



Harvard & the Legacy  
of Slavery Initiative

# Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery: **Memorial Project**

## Request for Qualifications December 2023

Updated February 2024

The Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery initiative invites artists and creators to submit their expressions of interest for the opportunity to design Harvard's legacy of slavery memorial.

[harvard.edu/vice-provost-for-special-projects](https://www.harvard.edu/vice-provost-for-special-projects)

## I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery (H&LS) [Memorial Project Committee](#) invites artists, architects, designers, multi-disciplinary teams and other creators to express their interest in conceiving a site or sites on Harvard's Cambridge campus for commemoration and reflection, as well as for listening to and living with the University's legacy of slavery. We seek expressions of interest from those with investments of thought and practice in memorialization, ritual, community-building, history, and questions about the future. In particular, we are interested in creative visions that activate and make visible complex dynamics, such as: permanence and vitality; honor and rebuke; ecology and the built environment; institutional interest and the common good. We welcome submissions from individuals, collaboratives, and teams rooted in traditional or non-traditional memorial practices at any stage of their career.

This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) invites artists, designers, design teams and other creators to submit required materials for consideration. The anticipated timeline for completion of the memorial is summer 2027. Upon review of all submissions, the Memorial Project Committee will invite a small group of finalists to visit Harvard, meet with community members, and submit formal proposals to be considered for the Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery Memorial. The University has provisionally budgeted approximately \$4M for this project inclusive of artist fees, materials, fabrication and construction costs. Additional funds from the Legacy of Slavery endowment may be available for short and long-term planning, programming and engagement.

## II. BACKGROUND

In April 2022, Harvard University released the [Report of the Presidential Committee on Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery](#). The report is organized around three themes that expose the interconnections among Harvard, slavery, and its legacies. Specifically:

- **Direct ties:** Harvard leaders, faculty, and staff enslaved more than 70 people during the 17th and 18th centuries.
- **Financial ties:** Five men who made their fortunes from slavery and slave-produced goods accounted for over one-third of all private donations and financial pledges to the University in the first half of the 19th century.
- **Intellectual ties:** In the 19th and 20th centuries, some Harvard faculty and leaders promoted controversial and now discredited theories of race science and eugenics. These ideas contributed to Jim Crow legislation, anti-immigration policies, and legislation supporting involuntary sterilization of US women.

Harvard acknowledges its complicity in slavery and the damage caused by it. The University is committed to taking meaningful, visible, and effective actions to address its legacies of slavery. To this end, Harvard University established the Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery (H&LS) initiative as a steadfast commitment to the active pursuit of long-lasting repair. The team responsible for shepherding the University's reparative work is composed of dedicated, passionate, and talented professionals.

Rooted in the [recommendations from the report](#) and leveraging ongoing efforts at the University, several efforts have been launched to begin the University's journey toward repair, including:

- Designing a program to support K-12 teachers and schools in educating students about slavery and its lasting impact, using approved curricula.
- Building a physical memorial on Harvard's campus to acknowledge and honor the enslaved individuals who contributed to Harvard's founding, growth, and evolution. This process is being spearheaded by the [Legacy of Slavery Memorial Project Committee](#).
- Partnering with the HBCU Library Alliance to establish the [HBCU Digital Library Trust](#), which aims to digitize and preserve collections of African-American history and make them free and publicly available.
- Establishing the [Harvard Slavery Remembrance Program](#), which works closely with the New England Historic Genealogical Society to identify the descendants of those who were enslaved by Harvard's leaders, faculty, and staff.
- Providing funding for the ["Responsibility & Repair" conference](#), an event that sought to foster a national dialogue, advance knowledge, and establish partnerships with Indigenous communities by bringing together Native and University leaders.

For more information about the H&LS initiative and the work ahead, please [visit our website](#).

### III. EVALUATION CRITERIA

The Memorial Project Committee intends for the proposed memorial to recognize and honor the ongoing legacies of the enslaved; engage with the complexities of history as they relate to our collective future; and activate new vocabularies of grief, hope, reckoning and remembrance.

In conceiving and elaborating this memorial, we seek to engage with candidates capable of making visible and palpable such complex dynamics as permanence and vitality, honor and rebuke, ecology and the built environment, institutional interest and the common good.

