a nation reflect upon and celebrate the memory and work of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King, I thought I would share my own reflections, some of which were developed by listening to people at the various community meetings.

I remembered people asking us to remember that he was a Reverend, was spiritual, a preacher and a minister of the gospel. While we remember the iconic speech from the Lincoln Memorial, the majority of Rev. Dr. King's speeches were in churches. We were asked to make sure we included the fact that Rev. King had an earned doctorate. This is important in an age of educational disparity and the need for role models.

The King's message went beyond civil rights, but included love, as in the Beloved Community, and peace such that he opposed the war in Vietnam long before that was popular. King felt compelled to be consistent. When he preached that violence never solved anything, he was challenged by some asking, "Then why are we in Vietnam?" In terms of the message, the Kings were about more than civil rights, and racism, but their message included the anti-poverty movement, economic development, ending the war in Vietnam and anti-imperialism." Non-violent passive resistance became a universal strategy used from Northern Ireland, to South Africa, and all across America by a wide

range of ethnic and gender groups suffering injustice. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King was a universal and transformative figure, similar to Gandhi. I remember being in Mexico City and seeing a statue of King in a park, next to Abraham Lincoln. (See above).

This reminded me of an essay my daughter wrote in eighth grade. She asked rhetorically, at the time of the Gettysburg address, could President Lincoln imagine that one day there would be a monument built in his memory, the Lincoln Memorial. That on the steps of that memorial, one of the most famous speeches of all time would be given by a Black man; who would be recognized globally for his efforts for peace. Years later, America would have its first black president, who would also give a speech from that same monument, marking the 50th anniversary of King's famous "I Have a Dream speech." No, none of us can imagine what doing the right thing today, no matter what the cost, will lead to in the future.

When the community came out to provide ideas on a memorial to mark the King's time in Boston, I said we would get back to you. Below is such an update. For the most current information, please go to the [King Boston Website](#).



Ed Gaskin is the Executive Director of Greater Grove Hall Main Streets and an Advisor on the King Boston project.

Update on the King Boston Project



On March 19th of 2018, at the Prince Hall Masonic Lodge in Grove Hall, 146 people signed in to participate in a discussion on the Memorial for Rev. Dr. Martin Luther and Coretta Scott King. We were proud this was the largest of the 14 gatherings. We also want people to know that we captured your input and as a result of that and other meetings, the leaders of King Boston made a number of decisions that reflect the voice of the community. What follows is a summary of what has happened since then.

What is also important is increasing the level of participation from the community in terms of volunteers, attendance at educational and other types of program events and of course fundraising.

There have been several efforts in the past to bring a King Memorial to Boston and they fell short because of the fundraising. The vision from the Co-Sponsors was that everyone could contribute from an elementary school taking up a collection to major donors, so that in the end, we would all be a part of the King Boston project. For more information on events, need for volunteers, making a donation or helping with fundraising, please contact

King Boston

Executive Director Marie St. Fleur at marie@kingboston.org

or call Marie at **617.338.4126**.

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What has Happened Since?

During the night, the 146 participants were asked to join one of five groups that most represented their interest. The five groups were Artistic Direction, Theme, Education/Programming, Fundraising and Location. The groups reported out and there was a question and answer period. Participants were also asked to provide feedback on the best location for the memorial and artistic direction based on prior King Memorials.

Documentary Movie

A documentary movie by [Roberto Mighty](#) on the lives of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King and Coretta Scott King while they were in Boston. Roberto interviewed people who knew the Kings while they were in Boston. This will be America's first documentary, multi-media and online project about the King's pivotal years in Boston in the early 1960s. This movie is almost complete.

The Memorial

A design, a team, and a location were chosen. Over 126 teams from around the world applied to be considered for the development of the memorial, and in May of 2018, the King Boston Art Committee narrowed the field down to five teams. Those teams worked over the summer of 2018 on their proposals and those proposals were put on display from Sept 18th to October 16th at the Boston Public Library in Copley Square and at the Bruce Boiling Building in Roxbury. The Embrace by Hank Willis Thomas and MassDesign Group was selected.

Bringing the Memorial to Life through Knowledge and Action

The King Boston Center for Economic Justice

The new King Center for Economic Justice will create a dynamic space for residents and local institutional partners to engage in informed civil dialogue and action. King Boston is in preliminary conversations with the Boston Public Library to locate the King Center for Economic Justice in the newly renovated Dudley Square library branch in Roxbury. Community conversations focused on the new center will begin this spring. The idea is to

create an interactive MLK learning center in Roxbury designed to teach individuals to be change agents/activists in Boston. The creation of a new "King Center for Economic Justice" in Roxbury is where we will work to improve economic disparities across our city.

Teach-Ins

While progress on the memorial has occurred, King Boston has been busy with programs. There have been four "Teach-ins" and the first one for 2020 is planned. These programs engage the community and bring the spirit of the Kings to life through education.

The next King Boston Teach-In is on **March 19th from 5:30-8PM** at Dudley Cafe. King Boston will be partnering with Sheena Collier, founder of The Collier Connection.

King Legacy Night

On October 16th, of last year, we had a gala at the MFA that was SOLD OUT and cleared over \$500,000 in profit. We had a fantastic and diverse crowd with amazing speakers and entertainment.

King Boston Programming

A \$1M endowment with the Twelfth Baptist Church to do MLK-related programming, honoring MLK's time preaching at Twelfth Baptist while he lived in Boston.

