

WELCOME.

We invite you into conversation with us—members, supporters, volunteers and friends.

The last two years have been **seismic**. Not just for the Royall House and Slave Quarters, but for our nation as a whole.

It's no secret our museum is committed to telling the history of slavery and freedom while highlighting how the legacy of enslavement creates systemic inequalities today.

The last two years have brought greater urgency to our mission.

Exterior of the Slave Quarters
Royall House and Slave Quarters virtual tour



February 2022



Kyera Singleton

*Executive Director, Royall House and Slave Quarters
PhD Candidate, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor*

Dear Members and Fellow Travelers:

When I became the Director of the Royall House and Slave Quarters in March 2020, I started at the beginning of the pandemic. The museum was closed, our tour season and in-person programs cancelled indefinitely, and we were in the midst of protests across the country against systemic racism and police violence. It was not only my first time leading a museum, but I was also tasked with leading *this* museum—one that is so dear to our community—through an intense moment of uncertainty.

What did I want to say?

In *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, James Baldwin writes, “People pay for what they have allowed themselves to become. And they pay for it very simply; by the lives they lead.” As a historian of slavery, **I cannot imagine a life led without a commitment to scholarship**. In my opinion, education serves as a means of empowerment and liberation to disenfranchised individuals. I bring this philosophy to my work as a museum leader.

Over the past two years, our organization, with the help of an incredible board of directors, has begun to reimagine our collections, tell new stories, and work with descendent communities to center the ways in which the afterlives of slavery manifest in systemic racism every single day. It is important to me that the Royall House and Slave Quarters is a site of memory and that we locate our value in not only understanding the past but in hearing the freedom dreams of Black people today.

Therefore, we have partnered with cultural institutions in Massachusetts and beyond to discuss the varied histories of slavery locally, nationally, and globally. We have created a diverse array of programming that explores Black cultural productions, and we surveyed our community stakeholders to host virtual public programs around issues that impacted them the most. My greatest joy in these last two years has been working with and learning from the many different communities our museum serves.

Our museum’s mission to use the past to understand today and build a better tomorrow brought hundreds of visitors to the museum when we re-opened in July of last year—everyone from Medford neighbors, to families, teachers, or high school and college students. Most were shocked to learn that slavery was essential to the development of Massachusetts’s economy and that Medford is a central part of this story.

Every visitor, member, donor, and volunteer who chooses to champion the work we do on a daily basis is a part of bringing this history to visitors who walk through our door, and to those who engage with our site from afar. And for that, **we are deeply grateful for the trust of our community**.

Thank you for your immense support! We are so excited for you all to join us in celebrating the last two years with us, and we look forward to celebrating with you for years to come.

Kyera Singleton

*Executive Director
Royall House and Slave Quarters*



OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

In 2022, we are committed to reflecting on the year behind us and bringing forward lessons and opportunities we want to embrace and learn from today.

And, despite the challenges of the last two years—there is so much to celebrate:

- ▶ New Executive Director Kyera Singleton joined us in 2020 after longtime director Tom Lincoln's well-deserved retirement—and became the **first full-time staff person in our museum's history**.
- ▶ In July, we re-opened our doors for the first time since November 2019 for on-site tours with our paid, trained guide staff.
- ▶ In this update, you will read about what's been keeping us busiest: **vital emergency repairs** to the historic buildings; the coming **relaunch of our education program** in 2022; the **countless virtual tours and programs** we hosted in 2020 and 2021; and the **new partnerships** we've pursued with local arts and culture organizations, scholars, and the city of Boston.

*Mansion exterior
Royall House and Slave Quarters virtual tour*

8,000+

**Social Media
Followers**

25

**Virtual or
Hybrid
Programs**

2,000+

**Virtual Event
Attendees**

**2021 AT A
GLANCE**

4,000+

**E-news
subscribers**

50+

**Specialized
Group Tours**

THE OUTPOURING OF ENTHUSIASM FOR OUR MISSION HAS BEEN INVIGORATING:

60 enslaved people once toiled for a rich landowner in Medford. Kyera Singleton wants you to know who they were

By [Hayley Kaufman](#) Globe Staff, Updated August 8, 2020, 4:22 p.m.



[BOSTON GLOBE](#)



[NATIONAL HUMANITIES ALLIANCE](#)



[HARVARD MAGAZINE](#)

Plantation tours bypass the 'big house' to focus on the enslaved



[CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR](#)

Out of History's Margins



[MACALESTER TODAY](#)



This work would not be possible without each of you.

Our mighty team of board members, volunteers, tour guides, interns, supporters, and members ensures this museum continues to grow.

You have made an immediate and important impact in our ability to educate about the history and legacies of slavery in the North, and we can't thank you enough.

*Micah Kraus and Aabid Allibhai at
volunteer Clean-Up Day 2021
Courtesy of Maureen Curley*



COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS: A Q&A WITH MAUREEN CURLEY

Our "volunteer, volunteer coordinator" Maureen Curley is on a mission to guarantee our volunteers feel the impact of their work.

Maureen, what do you do at the Royall House and Slave Quarters? What exactly is a "volunteer, volunteer coordinator?"

I am a volunteer myself, and my way to support the Royall House and Slave Quarters is by matching interested volunteers with work that supports the growing reach of the site—and work that they feel passionate about, and enjoy.

*Volunteer Maureen Curley with husband—
and fellow RH&SQ volunteer!—Ken Stone.*

When the museum gets a new volunteer inquiry, I set up a conversation with that person to walk them through the intake form and hear the reasons why they want to volunteer with RH&SQ. I love drawing out people's passions. There is a lot of variation across people, and that's totally okay! Everyone has a different reason to come in.

Why did you decide to offer your time to the Royall House and Slave Quarters?

