

Friend-

Thank you for opening the Mass Humanities Annual Report for 2023. The report reflects the work unfolding across Massachusetts as more communities turn to the humanities to build a more equitable future.

In 2023, the staff and board of directors of Mass Humanities traveled to every region of our state to engage with residents supported by our grants, programs, and partnerships. We heard from farmers and dancers, librarians and boatbuilders, each of them finding a way to serve their neighbors and seek their truths. Whether in documentary films or on the steps of town halls, the humanities grew more vibrant in 2023 because of the support of these local champions. We are grateful to share their accomplishments in this report.

Our grant-making reached new milestones, with more than \$2.3 million in funding provided to non-profit organizations. Through the support of Governor Healey, the legislature, and our allies at Mass Cultural Council, we helped to sustain staff and create new positions at grassroots organizations with small budgets and infinite supplies of ingenuity and courage. Major funding from the Barr Foundation enabled us to grow the diverse, intersectional field of storytelling that is reshaping our understanding of Massachusetts and its people. Supporters like you joined us to welcome longtime friends along with many new faces at the Governor's Awards in the Humanities.

We'll remember the school children who visited "Crossroads," the traveling exhibition we produced in partnership with the Smithsonian Institution and six humanities organizations in rural Massachusetts. More than 23,000 residents viewed the exhibition, 57% of them visiting their local library or museum for the first time. For the second straight year, forty communities hosted Reading Frederick Douglass Together events, forging new bonds and new ways to interpret Douglass's words. Participants in six cities embraced the opportunities offered by the Clemente Course in the Humanities, including a summit at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and a new summer writing initiative.

These accomplishments are possible because people like you understand that the power of culture is to shift power, to make resources and platforms available for people too often left out of the story of Massachusetts. Every day, we commit to bringing more people together to develop ideas and relationships that benefit their neighbors. This is the humanities we strive to sustain.

In 2024, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Mass Humanities. As we look back on a half-century of accomplishments, we are grateful to share this latest chapter in the foundation's history. Thank you for all that you do to make our story possible.

Best,



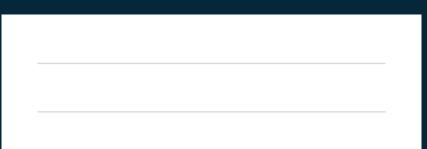
Brian Boyles
Executive Director



Dr. Yves Salomon-Fernández Board Chair



How will you join in?



Take a picture of your response and share it with us on social media using #MH50.

On the Cover: Nikki Turpin, Robbins House board president, and Anna Tucke executive director of the Framingham History Center, enjoy a portrait making activity at Mass Humanities' "The Futur of Storytelling" gathering; Clemente Worcester graduate.







CELEBRATING 50 YEARS OF MASS HUMANITIES

To commemorate five decades of public humanities work in Massachusetts, we set out to write a new chapter in our history, beginning with rolling out a new organizational brand and website in March. As part of this makeover, we debuted a brief yet powerful phrase on our homepage: Be Human.

What might seem obvious at initial glance is actually an invitation to participate in the transformative work of the public humanities. History, literature, philosophy, the arts, communication—they all have at their core a desire to uncover truths about our identities, communities, and lived experiences.

The insert you see here is both an epilogue of the past 50 years and a preamble for the next 50. It's a touchstone. A clean slate. A living archive. As you review a few highlights from our history, we encourage you to think about how you might participate in the next chapter of our story.

Revisiting the Mass Humanities Archive

Documentary filmmaker Lawrence Hott of Florentine Films recently sat down with us to share some insight into his body of work.

"I've really come to love what Mass Humanities does," says Hott, who, from 1978 to 2013, received funding from the organization for nine of his films. "People are starting to learn that this is where we go to get grants to help us talk to the community about issues that are important to us."

Hott's 1981 documentary *The Old Quabbin Valley* is featured in a forthcoming film produced by Mass Humanities that explores the topic of rural identity in Massachusetts.



