



BRISTOL MIDDLE PASSAGE PORT MARKER PROJECT

P.O. Box 871, Bristol, RI, 02809

bmppmp.org

info@bmppmp.org

History, Accomplishments and Budget

January 18, 2024

Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit community organization based in Bristol, RI, working to erect a memorial to acknowledge the history of Bristol's participation in the Transatlantic Human Trade and this trade's effects on African and Indigenous peoples. Our memorial will be a place of remembrance, reconciliation, healing and education for our town and its visitors and a prominent acknowledgement of the role of this trade in both our town's and our nation's history.

In this project we join many other communities across the Atlantic and Gulf coasts in remembering the role that their communities played in the Transatlantic Human Trade and we are collaborating with the national Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers Project as well as the Newport Middle Passage Ceremony and Port Marker project. This effort is also included under the UNESCO Routes of Enslaved Peoples Project.

Our project has received the support of the Bristol Town Council which has designated a prominent site in Independence Park on the Bristol waterfront on which our memorial will be erected.

Project Goals

As our mission statement says:

"The Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project seeks to acknowledge the history and memory of Bristol's participation in slavery and the Transatlantic Human Trade and its resounding effects on African and Indigenous peoples by erecting a memorial to honor those affected by this history and their contributions to our nation, and to serve as a site for educating people on this history and for hosting reconciliation and healing ceremonies."

We feel the solemn weight of this history and believe that Bristol, with its long-standing and proud tradition of recognizing the many ways in which our town has contributed to the history of the United States since long before its founding, is a perfect *and important* place in which to acknowledge the historic yet still ongoing effects of the Transatlantic Human Trade.

Our goal is to erect an artistically significant memorial designed and implemented by an individual or group of artists from the state of Rhode Island. Towards this goal, in May, 2023, we issued a Call for Artists which has been distributed to dozens of individual artists and artists' associations across the state of Rhode Island and which was published on our web site. We received multiple responses to this call and in September, 2023, we convened a jury of 5 independent and notable professionals from the Rhode Island arts and culture community to review the submissions and recommend three semi-finalists who were invited to submit detailed design proposals to be reviewed by board of directors. Models of these proposals will be displayed to the public at the Rogers Free Library in Bristol during December,

2023, and comments from the public will be solicited. We will select a single design finalist in early 2024 and will work with that artist to develop a final design and budget for the completion of the project.

Project History

The Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project started nearly ten years ago as a collaboration among a small group of local citizens who recognized the significance of Bristol's historic role in the Transatlantic Human Trade and sought some way to acknowledge it. Over the years our organization has grown and developed concrete plans for the completion of this project. We were incorporated in the State of Rhode Island in early 2023 and received our 501(c)(3) determination from the IRS in June of that year.

Our corporation is composed of a board of directors and elected officers operating under the terms of bylaws which were approved by vote of the full board of directors. All directors and officers serve without compensation. Our board includes notable members of our community, scholars, artists, and professionals.

In June, 2022, we presented our proposal to the Bristol Town Council which approved our site on the Bristol waterfront. In January, 2023, we erected a temporary sign at the memorial site proudly declaring our intent to erect the monument. And on February 25, 2023, we held a dedication ceremony at the memorial site which was attended by our State Senator and State Representative, Town Council Members, representatives of the Newport Middle Passage and the Rhode Island Slave History Medallions projects, and many members of the community and our board. Since the designation of our site, the Bristol Town Council has assigned a council member to serve as liaison to our project and we plan to work closely with the town council in completing the project.

In May, 2023, the Bristol Middle Passage Project announced a Call for Artists inviting artists from across Rhode Island to submit proposals for the design of the Middle Passage Memorial. Multiple submissions were received and in September, 2023, we convened a jury of five independent members of the Rhode Island art and performance community to select three finalists. These finalists were asked to submit detailed design proposals and budgets to the Bristol Middle Passage Project board.

In November, 2023, the finalist artists' proposals were received and in December models of the proposals were placed on display in the Rogers Free Library in Bristol. The public is invited to view and submit comments on the proposals and a final design will be announced in early 2024.

Community Activities

In August, 2023 the Bristol Middle Passage Project sponsored a commemoration for the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the International Slave Trade, a United Nations sponsored event, at Independence Park in Bristol, RI. Noted Rhode Island historian Keith Stokes spoke at the event as well as Bernard Freamon, Bristol Middle Passage president and Director the Roger Williams University Law School Program on Race and the Foundations of American Law. This event was attended by Town Council members, State Legislators and numerous members of the public.

In September, 2023 the Bristol Middle Passage Project co-sponsored with Saint Michael's Church in Bristol and lecture on the history of slavery in Rhode Island by noted Rhode Island historian and former Executive Director of the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation, Keith Stokes. This event was

held at the Saint Michael's Church Parish Hall and was attended by many members of the congregation and of the Bristol community.

In December, 2023, artists' models for proposed Middle Passage Memorial design were put on display at the Rogers Free Library in Bristol and members of the public were invited to provide their comments. We received almost 200, overwhelmingly positive, comments from the public over the month of December. This input was used in the Board's selection of the final design.

February, 2024. The Bristol Middle Passage Project will host a fundraising event at Pivotal Brewing in Bristol at which the final design selection is publicly announced and where a number of notable public figures and the winning artist will speak.

Further educational and fundraising events are planned for early 2024.

Fundraising Donations and Grants

Since announcing the site of our memorial, we have initiated a fundraising campaign both invitations for donations from the Bristol community and applications for grant funding from local and national sources.