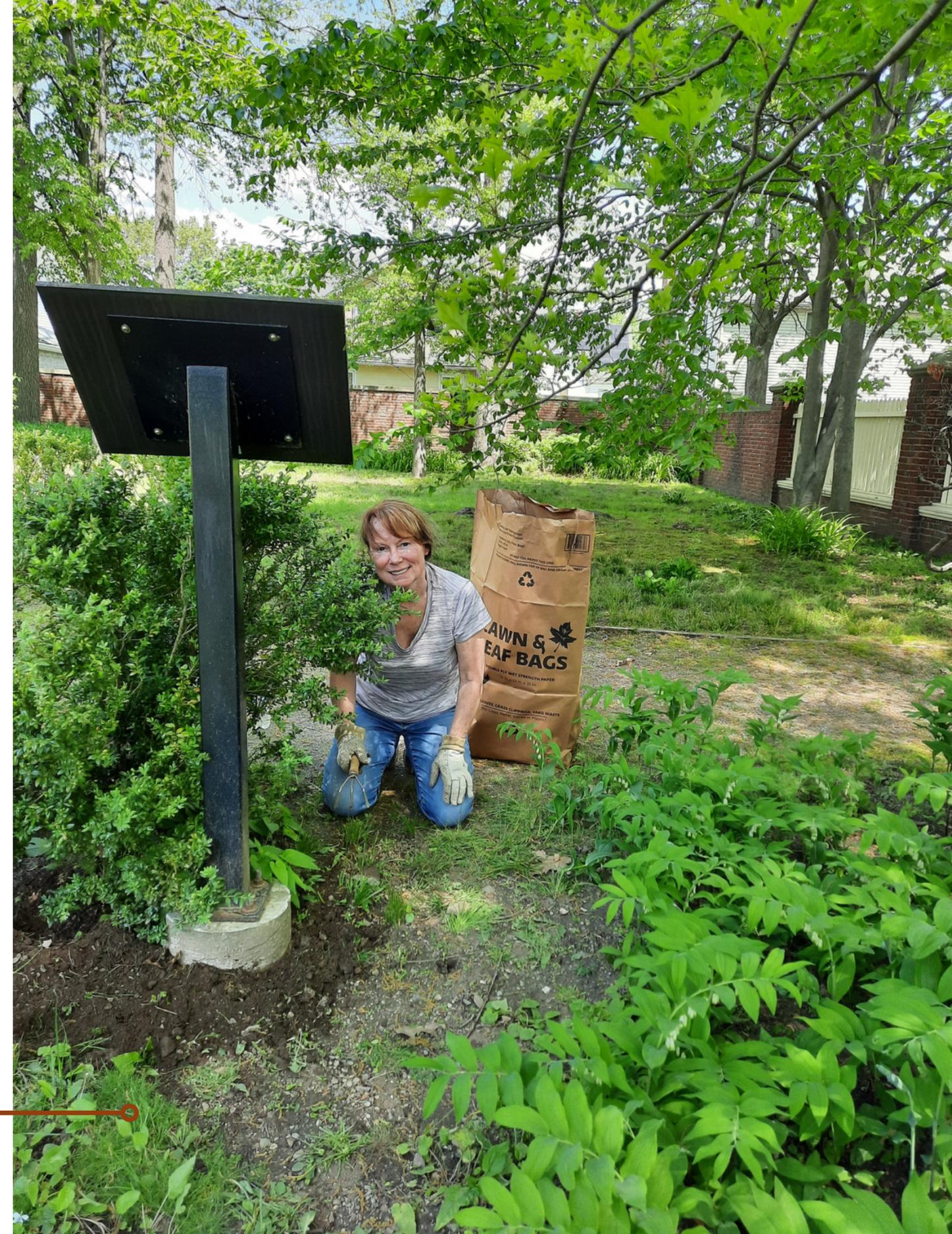
My husband I were riding our bikes around Medford and quite literally stumbled across the museum. It astonished me that I did not know this history. Growing up here [in New England], you don't always connect the North with slavery, and you begin to unravel this history and see the story of our country unfold in a way you never really understood properly. As a twenty-year-resident of Medford, I feel it's so important and makes for a more complex and complete picture overall.

Why help with volunteers? What got you interested in that work?

Before I retired, I'd spent my career in nonprofits as a volunteer manager and executive. I love the behind-the-scenes work of nonprofits and ensuring everything runs smoothly in support of the mission.

When I retired, I wanted to find a place to volunteer locally. So, I started out—like many of our volunteers—at the front desk welcoming visitors the museum. I also got involved in the garden upkeep with longtime volunteer Lindsay Rider.

*Many of our volunteers work in the garden beds on-site, particularly during COVID-19.
Pictured: volunteer Julie Kinchler*





Around January last year, I approached Kyera [Singleton] about organizing and engaging a “bench” of volunteers to support the recent growth of the museum. I felt it was a great way for me to use my experience and skills to support the RH&SQ’s mission.

What are your favorite parts of working with volunteers?

I think volunteers are really the heartbeat of a nonprofit. Starting with the board, you need an incredibly dedicated group of people with real investment in their community. I love figuring out what motivates people to volunteer and matching them with something they really want to do. It’s a fun puzzle—matching people with ideal opportunities—and it sets everyone up for success.

I also really enjoy opportunities to recognize our volunteers’ hard work: a personal call, a follow-up. If a volunteer hasn’t heard from the museum recently, they should give me a buzz! Particularly during COVID, it has been difficult for us to stay connected with volunteers and keep them engaged. I want to be that bridge to the organization.

What kinds of volunteers does RH&SQ need?

First, there are volunteers who remain involved long-term and are usually a part of our local community. For example, a lot of our repeat volunteers commit time to working our programs and events, gardening with our garden committee, or staffing the front desk to welcome visitors.

Then, you have volunteers who want to do a “deep-dive” on a focused project for a limited amount of time—for example, graduate students and interns working with the collections for sustained periods.

I also think “episodic” volunteers are incredibly important: people who want to offer help a few times a year flexibly, such as additional support during our public programs, or joining in on a clean-up day.

Offering a wide range of volunteer opportunities for all types of interested people ensures everyone can contribute and participate in a way that feels right to them. In this way, each volunteer makes a huge difference to the site.

