


Boston's Martin Luther King Jr. monument: The 5 design finalists

 boston.curbed.com/2018/9/18/17871320/boston-martin-luther-king-monument-finalists

Tom Acitelli

September 18, 2018



King speaking at the Massachusetts State House in April 1965.

Boston Globe via Getty Images

On September 18, the backers of a planned Boston Common monument to civil rights leaders—and one-time Bostonians—Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King unveiled the five final would-be designs for the project.

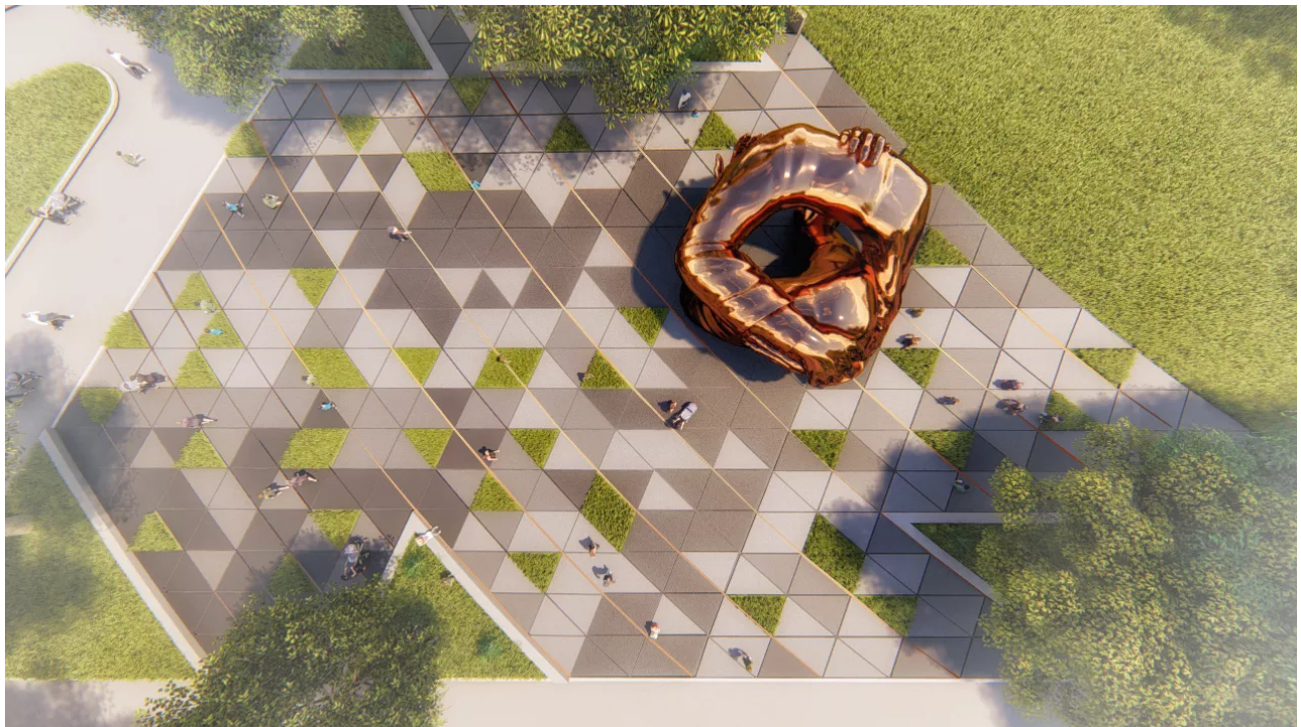
The city and MLK Boston, a nonprofit that Paul English founded and that he co-chairs along with Liz Walker, are working together on it. The monument will be part of a larger initiative honoring the Kings, including an interactive educational center in Roxbury and \$1 million endowment for programming related to their lives.

The five finalists' designs will be on display at the Boston Public Library's main location in Copley Square and at the Bruce C. Bolling Municipal Building in Roxbury's Dudley Square until October 16.

Each of the five—detailed below, using information that MLK Boston provided—is, well, monumental in scope, with designs that if realized would alter the look and the flow of America's oldest public park.

"Each one of these five proposals does a tremendous job of honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King and their ideals, teachings and values," Mayor Marty Walsh said in a statement. "I look forward to hearing the public's response to each proposal, and gathering their feedback on which project best exemplifies the profound impact the Kings had on the City of Boston."

The backers plan to select a final design in November. All renderings below are courtesy of the teams pitching the designs.



Hank Willis Thomas with MASS Design Group

Hank Willis Thomas is a conceptual artist working primarily with themes related to identity, history and popular culture.

His work has been exhibited throughout the U.S. and abroad, including the International Center of Photography, Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, and the Cleveland Museum of Art. MASS Design Group designs built environments that seek to improve people's lives in measurable ways and are infused by the potential to promote justice and human dignity.