The following criteria will be used to evaluate all RFQ submissions and inform the selection of finalists:

#### VISION:

Via their submitted written statements and portfolio materials, candidates should demonstrate the following:

- Nuanced understanding of the themes of the Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery Report, particularly as it relates to the voices and histories of those who were enslaved and the ongoing impacts of enslavement on direct descendants and descendent communities
- Recognition of the active and continuous presence, growth, and aliveness of Indigenous communities and their complex relationship to enslavement
- Competencies necessary to envision and materialize a public artwork in step with the priorities articulated by the Memorial Project Committee
- Ability to collaborate with institutions, work with fabricators, and engage in sustained dialogue with diverse communities of people

#### COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

Candidates should demonstrate willingness and capacity to do the following:

- Engage a diverse community of stakeholders in dialogue on topics of public art and memorialization as it connects to their creative process
- Collaborate with municipal offices and civic institutions
- Engage with the Memorial Project Committee, University leadership, and community stakeholders throughout the creative process, including design and installation

#### DESIGN EXPERTISE

Candidates should be able to demonstrate evidence of experience with or interest in some of the following:

- Public space, sculpture, interactive design, architecture or building/construction methods, public performance, landscape design and gardening, and the ethical and logistical complexities of art in and for the public

## IV. SELECTION PROCESS

- Submissions will be accepted through the [online application portal](#) on a rolling basis.
- From the submissions solicited by this Request for Qualifications, ten to twenty semifinalists will be asked to provide further materials for review. From that group, four finalist artists/teams will be invited to submit proposals in the RFP stage.
- A \$40,000 stipend will be provided to each of the four invited finalist projects to develop initial design concepts.
- Each of the four finalists will make two campus visits to engage with community stakeholders. The first visit will include a site visit and community listening sessions. The second visit will be an opportunity for finalists to share their proposal in a series of public gatherings and conversations.

## V. SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Submissions will consist of one (1) online application via the H&LS website; the committee will not accept hard-copy materials. **All submissions may be submitted electronically and will be accepted on a rolling basis.**

Submission instructions are available on the [Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery Memorial RFQ website](#), and the [direct link to the Memorial RFQ application](#) is available on that webpage as well. Applicants will be required to provide the following information:

- Applicant Info:
  - First Name/ Last Name of primary contact:
  - Company Name:
  - Primary Contact Email Address:
  - Primary Contact Phone Number:
  - Mailing Address:
  - Website:
- Are you applying as an individual or as a team/ collective?
  - If team/collective: Team Members [up to 7 additional individuals]
  - Insert fields: first name, last name, title/ position, email address
- A portfolio of past work [maximum 10 files]  
Acceptable files include: PDF, MS Word, PowerPoint, .avi, .mp4, .mov, .wav, .mp3, .png,

.jpg, .jpeg, YouTube, Vimeo (please include relevant timestamps if applicable)

- Resume (2 page per person maximum) from each of the Key Team Members
- Names and contact information for up to three references (first & last name, email, nature of work relationship)
- Narrative statement responding to the following prompt: “How does your work reflect on questions of reckoning and commemoration?” [maximum 500 words]
- Do you agree to share portions of your submitted material to the Memorial Committee public archive? Candidates are under no obligation to share their submissions and selecting “no” will not affect evaluation of your information. If you elect to share your material, then by making submission you grant the President and Fellows of Harvard College a limited, non-exclusive, fully paid-up, royalty-free, worldwide license to reproduce, transmit, display, distribute in the Memorial Committee public archive, including any online, print, or video versions thereof, the first and last name of all artists and team members making the submission, any applicable website(s), and in the case of semifinalists the content of their submitted portfolio materials. Finalists will also be asked to share their proposed design concept.

## VI. GENERAL TERMS

This Request for Qualifications is solely an invitation to artists or design teams to provide information about their professional qualifications to Harvard and is not an offer to contract. Submission of materials in response to this RFQ does not guarantee an invitation to advance to the next stage of review or to participate in the Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Furthermore, this request does not obligate Harvard to pay any costs that any Respondent may incur in the preparation of their response. The funds provisionally budgeted for this project may be subject to change. All costs associated with the preparation of a response to this request including without limitation any responses to clarifying and/or follow-up questions asked by the Memorial Project Committee upon review of Respondent’s submission shall be borne solely by the Respondent.

## VII. REFERENCE MATERIALS

- [Report of the Presidential Committee on Harvard & the Legacy of Slavery](#)
- [Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery Tour Experience](#) (campus and virtual available)

- [Report of the Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences Taskforce on Visual Culture and Signage](#)

## QUESTIONS?

[An interview with Tracy K. Smith and Dan Byers](#), the Harvard & Legacy of Slavery Memorial Committee co-chairs, is available from the Harvard Gazette.

Please email [LegacyOfSlavery\\_Memorial@harvard.edu](mailto:LegacyOfSlavery_Memorial@harvard.edu) with questions about this opportunity or the project; for technical assistance with the SM Apply site, contact [support@smapply.io](mailto:support@smapply.io)