What has been one of your favorite or most memorable volunteer projects to participate in at RH&SQ yourself?

Oh—definitely the garden. Lindsay Rider and I came up with the idea of assigning some of the garden committee volunteers an individual garden bed to tend whenever they liked. It gave everyone such a sense of ownership and pride in their work and has made us feel really connected to the site. I can’t wait to see how the beds look this spring!

*Volunteer Lindsay Rider
leads the charge in caring for beds on the Gardening Committee*



We are eager to show you what's underway at the Royall House and Slave Quarters.

What we heard loud and clear the last two years: **you want more**. More diverse programming, and more opportunities to learn.

To make the history of Northern slavery accessible and expansive through a social justice lens, we are building our capacity: sustainably investing in the staffing necessary to offer new programs, educational offerings, partnerships, and historical scholarship.

Kyera Singleton celebrates award of Cummings Foundation grant in May 2021

Thanks to **Cummings Foundation's** \$25 Million Grant Program, we are deploying flexible, philanthropic funds to build greater capacity at our museum—hiring essential staff to drive our museum's core, mission-led work.

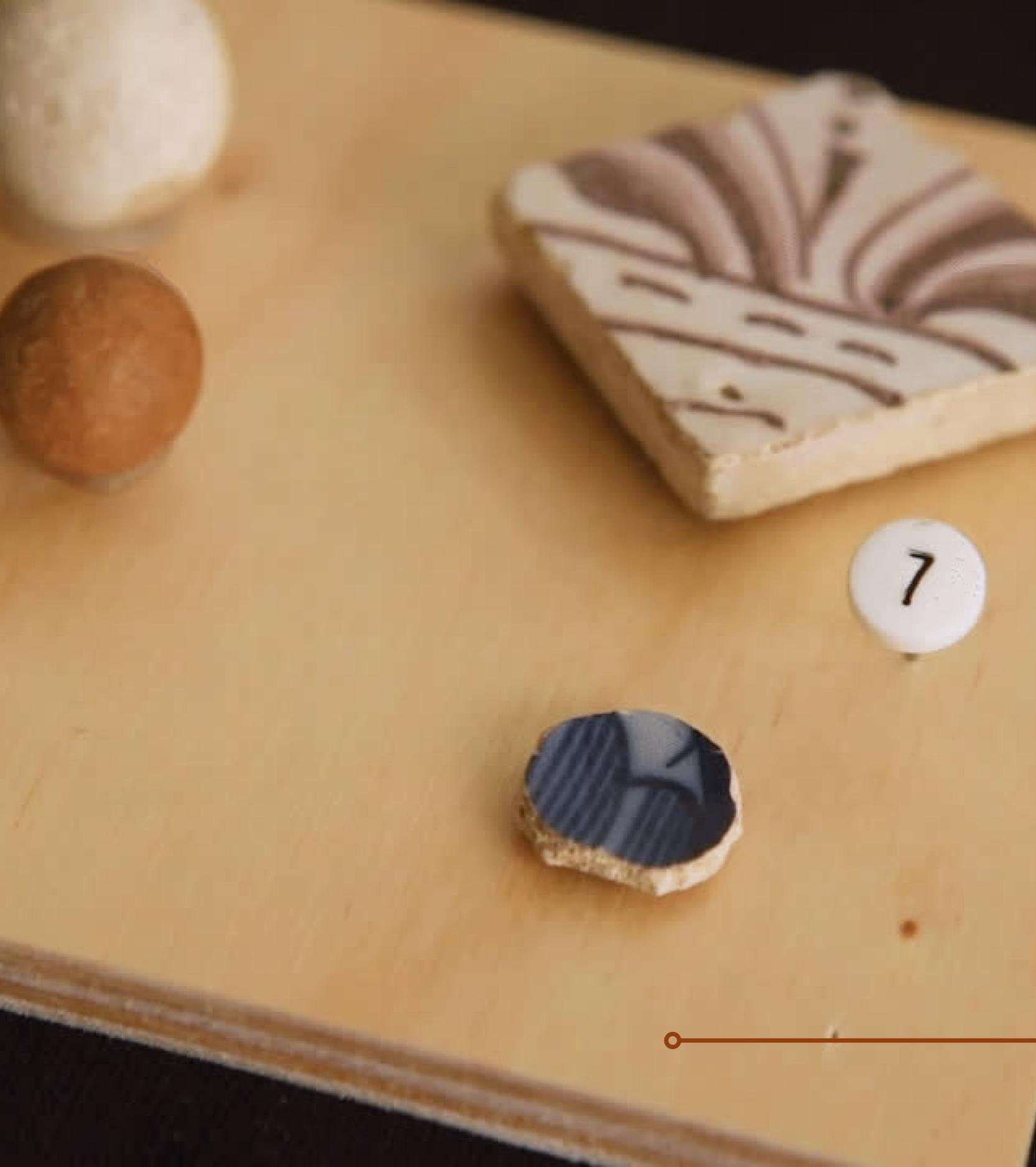
The more we strengthen our foundation, the more we can grow in a sustainable and strategic way.



WE ARE ENORMOUSLY GRATEFUL TO CUMMINGS

FOUNDATION for its faith in our museum's work to tell a complex story of slavery and the contestation over freedom in America—and to amplify how the legacies of enslavement affect communities today.
—Kyera Singleton





EXPANDING OUR REACH DURING COVID-19

As we broaden our reach on social media and virtual channels, we are more committed than ever to growing our educational programming for students, educators, and our community.

In 2020 and 2021, we **adapted existing educational programming** and **developed virtual options** in accessible formats to communities both new and old—despite the limitations of a global pandemic.

- ▶ *Former education coordinator Denise Moehring adapted our K-12 programs via Zoom, continuing teaching to classrooms.*
- ▶ *Executive Director Kyera Singleton gave live talks to students, libraries, and other community centers paired with our newest resource: **a virtual tour video of our site.***

*Gaming tiles and marble
Royall House and Slave Quarters virtual tour*

With the start of an unprecedented pandemic, we had a **tough new question**: how do we serve as a vital resource on the history of Northern slavery for local communities while we remain closed, and for those at a distance once our site re-opens?