Frederick Douglass in Context: Boston to Belfast

Mass Humanities hosted its first shared reading of Frederick Douglass' address "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" in Massachusetts on the Boston Common in 2009. A group of approximately 100 people gathered in the "free speech zone" at the foot of the monument to the 54th regiment. David Harris, at the time a board member of Mass Humanities, partnered with longtime Executive Director David Tebaldi, as well as Paul Marcus, the executive director of the nonprofit Community Change, to make the idea a reality.

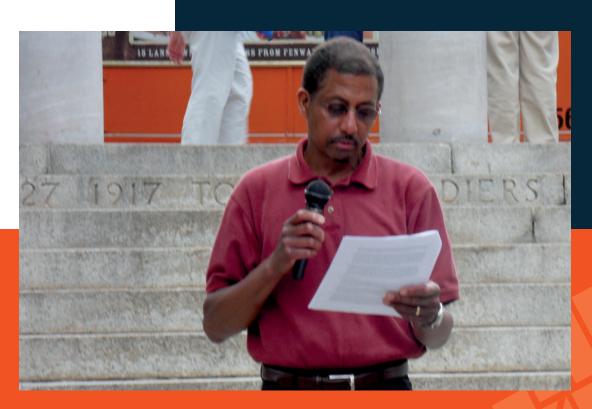
"We learned something at that first reading," says Harris. "The speech is the star. There's anonymity. It's not about the reader. And I think that that has become one of the strongest points of it."



Since that time, the Douglass program has blossomed, with 60 readings scheduled to take place in the Commonwealth in 2024. What's more, Douglass' legacy is attracting attention on a global scale, too. In March, a cohort of Mass Humanities staff, board, and partners traveled to Belfast, Northern Ireland, to participate in Douglass Week, a weeklong series of public symposia and readings dedicated to better understanding the orator's life and work. Anne Mattina and Desiree Taylor, two research fellows whose work was funded by Mass Humanities, presented original research on Douglass during a panel discussion.



Hott (center) interviews Warren Doubleday (right), a resident of historic Enfield before the town was flooded to create the Quabbin Reservoir



Dr. Toni McComb, board member, at the newly established statue of Douglass in Belfast.

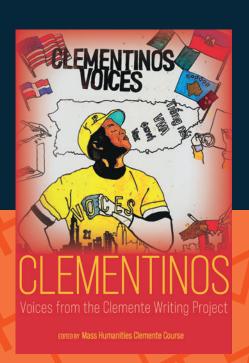






Clementinos: Voices from the Clemente Writing Project

Mass Humanities brought the Clemente Course in the Humanities to the Commonwealth in 1999. Since then, we have witnessed over 750 Massachusetts residents graduate from the program. In that time, we have also published two anthologies of student essays: This is Your Democracy (2021) and We, Too, Are America (2020). In 2024, we continue this tradition of providing a platform to Clemente students to narrate their histories and lived experiences with the publication of Clementinos: Voices from the Clemente Writing Project.



Linking Community Networks

Relationship building is a hallmark of the nonprofit cultural sector. As such, we set out to host several workshops and community gatherings this year, exploring the theme of "The Future of Storytelling." Grantees, board and former board members, staff, community partners, and legislators came together to reflect on this question and imagine a more just and equitable Commonwealth for the future.

"We decided as a board, and with Brian's focus on really embracing all and making a place for belonging, that having these convenings would be very significant," said Erin Williams, secretary of the board. "Really what it's about is that active listening, engagement, and learning from each other."



Logos Through the Years

Late 1970s



1990



2020



2024



Grantees, staff, board, community partners, and local legislators gathered in March in Worcester for the first of three "The Future of Storytelling" receptions. Shown here: Board members Deb Hall and Erin Williams welcome the

Visit masshumanities.org for additional stories, interviews, and oral histories exploring 50 years of Mass Humanities.

CHAMPIONING THE STORYTELLERS

\$2.3M+ in total grants

Credit to Buy!
Police (sobo)



Our signature grants initiatives support public humanities programs hosted by museums, historic sites, libraries, education providers, and community centers. By funding this vital cultural work, we're laying the groundwork for achieving a more free and equitable society.