Based in Boston and Kigali, Rwanda, MASS forces the building process to engage with end stakeholders, and become a catalyst for hope and change in physical space.

Their proposed memorial, "The Embrace," is overwhelmingly simple and accessible: It is about what we share, not what sets us apart. Beneath the 22-foot-high arms of Dr. King and Coretta Scott, passersby will be reminded of our shared human connection. The memorial will envelop participants, allowing them to be simultaneously vulnerable and protected.

By highlighting the act of embrace, this sculpture shifts the emphasis from singular hero worship to collective action, imploring those curious enough to investigate closer.

"The Embrace" will be a mirror finish bronze, reflecting the changing natural environment of the park and the viewers themselves. Together, "The Capitol," "The Embrace," and "The Bandstand" create an axis that leads to the proposed King Educational Center in Dudley Square.

A wall bearing the iconic image that inspired the Embrace will accentuate the exterior facade and mark the gateway to Dudley Square.





Adam Pendleton/Adjaye Associates/David Reinfurt/Future\ Pace/Gilbane Boston

Artist Adam Pendleton is known for his conceptual practice, which encompasses painting, sculpture, writing, film, and performance. Future\ Pace is an international cultural partnership between Pace Gallery and FutureCity innovating multidisciplinary projects for art in the public realm.

Architect David Adjaye's broad range of influences, ingenious use of materials, and sculptural ability have established him as an architect with an artist's sensibility and vision. David Reinfurt, an independent graphic designer, was the lead designer for the New York City MTA MetroCard vending machine interface and currently teaches at Princeton University.

Their proposal is informed by Dr. King's final speech, "I've Been to the Mountaintop." The memorial is an overlook in black stone, projecting out from Beacon Street to embrace and overlook the Common below. From the summit of the memorial, visitors are invited to regard America's oldest city park and new mountainous sculptures below, which together compose a radical amphitheater.

The open structure bridges over the Common's walking path. It is accompanied by a gentle handicap-accessible ramp which leads visitors from the upper street-level down to the lower-level of the existing walking path. On the lawn are sloped stone sculptures engraved with the words of the Kings that act as terrain and provide seating.

The top surfaces of the stone memorial are engraved with text from their speeches. In addition, an integrated passive digital platform for mobile devices provides annotated transcripts and audio of the Kings' speeches, along with images, unlocking a deeper dive into the Kings' powerful messages.





Barbara Chase-Riboud

Barbara Chase-Riboud has been creating abstract art for over 50 years, and has developed her own particular innovation on the bronze sculpture method by creating thin sheets of wax that she could bend, fold, meld, or sever to produce large-scale sculptures comprised of ribbons of bronze and aluminum.

She later added fiber to these metal elements to create some of her most renowned works—among which were a group of 20 sculptures memorializing Malcolm X and his transformation “from a convict to a world leader.”

Her “Empty Pulpit Monument” dedicated to Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King is made of light, stone and bronze. The truncated stone pyramid represents their mission and collaboration, and the searchlight beacon represents their message from the top of the mountain they climbed together.

The memorial is inspired by a 17th-century wooden pulpit, resembling that of the first Martin Luther and symbolizing MLK Jr.’s silenced voice. The Indian granite serves as homage to Gandhi’s non-violence movement and inside the passageway is engraved a historic lineage of the diaspora.

The floor under the arch repeats the iconic “We shall overcome” slogan. Carved on the back of the monument is their most powerful quote, “I have decided to stick with LOVE, HATE is too great a burden to bear.”

A series of “waves”, green rolling hills where the public can roam, will surround the memorial. Additional quotations from the Kings will be emblazoned on bronze plaques embedded in the hills.



Wodiczko + Bonder/Maryann Thompson Architects, with Walter Hood

Wodiczko+Bonder is a Cambridge-based partnership between artist and professor Krzysztof Wodiczko and architect and professor Julian Bonder that focuses on art and design projects that engage public space and raise the issues of social memory, survival, struggle and emancipation.

Maryann Thompson Architects (MTA) is a Cambridge-based architecture firm that specializes in architecture that is sustainable, regionally driven and that attempts to heighten the phenomenological qualities of the site in which they work.

Walter Hood is the Creative Director and Founder of Hood Design Studio in Oakland, California, who designs and creates urban spaces and objects that are public sculpture.