Over the course of three and a half months, a team comprised of Executive Director Kyera Singleton, tour guide Lee LaFleur, videographer Shun Liang, and Tufts University Professor Ninian Stein designed, filmed, and composed the **Royall House and Slave Quarters' first-ever virtual tour** —unveiled on February 24th.

A **complement** and **companion** for our on-site tour, our 38-minute virtual tour explores the interconnected and complex histories of the Royall family and the men, women, and children they enslaved through the lens of the often-forgotten history of Northern slavery and the North's role in the global slave trade.

Tour guide Lee LaFleur and videographer Shun Liang filming the Royall House and Slave Quarters virtual tour





In 2021, our virtual tour was a valuable way for us to partner with universities, libraries, nonprofits, and school programs. Its format also offers fresh and unique ways to communicate our story:

- ▶ Using creative graphics and maps, we can **situate our history** within the context of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the wider Atlantic world.
- ▶ Through **visually integrating primary sources** and archival documents, we can show the scholarship that underpins our interpretation.
- ▶ And, because the video is on demand, we can share our tour widely and **provide access to our history** without increasing the burden on our tour guides—reaching new audiences who were previously unable to access our site in-person.

Reminder: members can view the virtual tour at any time! Email us at contact@royallhouse.org to learn how.

If you haven't become a member yet, we also include our virtual tour in numerous webinars and Zoom events—keep an eye on our e-newsletter for opportunities to join a tour virtually.

Royall House kitchen
Royall House and Slave Quarters virtual tour

We are grateful to the Tides Foundation for their generous support of the video's production. The introductory video is also supported in part by a grant from the Medford Arts Council, a local commission that is supported by the Mass Cultural Council and the City of Medford.

With these new experiences and resources under in our arsenal, in 2022 we are focused on **relaunching our education program** with a range of fully virtual, in-person, and hybrid options.

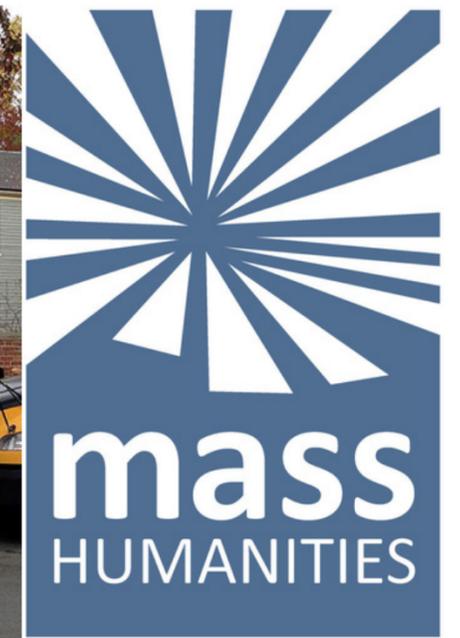
Our goal? Building deeper community outreach and onboarding a new part-time staff member: our Education Coordinator.

In the coming months, we seek to hire a part-time education coordinator committed to diversity, equity, and social justice, who will lead tours and in-person programs for students as well as adapt our existing programming for dynamic virtual and hybrid education.

Students viewing our virtual tour are welcomed by Executive Director, Kyera Singleton

Thanks to a "Sustaining the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan" grant from Mass Humanities, we have the resources to push our programs to the next level.

“**WITH SUPPORT FROM MASS HUMANITIES**, we are able to grow the vital corps of Royall House and Slave Quarters staff doing education and outreach work in a thoughtful way—increasing our hybrid and virtual programming, and enabling more authentic outreach.
—Kyera Singleton





AMPLIFYING VOICES

Panels on mass incarceration. Poetry readings. Art workshops. In the last two years, the Royall House and Slave Quarters has widened the diverse array of programs we offer not only to educate on the history of colonial slavery but also to discuss events that reflect the realities of the present—and allow us to imagine a better world.

One of our 2020-2021 goals? To **reach our participants where they are**. For the first time, our site live-streamed on-site programs, offered lectures and panels via Zoom, and built a repository of programs on our new YouTube account.

And, despite the closure of our museum to onsite visitors in March 2020, **our community has expanded beyond the physical limitations of our site**.

*Kyera Singleton and Dr. Malcolm Tariq
Poetry as Protest, June 2020*

Poetry events and performances help create not only empathy, but also awareness of the role art can play in making sense of difficult histories—and in our collective dreams of freedom.

In November 2020, **Boston poet laureate Porsha Olayiwola** shared **poetry-in-progress** rooted in the Black diaspora and imagery of water.

[WATCH NOW](#)

Porsha Olayiwola
Courtesy of Carlie Febo





Discussions around history at the Royall House and Slave Quarters reveal the legacies of the past in the present moment.

Renowned historian **Eric Foner**, DeWitt Clinton Professor Emeritus of History at Columbia University, spoke with us in March 2021 about the failed promises of Reconstruction, racial violence and democracy, and the **role of historical memory in the fight for social justice today.**

WATCH NOW

*Eric Foner, PhD
Courtesy of Columbia University*

The Royall House and Slave Quarters **uplifts the work of academics deeply engaged with the legacies and realities of slavery** from a historical perspective.

Together with the Robbins House and the Concord Museum, the RH&SQ co-sponsored MacArthur “Genius” Fellow and Harvard University Professor **Tiya Miles** for a book discussion at the Concord Museum on her latest work:

All that She Carried: the Journey of Ashley’s Sack, a Black Family Keepsake.

WATCH NOW

Tiya Miles, PhD

Photo by Kimberly P. Mitchell, Detroit Free Press





We partner with institutions to bring historical education into communities across New England.

Our partnership with the **Presidential Initiative on Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery at Harvard Radcliffe Institute** resulted in a number of engaging conversations—such as the fantastic one between Kyera Singleton and **Clint Smith**, author of *How the Word is Passed: a Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America* and staff writer at the *Atlantic*.