We also take pride in supporting the folks who keep the cultural nonprofit sector running each and every day —in 2023, we awarded \$1.2 million in Staffing Recovery Grants to 35 organizations, thanks to the support of Mass **Cultural Council.**



-Erika Slocumb, historian

Slocumb worked with Megan Seiler, director of Wistariahurst Museum, on Reliquary of Blackness: Sustaining the Humanities in Holyoke. The project was funded by a 2023 Sustaining the Humanities through the American Rescue Plan (SHARP) grant. Their goal was to create an oral history of the city that moved beyond perspectives of wealthy mill owners to explore the experiences of Black citizens. Still by Evan Goodchild.



Watch Reliquary of Blackness by scanning the QR code.

2023 Grantees

BERKSHIRES

Becket Athenaeum Berkshire Pride **Bushnell-Sage Library** Plainfield Reads

CAPE AND ISLANDS

Aguinnah Cultural Center

The Generations Project

The Helene Johnson and **Dorothy West Foundation for** Artists In Need

Migrant Communities Project

Twenty Summers

Wellfleet Historical Society & Museum

CENTRAL

The Armenians of Whitinsville

Athol Public Library

IDEAL4Gifted

Literacy Volunteers of Greater Worcester

NAACP Worcester

OurStory Edutainment

Rutland Free Public Library

The Village Afrocentric **Cultural Center**

Worcester County Poetry Association

Worcester Roots

CONNECTICUT RIVER VALLEY

American Farmland Trust Amherst Historical Society

Blues to Green

Common Wealth Murals

Cummington Cultural District

Doctorbird

Friends of the Great Falls **Discovery Center**

Holyoke Community College Foundation

KlezCummington

Local Access to Valley Arts (The LAVA Center)

Love Art Collective

Martin Luther King Jr. Family Services

Michelle Falcón Fontánez (filmmaker)