Fundraising

As these projects move forward, the importance of raising the \$12 million needed to complete these projects grows in importance. The vision from the start has been that this is the "People's project" with people from all walks of life participating in the development of this project, in terms of fundraising, from school children as a class project to foundations and philanthropists.

For More information on Donating contact

King Boston

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Ekua Holmes and a group of volunteers from Mass College of Art and others such as Napoleon Henderson Jones and Angela Williams Mitchel worked hard to facilitate a participatory event.

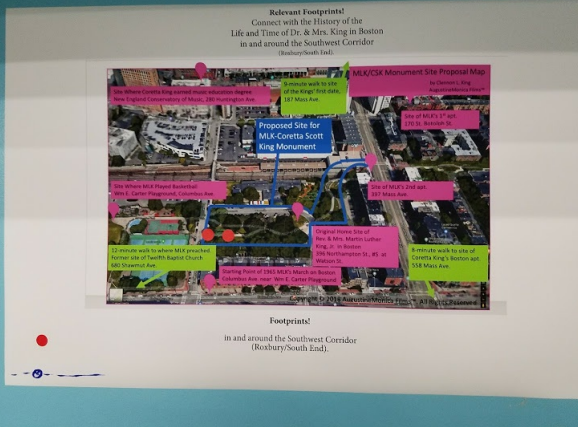
People were asked to break into one of five groups, Artistic Vision, Fundraising, Education/Programing, Location, and Thematic Direction, depending upon their interests.



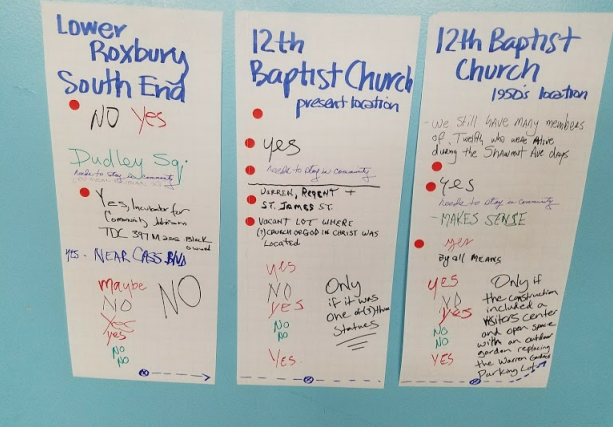
The groups included **Artistic Vision**, which provided feedback on the type of Memorial people would like to see in Boston. Ideas ran from realistic to abstract.

Location

There was a lot of interest in the location(s) of the memorial from the beginning of the project. Ideas for locations ran from UMass Boston next to the Kennedy Library, the South End/Lower Roxbury, Franklin Park, 12th Baptist Church past and present location, in front of the Roxbury Courthouse, City Hall Plaza, Grove Hall in front of Freedom House, The Boston Common, the State House lawn, and other sites in Dudley.



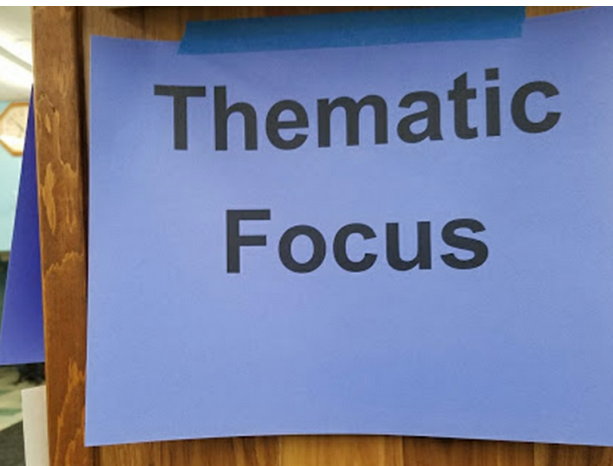
A chart by **Clennon L. King** making the case for the South End/Lower Roxbury as the ideal location for the Memorial.



A chart capturing feedback from participants on location.



The **Thematic Focus Group** working.



Thematic Focus - Which aspect(s) of the King's life should be the focus, from civil rights and justice, to non-violence and the global peace.

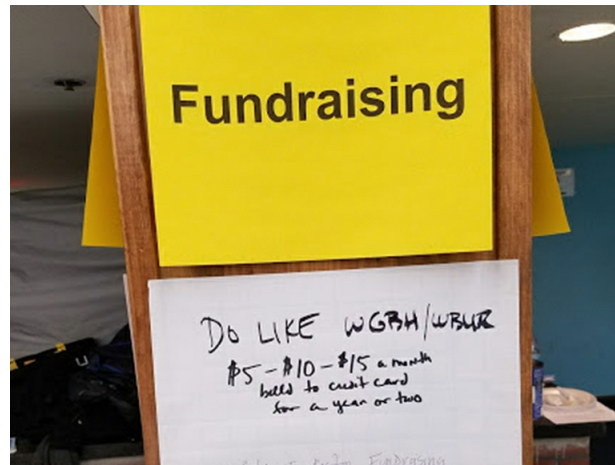


These were photos of King memorials from around the world. Participants voted by placing stickers on the

ones they liked.



The Educational/Programing Group - The idea was to have the Memorial be more than just something you go to see one time. How and what type of programming do we develop to keep this alive?



Fundraising was one of the five groups that met to come up with ideas.

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