WATCH NOW

Clint Smith, PhD
Photo Credit: Carlotta Girma

The Royall House and Slave Quarters is taking part in national conversations about the interpretation of the history of slavery in the United States.

In November 2021, **Tsione Wolde-Michael**, curator at the Smithsonian's National Museum of American History, joined us to share her insights into the **complicated relationship with Black history and national belonging**.

Read her perspective in "Excluding Black Americans from our History Has Proved Deadly:"

[**READ NOW**](#)

Tsione Wolde-Michael
Courtesy of Smithsonian National Museum of American History



Overview of Our 2020-2021 Programs:

- ▶ Coffee and Conversation: Meet the Executive Director (May 14, 2020)
- ▶ Poetry as Protest with Dr. Malcolm Tariq (June 19, 2020)
- ▶ Acts of Rebellion & Envisioning a New Society: A Conversation with Drs. Vincent Brown and Timothy McCarthy (September 23, 2020)
- ▶ Poetry as Protest with Porsha Olayiwola (November 6, 2020)
- ▶ Five Minutes with Master Musician Balla Kouyaté (July 2020)
- ▶ Giving Voice: Poetry as Protest with Honorée Fanonne Jeffers (February 18, 2021)
- ▶ Giving Voice: The Unresolved Legacy of Reconstruction and the Fight for Social Justice Today with Eric Foner (March 31, 2021)
- ▶ Online film premiere for *The Slave Narrative of Willie Mae*, based on the book by multidisciplinary artist Ifé Franklin.
- ▶ Reckoning with Remembrance with Tsione Wolde-Michael (November 30, 2021)

A live performance by Balla Kouyaté
livestreamed from our site via Facebook Live in 2020

We are not a site that only talks about the "hard history"—we also partner with artists who are deeply invested in creating work about the history of slavery and the contested condition of freedom and social justice today for Black Americans.

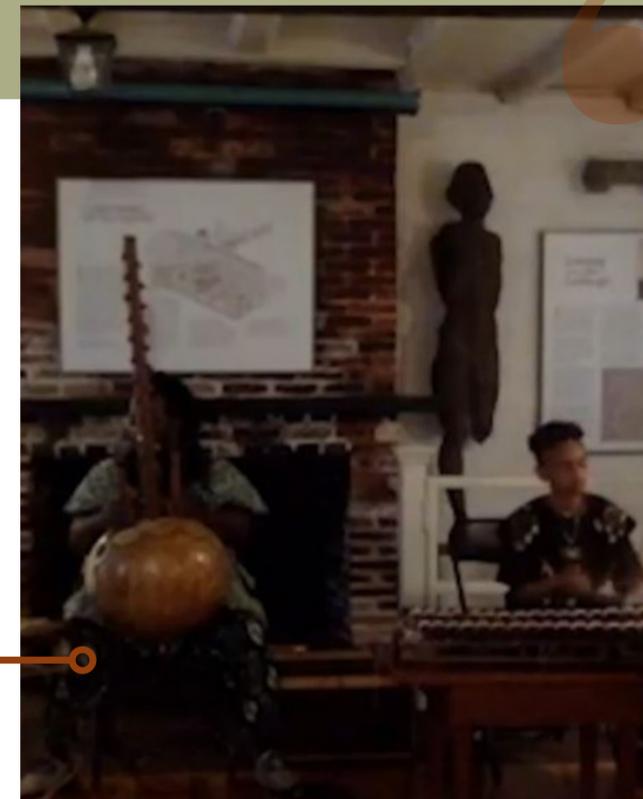
*Our 2020-2021 "Poetry as Protest" series encouraged participants to **explore social justice, history, and collective memory through the arts**—drawing virtual audiences of 500+ to each reading.*

**WE HAVE EXPLORED
VITAL, CREATIVE WORK**

thanks to the support of a 2020 New England Arts Resilience Grant through the New England Foundation for the Arts. They have enabled us to equitably engage artists of color to share their work at our site.

—Kyera Singleton

nafa
NEW ENGLAND FOUNDATION FOR THE ARTS



In 2020 and 2021, the Royall House and Slave Quarters also co-sponsored numerous community events, and participated in panels, workshops, and lectures with community partners:

- ▶ Kyera Singleton joined a panel, Can We Recover from the Pandemic While Becoming a More Equitable Society, at **GMA Foundations** (Summer 2020)
- ▶ In Residence: A Conversation with Kyera Singleton of Royall House and Slave Quarters, a program of **Mass Humanities** (October 7, 2020)
- ▶ Kyera Singleton spoke alongside Tiya Miles, John Stauffer, and Manisha Sinha at The Enduring Legacy of Slavery and Racism in the North, a program at the **Radcliffe Institute** for Advanced Study, Harvard University (October 8, 2020)
- ▶ An episode of podcast mini-series, “Public Health, Public History” from the **Institute for Thomas Paine Studies** featured executive director Kyera Singleton. Check out "Episode Three"!
- ▶ Kyera Singleton joined the conversation "Reckoning with History: A Discussion of Reparations" from the **Harvard Alumni Association**'s Unity Webinar Series (January 2021)
- ▶ Confronting Racial Injustice: Slavery, Wealth Creation, and Intergenerational Wealth, co-sponsored with **Massachusetts Historical Society** and **Northeastern University Law School**'s Criminal Justice Task Force (February 18, 2021)
- ▶ Kyera Singleton participated in a panel at the **New England Museum Association**'s annual conference: “Telling the Whole History: Enslaved Peoples’ History at Your Historic Site and Museum” (May 11, 2021)
- ▶ Kyera Singleton gave a talk at the **Malden Public Library**, “Telling Uncomfortable Histories: The Enduring Legacy of Slavery and Racism in the North” (May 12, 2021)
- ▶ Kyera Singleton spoke on a panel with **Revolutionary Spaces**, A New Space for Our Ideals: Revolutionary Era Buildings as Monuments (April 8, 2021)
- ▶ Confronting Racial Injustice—the Charles Stuart Story: White Lies and Black Lives, co-sponsored with **Massachusetts Historical Society** and **Northeastern University Law School**'s Criminal Justice Task Force (June 9, 2021)
- ▶ All that She Carried: A Conversation with Tiya Miles, co-sponsored with the **Concord Museum** and the **Robbins House Museum** (June 22, 2021)
- ▶ Kyera Singleton gave a lecture through the **Connecticut League of History Organizations**, Keynotes of Change (June 16, 2021)
- ▶ Kyera Singleton participated in Recounting Slavery in Historic Houses and Museums at the **Concord Museum** (February 2021)
- ▶ Kyera Singleton participated in a virtual roundtable, A Conversation on the Importance of Black Activism, with **Congresswoman Katherine Clark** (February 2021)