Mount Calvary Baptist Church

Museum of Our Industrial

Nueva Esperanza

Ohketeau Cultural Center

Piti Theatre Company

Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association

Porter-Phelps-Huntington Foundation

Springfield Dementia Friendly Coalition

Town of Longmeadow **Public Schools**

Transhealth

University of Massachusetts Amherst

GREATER BOSTON

BAMS Fest

The Boston Home

Brookline For The Culture

Cambridge Black History Project

Chinatown Community Land Trust

Different Threads of the Same Fabric

Downtown Boston Partnership

Everyday Boston

Friends Group of Egleston Square Branch Library

Gibson House Museum

Guerilla Opera

H.E.R.O. Nurturing Center

History Cambridge

The History Project: **Documenting LGBTQ Boston**

Jamaica Plain **Historical Society**

The Jar

The League of Women for Community Service

Madison Park Development Corporation

Massachusetts Historical Society

Network for Social Justice

Northeastern University Old Parish Preservation

Volunteers Partnership of the Historic

Bostons

The Proprietors of the Boston

Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy

Roxbury Cultural District

Shirley-Eustis House Association

Simmons University

Somerville Museum

South End Technology Center

Slave Legacy History Coalition VOICES 21C

METRO WEST

African Cultural Services

Athina Education

Dedham Historical Society

Forbes House Museum

Medway Marches Incorporated

Natick Historical Society

The Robbins House

Royall House and Slave

Quarters The Thoreau Society

Watch City Arts

West Medford

Community Center

NORTHEAST

ActiveVista Media

Andover Center for History & Culture

Angkor Dance Troupe

Beverly Historical Society Boston Comic Arts Foundation

Bread & Roses Heritage Committee

Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association

Cape Ann Museum

Do-it-Yourself (DIY) Lowell

Essex Historical Society & Shipbuilding Museum

Friends of the 1836 Meeting House

Haverhill Historical Society, **DBA Buttonwoods Museum**

Heathmere Center for Cultural Engagement

Historical Society of Old Newbury

The Latino Leadership Coalition

Lawrence History Center

Marblehead Museum

Massachusetts Center for Native American Awareness

Newburyport **Preservation Trust**

Association

North Shore Juneteenth

Peabody Institute Library - City of Peabody

University of Massachusetts Lowell

United Lynn Pride

SOUTHEAST

Bristol Black Collective

Cape Code Cape Verdean Museum and Cultural Center

Casa Dos Acores da Nova Inglaterra

Creative Arts Network

Hull Livesaving Museum

Indigenous Peoples Network

Marion Art Center **New Bedford Fishing**

Heritage Center Old Colony Historical Society

Raising Multicultural Kids Sharon Historical Society

EXPAND MASSACHUSETTS STORIES

\$750,000+

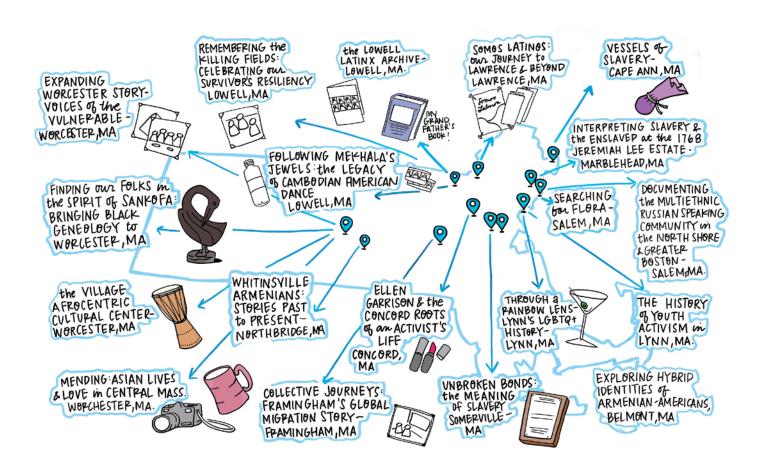
in funding for EMS grantees

42 cultural organizations supported

Expand Massachusetts Stories (EMS) grants are designed to spotlight narratives from individuals, cultures, and communities that have been historically excluded from public history. Through oral histories, documentary films, museum exhibitions, education programs, and many other formats, our grantees celebrate their lived experiences while also creating safe spaces for others to learn about, engage with, and build solidarity with cultures different than their own.







Christle Rawlins-Jackson, Susi Ryan, and IlaSahai Prouty, all members of Sisters in Stiches Joined by the Cloth, work on Vessels of Slavery, an art installation project uncovering the history of slavery in Gloucester, Massachusetts. The installation is on view at Cape Ann Museum in Gloucester. of supported projects were led by people

65%

of organizations had annual operating budgets of less than \$300,000

15

organizations received Advancing Equity Track grants, which support first-time grantees with projects led by people from historically excluded communities

(Opposite) A small sample of EMS projects taking place around the state. Illustration by Jessica Beasley.

EMS Grantees

CAPE & ISLANDS

Migrant Communities Project

The Generations Project
Twenty Summers

CENTRAL

OurStory Edutainment The Village Afrocentric Cultural Center

CT RIVER VALLEY

American Farmland Trust Amherst Historical Society

Common Wealth Murals Doctorbird

Love Art Collective

Michelle Falcón Fontánez

Mount Calvary Baptist Church

Museum of Our Industrial Heritage

Ohketeau Cultural Center

Piti Theatre Company

Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association

Porter-Phelps-Huntington Foundation

Springfield Dementia Friendly Coalition

Town of Longmeadow Public Schools

Transhealth

GREATER BOSTON

Cambridge Black History Project

Chinatown Community Land Trust

Different Threads of the Same Fabric

Massachusetts Historical Society

Northeastern University Rose Kennedy Greenway

The Boston Home

The Proprietors of the Boston Athenaeum

Voices 21C

Conservancy

METRO WEST

The Robbins House
West Medford
Community Center

NORTHEAST

ActiveVista Media

Angkor Dance Troupe

Cambodian Mutual Assistance Association

Cape Ann Museum

Marblehead Museum

Newburyport Preservation Trust

The Latino Leadership Coalition

United Lynn Pride

University of

Massachusetts Lowell Indigenous Peoples Network

SOUTHEAST

New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center

READING FREDERICK DOUGLASS TOGETHER

40

events across the Commonwealth in 2023

Research Fellows conducted original research into Douglass' life

"Allow me to say, in conclusion, notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country. There are forces in operation, which must inevitably work the downfall of slavery. I, therefore, leave off where I began, with hope."