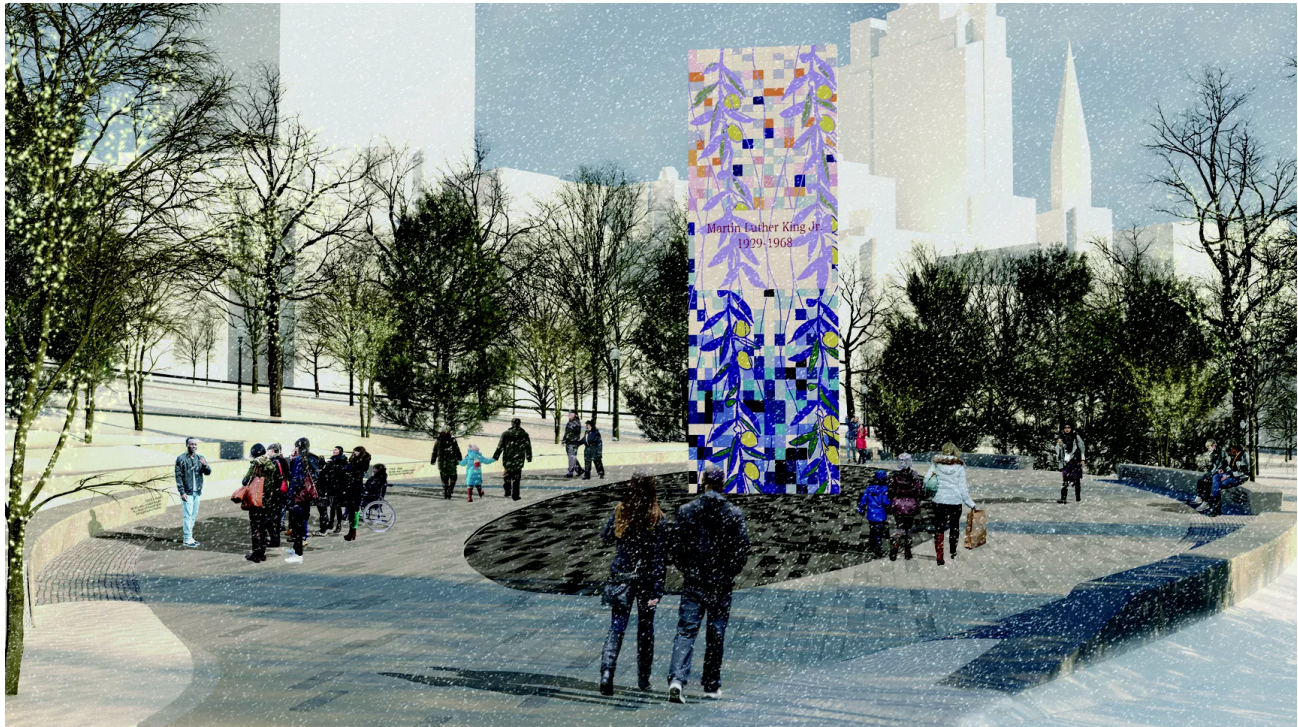
Their proposal, "The Ripple Effects: Resonance of Voices, History, Love and Action," includes Beacon Towers, which symbolize the continuing presence, inspiration, and impact of the Kings' moral and social leadership.

Emanating from the Beacon Towers are ripples that evoke the "ripple effect" of the words, actions, and leadership of the Kings. The Mound creates a journey "to the mountaintop" culminating in a deliberately empty and shaded platform conceived to bring into being a public community of engaged visitors.

The "bridge" leading from the 54th Memorial across the Common past the Beacon Towers is inscribed with a chronology of emancipatory events. Below it, a glass wall offers a more intimate and self-reflective encounter with written and spoken texts that teach and inspire.

The reflective surface of the glass allows for the visitor to see themselves within the context of the inscribed words, and in the company of "others."





Yinka Shonibare

Yinka Shonibare MBE was born in London and moved to Nigeria at the age of three. He returned to London to study fine art, first at Byam School of Art and then at Goldsmiths College, where he received his MFA.

Shonibare's work explores issues of race and class through the media of painting, sculpture, photography, and film.

His proposal, "Avenue of Peace," is a memorial walkway, sculpture, and water feature. This interactive memorial engages the public with the story of the Kings' lives and mission, through a series of 22 inscribed benches and an app that visitors can download.

The public is invited to journey along the avenue and sit on the stone benches lining the walkway to learn about the couple and their histories.

A white pine, called the "Tree of Peace" by indigenous peoples of New England, will symbolize the couple's enduring values, whilst deciduous trees will mark the passing of time by changing color with the rest of the park.

Toward the center of the avenue will stand a tall fountain covered in colorful mosaic, set in the middle of a continuous oval pool lined with black granite. The mosaic design incorporates the couple's names alongside olive branches that will remind viewers of peace.

As visitors approach from the east side, they learn about Coretta's life, and the west side narrates MLK's early life and his journey to Boston. The memorial as a walk will evoke the long marches they both made for peace.

Curbed Boston Newsletter

By signing up, you agree to our [Privacy Policy](#) and European users agree to the data transfer policy.

- [Martin Luther King Jr. in the Boston area: Where he lived, worked, and played](#) [Curbed Boston]
- [Boston's Martin Luther King Jr. memorial will include Boston Common monument](#) [Curbed Boston]



Next Up In News