- ▶ Confronting Racial Injustice: Redlining: From Slavery to \$8 in 400 Years, co-sponsored with **Massachusetts Historical Society** and **Northeastern University Law School's** Criminal Justice Task Force (March 11, 2021)
- ▶ Racial Inequality and Housing Instability in Boston: Past, Present, and Future, co-sponsored with the Presidential Initiative on Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery at the **Radcliffe Institute** (April 2021)
- ▶ Confronting Racial Injustice: The War on Drugs in Massachusetts, co-sponsored with **Massachusetts Historical Society** and **Northeastern University Law School's** Criminal Justice Task Force (May 19, 2021)
- ▶ Kyera Singleton spoke at "Diggin' In: How Can We Tell a Complex Story of Slavery in the North," held at the **Massachusetts Archaeological Society** (May 5, 2021)
- ▶ "Juneteenth: A Celebration of Joy, Empowerment, and Healing," co-sponsored by **Massachusetts General Hospital's** Department of Radiology Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee (June 18, 2021)
- ▶ Co-sponsored program, Reading Frederick Douglass Together (July 2, 2021)
- ▶ Virtual Radcliffe Book Talks: Clint Smith, co-sponsored with the Presidential Initiative on Harvard and the Legacy of Slavery at the **Radcliffe Institute** (July 13, 2021)
- ▶ Co-sponsored program "Force and Freedom: Black Abolitionists and the Politics of Violence," featuring Kellie Carter Jackson (July 13, 2021)
- ▶ Slavery at Roxbury's Shirley Place: A Working Report, co-sponsored with the **Shirley-Eustis House Association** (October 12, 2021)
- ▶ Co-sponsored a three-part series "Crossroads in Community: What 'Then' Says to Us 'Now'" with the **Medford Historical Society & Museum**, and the **West Medford Community Center**.

Lectures included "Royall House & Slave Quarters Virtual Tour: A View of the African American Presence in Colonial Medford" (October 21, 2021); "West Medford, Then and Now: A Roundtable Conversation with Members of the Local Community" (October 29, 2021); and "Pride and Poetry of the Ville: An Evening with Medford's Poet Laureate and Friends" (November 5, 2021).
- ▶ "Poets on Craft: Interrogating Legacies of Slavery", co-sponsored with the **Cave Canem Foundation** (November 3, 2021)



We are **taking part in growing national and global conversations** around the history and memory of slavery, ensuring the mission of RH&SQ is heard beyond the bounds of our physical site. In the last two years, we were invited to participate in three projects that shape the landscape of memory in the City of Boston:

Last fall, the **Middle Passage and Port Marker Boston Partnership** installed a permanent marker on Long Wharf acknowledging Boston as a port of entry for enslaved Africans. On the advisory committee, Executive Director Kyera Singleton took part in ensuring the marker reflects the realities of life in central Boston, and assisted with outreach to local organizations and communities engaging with remembrance.

In August 2021, the marker was dedicated in a reverent and moving ceremony that included a reading of a poem by Kyera and L'Merchie Frazier of the Museum of African American History- Boston and Nantucket. Jazz Dottin, host of Black Gems Unearthed, an educational video series about Black history in Massachusetts, created [this 18-minute video of the ceremony's highlights](#). Kyera noted, **“Visitors have to contend with the fact that the beauty of [Boston’s] waterfront is tied to the history of slavery, and we cannot separate the two.”**

*Kyera Singleton and L'Merchie Frazier
read aloud at the Long Wharf Ceremony
[Photo Courtesy of Jazz Dottin](#)*

In March 2021, Kyera Singleton was invited to participate in the **Boston Public Library's** outreach committee for the **Anti-Slavery Collection Campaign**. ◀

Working with the library to increase awareness of the invaluable archival resources in the Collection, Kyera is one of six academic and community partners strategizing outreach to libraries, higher education, and museums.

Kyera Singleton is one of the public historians advising **Faneuil Hall's forthcoming ground-floor exhibit on slavery in Boston** through the City of Boston's Archaeology Department. ◀

As part of a community advisory group, Kyera conducts community outreach, participates in conversations about the exhibit's lens and messaging, and shares advice from our experience using artifacts to tell the story of slavery at the Royall House and Slave Quarters.

We are excited to build on this momentum in 2022.

Faneuil Hall in Boston, Mass.
Photo Credit: [Kevin Rutherford](#)





PRESERVING THE FOUNDATION OF OUR MISSION

Maintaining two eighteenth-century buildings requires vigilance and regular upkeep. In the last two years, we have undertaken many significant restoration projects with the help of our donors, volunteers, members, and dedicated staff:

Led by the skilled team at Window Woman of New England, we **removed most of the 66 wooden windows in both museum buildings for intensive off-site restoration** in 2020, repaired some of the newer windows “in situ,” and did minor carpentry and painting repairs.

*"Window Woman" Alison Hardy repairs a window in the mansion in situ
Courtesy of Gracelaw Simmons*

During our preservation work, we take every opportunity we can to restore the Royall House and Slave Quarters to their original appearance using historic methods. ◀

In spring 2021, we learned the Slave Quarters' asphalt roof and brick chimney were failing, about two years earlier than anticipated. With support from Preserve Medford, our city's Community Preservation Act Committee, and our community of donors, the chimney was repaired this summer —and we took the opportunity to **restore the Slave Quarters' roof to its original cedar shingle construction** for the first time since 1915.