-Frederick Douglass, excerpt from "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?"

Frederick Douglass was renowned during his lifetime for his public speech making and oration. His famous 1852 address, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?", is a prime example of classical rhetoric at work. He draws in his listeners gradually, praising the American Revolution and acknowledging the sea change taking place in the United States. Then, he systematically exposes the injustices that lay at the heart of American democracy, citizenship, and human rights. Notably, however, Douglass ends his address on a note of hope.

"The effect of that is, in a way, to force you to think about doing better," says former board member and chair David Harris, who helped co-found the Douglass program in 2009. "The psychology of it is just brilliant."

Mass Humanities hosted its first formal shared reading Douglass's speech in 2009 within the "free speech zone" of the Boston Common, at the foot of the Robert Gould Shaw and Massachusetts 54th Regiment Memorial, which extols one of the first Black regiments of the American Civil War.

Readings in 2023

Athina Sudbury

Beverly Historical Society Beverly

Boston Partners
Boston

Bristol Black Collective Fall River

Brookline For The Culture *Brookline*

Cape Ann Museum Gloucester

Cape Cod Cape Verdean Museum and Cultural Center East Falmouth

Creative Arts Network Fall River

Downtown Boston Partnership Boston Friends of the 1836 Meeting House North Andover

Haverhill Historical Society, DBA Buttonwoods Museum Haverhill

The Helene Johnson and Dorothy West Foundation for Artists In Need Oak Bluffs

H.E.R.O. Nurturing Center *Boston*

Historic Northampton *Northampton*

Historical Society of Old Newbury Newburyport

Holyoke Community College Holyoke

IDEAL4Gifted Longmeadow Jamaica Plain Historical Society Jamaica Plain

Madison Park
Development Corporation
Roxbury

Martin Luther King Jr. Family Services Springfield

Marion Art Center Marion

Medway Marches Incorporated *Medway*

NAACP Worcester Worcester

Natick Historical Society Natick

Northshore Juneteenth Association Lynn Old Parish Preservation Volunteers

Peabody Institute Library Peabody

Plainfield Reads

Norwood

Porter-Phelps-Huntington Museum

Hadley
The Robbins House

Concord

Royall House and Slave

Quarters
Medford

Sharon Historical Society Sharon

Somerville Museum Somerville

Watch City Arts Waltham



CLEMENTE COURSE IN THE HUMANITIES

177

Clemente Cours

60

Clemente Course graduates in 2023

23

Summer cours participants

The Clemente Course in the Humanities champions opportunities for Massachusetts residents from historically and systemically excluded communities to engage with, discuss and author stories and ideas about our democracy. In addition to earning college credits from Bard College and local universities, Clemente participants draw upon their lived experiences to spark new ideas about historical texts; connect with neighbors about relevant civic issues ranging from LGBTQ rights to voting accessibility; author powerful anthologies; and take on leadership roles in their communities.

MUSEUM ON MAIN STREET

Our first ever collaboration with the Smithsonian Institution concluded in 2023, with the completion of the Museum on Main Street traveling exhibition tour. "Crossroads: Change in Rural America" was an installation designed to catalyze community conversations in rural towns about what rural life and identity looks like in the 21st century. All told, the exhibition sparked increases in visitors, volunteer hours, and community and school engagement in each of the six host sites. To sustain their work in 2024, host sites will receive additional funding from Mass Humanities to create more public programming about "crossroads" in rural America.



Community Partners

Brockton: Brockton Public Library

Dorchester (Boston): Codman Square Health Center

Holyoke: The Care Center New Bedford: PACE, Inc.

Springfield: Martin Luther King Jr. Family Services

Worcester: Worcester Art Museum, Worcester County Poetry Association, and Trinity Lutheran Church



9

counties participating

23k+

visitors (57% first

30 fr

free public programs 2k

ural students eached

"Word got out that it was the last day of the exhibit, and we had over 300 people come that day. It was just spectacular...setting attendance records...I still feel like that buzz has been growing at our center, too."

-Janel Knockleby, Visitor Services Supervisor, Great Falls Discovery Center

Host Sites

IN 2022

Essex Historical Society and Shipbuilding Museum, Essex Sept. 10-Oct. 22

The Hull Lifesaving Museum, Hull Oct. 30-Dec. 10

Rutland Free Public Library, Rutland Dec. 18–Jan. 28

IN 2023

Great Falls Discovery Center, Turners Falls Feb. 5-Mar. 18

Bushnell-Sage Library, Sheffield *Mar.* 26-May 5

Athol Public Library, Athol May 14-Jun. 24



GOVERNOR'S AWARDS IN THE HUMANITIES

Each year, Mass Humanities recognizes individuals whose public actions enhance civic life in the Commonwealth through a deep appreciation of the humanities. On September 28, 2023, more than 200 friends and supporters of Mass Humanities came together at the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum in Boston to celebrate the 2023 Governor's Awards in the Humanities honorees: Elizabeth Bacon, Margaret Burnham, Vanessa Calderón-Rosado, and Kumble Subbaswamy.

"It's taken me, today, to questions of redress and reparation, how we talk about, appreciate, and recover the past. Law alone will not get you there, you need the humanities to answer the large questions about how we deal with our past. You need philosophy, you need religion, you need art, you need music, you need drama, you need it all."

-Margaret Burnham, 2023 Governor's Award recipient



Honorees

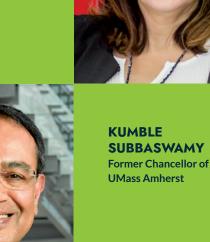
ELIZABETH BACONCoordinator of the Clemente Course in the Humanities, Worcester





MARGARET BURNHAM Distinguished Professor of Law at Northeastern University

VANESSA CALDERÓN-ROSADO CEO of Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción



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Thanks to our incredible sponsors, board, and community of supporters, we were able to exceed our fundraising goal, raising \$205,000 to support our grant initiatives and programs across the state.

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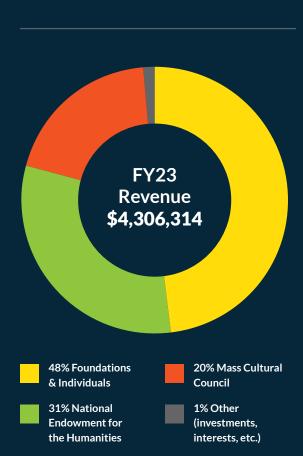
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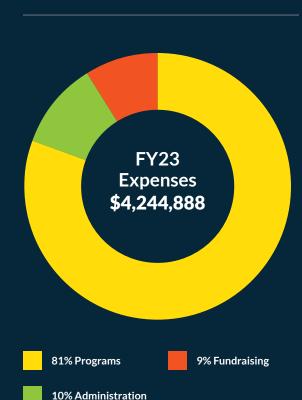
The Angkor Dance Troupe

performing at the 2023

Governor's Awards.

FINANCIALS





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Erin Williams

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Concord

Scott Casper

Worcester

Deborah Hall

Worcester

Candace Lee Heald

Mattapoisett

Lawrence R. Hott

Florence

Stephen Immerman

Salem

Imari Paris Jeffries

Boston

Dr. Michelle (Toni) McComb

Springfield

Kristin McGurn

Reading

Gage McWeeny

Williamstown

Michael Meltsner

Cambridge

Jacob Miller

New Bedford

Kyera Singleton

Somerville

Rajini Srikanth

Lexington

Aaron Vega

Holyoke



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