Wooden shingle roof in progress
Courtesy of Tom Lincoln



OUR ROOF TODAY!

Wooden shingle roof complete
Image courtesy of Kevin Grady/Radcliffe
Institute at Harvard University





- ▶ In addition, we conducted timely routine repairs to our masonry—such as the brick wall that divides our property from the nearby city park—and to the clapboard siding on the Slave Quarters in 2020.

Preventative repairs are important not just to maintain the integrity and appearance of our buildings, but also to identify other preservation concerns before they become critical, so they can be addressed.

Our physical landscape plays a vital role in illustrating our history for all visitors.

Few sites have the same ability to tell and show the history of colonial slavery in New England as the Royall house and Slave Quarters, and every dollar donated or hour volunteered towards our preservation needs ensures we can continue to educate future generations about the history and legacies of slavery in the North.

The team at Murray Masonry & More repairs our brick masonry on-site.

With that in mind, we put out an urgent call for help last year—and it was answered, loud and clear:

During the routine maintenance to the Slave Quarters' clapboard siding in 2020, we discovered that the building's sill—which supports the weight of the building on its brick foundation—had **deteriorated and required immediate restoration.**

Further, the timing of this discovery coincided with the closure of our 2020 tour season and on-site school trips for COVID-19, resulting in an unprecedented loss of revenue.

Murray Masonry & More
inspects the Slave Quarters' foundation—on which the sill rests



In July 2020, we launched a GoFundMe campaign to fund these unexpected and unbudgeted repairs.

Our calling was answered beyond our expectations, as both old friends and new joined in to ensure we could preserve our most vital resource: the only known freestanding Slave Quarters in the Northeast.

Ultimately, **we raised nearly double our original goal**—from more than 500 individual supporters!—for a total of \$38,000.



\$38,195 of \$20,000 goal

Raised by 520 people in 1 month

Join

Share

Created July 17, 2020



Armed with new resources, we hired Murray Masonry & More to complete the foundation work in August 2020.

In September 2020, preservation carpenter John Watson completed the restoration of the building's sill, drawing on his extensive knowledge of eighteenth-century construction techniques.

The Royall House and Slave Quarters is proud to be a place where a **community of passionate people can make such a difference** by choosing to join us in our mission. Much of our preservation work is funded by grants and individual donations from community members like you.

These are just a few of the dedications and messages left by our donors:

"Black Lives Matter!"

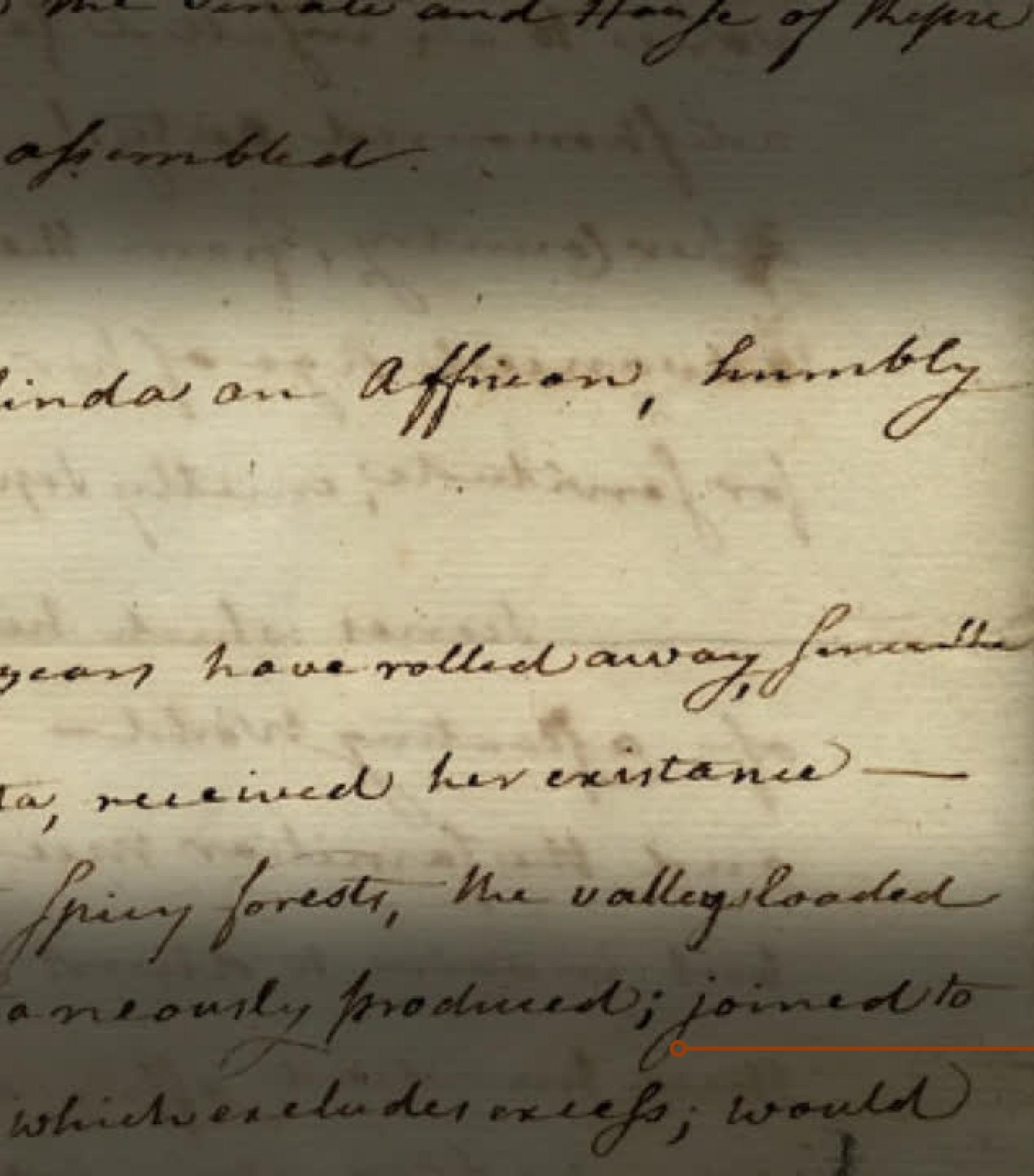
"Thank you for keeping this history alive"

"The Royall site connects our past with our present. THANK YOU"

"In memory of those who toiled at the Royall House"

"Because this is the truth"

John Watson completes repairs on the Slave Quarters' sill



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In 2020 and 2021, with our site closed to the public, we invested significant time considering our interpretation, research, and scholarship. **We are committed to continually learning more about those enslaved at the Royall House and Slave Quarters through research** and have taken a renewed focus on this work into 2022.

Now, this tenet of our mission feels particularly relevant. Over the last year, we have witnessed contentious conversations around Confederate statues, critical race theory in schools, and the names of public buildings and spaces.

In 2021, Medford took part in these debates over the renaming of Columbus Elementary School. After students suggested renaming the school after Belinda Sutton, a woman enslaved by the Royall family, some residents questioned her existence and the significance of slavery to Medford.

*Belinda's petitions
Royall House and Slave Quarters virtual tour*

Through thinking expansively about the world of enslaved people in Medford and beyond, we seek to counteract the “silence of the archive,” unearthing new stories to humanize and complicate our audience’s understanding of this history.

For the first time since the 2001 archaeological dig on-site led by Dr. Alexandra Chan, **we are conducting novel research to learn more about those enslaved at our site:**

Working with graduate research students, we will conduct extensive archival research that goes “against the grain,” working to tease out new details and **identify additional documentation that may have historically been overlooked**, such as church records, newspaper ads, and court records. ◀

By **asking new questions**—such as which merchants the Royalls used to purchase items like shoes for enslaved people—we also hope to uncover new material that offers a larger picture of enslaved people and the worlds they inhabited.

2001 archaeological dig at
the Royall House and Slave Quarters



- ▶ Using our additional archival sources, we then plan to **trace the last-known people enslaved by the Royalls**, using genealogical research to find evidence of their actions after their enslavement ended, and their descendants.

Our goal? To begin a conversation about slavery and freedom that extends beyond Medford into neighboring communities like Boston, Cambridge, and Malden.

Beginning in March 2022, our research team will convene to finalize the planning stage of this effort: determining what resources the RH&SQ already holds; surveying the existing research, to avoid re-treading ground; and drafting a research road map.

What documents have been newly published in archives in the last fifteen years that might shed new light?

Who are the enslaved people we want to focus on first, and what records should we search for?

Aabid Allibhai ○

*Building a collaborative research team is already underway. The Royall House and Slave Quarters welcomed **Aabid Allibhai** in 2020 as a part-time graduate student researcher.*

Aabid is a PhD candidate in Harvard University's African and African-American Studies program, and has previously completed research into the people enslaved by Governor Shirley and his daughter, Elizabeth Shirley Hutchinson.

One of the primary contributions of Aabid's efforts will be a working report on slavery at the RH&SQ that documents the research process, compiles findings, and identifies next research steps for this ongoing project.



I'M EXCITED TO WORK WITH THE ROYALL HOUSE AND SLAVE QUARTERS

to explore the intimate lives of enslaved people and embed their stories into larger narratives of colonial and revolutionary New England.

—Aabid Allibhai



The findings compiled by this research team will touch every part of our work at the Royall House and Slave Quarters, from tours to onsite exhibits and collections, rethinking and refreshing how we talk about slavery—not only at our museum, but also in Medford and the greater Boston region as whole.

Our **ultimate goals** would also encompass creation of a new, self-guided outdoor exhibit to extend the museum's onsite experience beyond our guided tours; outreach to descendent communities; and digital resources to enhance our regional understanding of slavery.

By telling new stories, conducting new research, and building stronger relationships with descendent communities, we aim to ensure no one will ever question Belinda Sutton's existence or the existence of slavery in Medford again.

*The Slave Quarters out-kitchen
Royall House and Slave Quarters virtual tour*

In addition to leading our own scholarship at the Royall House and Slave Quarters, we are participating in research partnerships with other organizations throughout the greater Boston area:

Through **Tufts University's African American Trail Project**, led by **Dr. Kerri Greenidge** and **Dr. Kendra Field** of Tufts, **Kyera Singleton** and **Mary McNeil**, PhD candidate at Harvard University and new member of our Board of Trustees, are advancing the body of scholarship on slavery in Medford, Massachusetts.

This collaborative team is building a **database of all people enslaved and freed in Medford** with an eye to offering dynamic resources to students of all ages and educators interested in leading this conversation at their own schools.



Above: Mary McNeil

At right: Kyera Singleton
Courtesy of Nicole Loeb, [Macalester Today](#)

**AFRICAN AMERICAN
TRAIL PROJECT SITE**

Expanding the story of northern slavery is a sprawling, intensive undertaking—albeit a critically impactful and rewarding one.

To complete this work, we are hiring highly-qualified research staff to partner with us with support from a grant through Mass Humanities.



HISTORY BELONGS TO THOSE WHO WRITE IT. Therefore, we are determined to learn more and lead the charge in

documenting the lives and contributions of Black people to begin a process of breaking the stereotypes that silence them in the historical record.

—Kyera Singleton





We hope you enjoyed this update on what's been going on behind the scenes at the Royall House and Slave Quarters in the last two years—and we can't wait to tell you more.

In the meantime, follow us on social media to keep up to date on all things RH&SQ, and please: join us as a member, come to a program, sign up for our e-newsletter, or join a cleaning day!

We love hearing from you.



[TWITTER](#)



[FACEBOOK](#)



[SIGN UP FOR OUR E-NEWS](#)

[SUPPORT OR JOIN](#)

*Street entrance of the Slave Quarters
Courtesy of Kevin Grady/Radcliffe Institute
at Harvard University*