We have already received over \$30,000 in grants from private foundations and private donations. In addition, we have received grants for \$500.00 from the Town of Bristol and from the Rhode Island State Legislature and anticipate additional government support in the future. We plan to continue our fundraising campaign by holding a major fundraising event in the winter with more to follow in 2024.

Budget Requirements

Having completed the selection of the winning design proposal in January 2024, we now have a clear understanding of our budget requirements. Although negotiations on details of the design and its costs are continuing, we anticipate expenses of approximately \$200,000. As we enter into the installation phase we may incur additional costs related to engineering assessments, installation and landscaping.

create a model which will be on display at Rogers Free Library for the month of December. The public will have the opportunity to weigh in on the final choice, as the Project committee has strived for transparency throughout this process.

Here's a snapshot of each of the artists vying to create the sculpture.

Spencer Evans

Providence-based artist Spencer Evans is a figurative draftsman, painter and sculptor who aims to tell detailed stories by using the imagery of specific moments. His choice of clothing and dramatic poses and facial expressions in the work is used to reference shared experiences rooted in identity and culture within the Black American community.

He sees Black expression as a heroic form of communication from one generation to the next — it has existed despite direct violent opposition since his ancestors were brought to American shores. "My work is free for any and everyone to witness and enjoy our songs of joy and pain; however, I am speaking to those who know," he wrote in a statement. "The descendants of the unfadeable."

Evans is a three-time Webby Award winner, two-time Cannes Lion award winner, two-time Design & Art Direction winner, two-time ADC Gold Award Winner, and a Campaign Media "Power of Purpose" Gold Award winner. Evans is also an Assistant Professor of Drawing at the Rhode Island School of Design and serves as Programs Head of the Experimental Foundations Studies Division.

"I am infinitely inspired by the wondrous attributes of my people — from the brilliantly powerful resilience and creativity of my ancestors to the unfathomable giftedness of our youth," Evans wrote. "My love and respect for our cyclically triumphant existence guides me through my creative expression of our stories. My artistic practice is a series of attempts at telling those stories with every ounce of vibrating flare whether its electricity is above or beneath the surface — and I request the help of my ancestors in every attempt at getting it right. This is my direction with this project and every other story I am tasked with telling."

Deborah Spears Moorehead

Spears Moorehead wears a lot of hats: internationally known fine artist, sculptor, author, historian, entrepreneur, Native American consultant, storyteller, composer, and performer. A member of the Seaconke Pokanoket Wampanoag Tribal Nation of Massachusetts and Rhode Island, she is a direct descendant of Massasoit.

In 2021 Spears Moorehead was invited to be the Artist in Residency at Brown University where she created a four panel mural addressing colonial and contemporary issues of racism.

Her art is on exhibit throughout 2023 at The Mashantucket Pequot Museum gallery; she is one of Bunker Hill Community College's Distinguished Scholar and Artist in Residency for 2023; and she recently finished two embellished original murals that will be on permanent display in the entrance of the Quinnipiac Valley Museum in Guilford, Connecticut.

To name just a few of her projects and honors, in 2019, Spears Moorehead painted two murals in Providence, Rhode Island. The first one is a 16 foot “Land Acknowledgement Mural” on Cypress Street. The second one is the “The Providence River Mural” funded by a Sites and Stories Grant from the Providence Preservation Society. The Providence River Mural was displayed at Providence City Hall in January 2021. She was awarded a 2019 Master/Apprentice Grant from the Rhode Island State Council on the Arts, and a “Princess Redwing Arts Award by The Tomaquaug Museum in 2020.

Also in 2020 she collaborated with artist Alison Newsome on a sculptural piece for the Art, Culture and Tourism Department of the City of Providence’s PVD fest called “The Three Sisters.”

This fall Deborah will be exhibiting her work at the Mystic Seaport Museum. In 2021, Deborah completed two community and historic murals for non profits: one in Wakefield for the Collective Museum and another for The Nolumbeka Project of Turner Falls, Mass.

Deborah Baronas and Greg Spiess

This husband and wife team have worked together on a multitude of projects. “We bring both artistic and architectural skill sets to these efforts,” they said in a statement.

Their first commission together was the design for ticket centers and graphics for venues for the Los Angeles Olympics. Locally they recently designed seven sculptural installations at the new Rhode Island Veterans Home in Bristol.

Deborah studied textile design and painting at the Rhode Island School of Design. After working in New York City, Los Angeles and Europe as a Creative Director in the textile industry, she moved back to Rhode Island and began work as a design consultant and fine artist.

Based on her own work experience and family heritage, she explores the condition of the American worker and landscape, Baronas designs site-specific installations that produce interactive environments incorporating painting, translucent panels in glass and textiles, music and video. Her work is based on personal interviews, portraits of her subjects and archival materials.

Greg is an architect working in the East Bay with a variety of experiences on the East and West coasts as well as assignments in the Middle East and the Pacific. A former adjunct faculty at the Roger Williams University School of Architecture and University of Southern California, where he graduated, he has always had an interest in world affairs, public spaces and has done post-graduate studies in Urban Planning and enjoys site planning and innovative strategies in environmental design.

He is currently working with JHLTecture in Bristol on a variety of projects including the Unity Park renovations, the downtown outdoor dining plans, Rogers Free Library and historical adaptive reuse projects in Bristol and many other sites throughout New England.

Spencer E. Evans

Our Ancestors Come With Us

It is with great enthusiasm and honor that I accept being chosen as the artist for the Bristol Memorial sculpture. I am an experienced artist and currently an Asst. Professor at Rhode Island School of Design in the Experimental Foundation Studies program.

I am also a direct descendant of enslaved African people. My sculpture design is dedicated to my own ancestors, but most importantly it is in the spirit of the ancestors of all African and Indigenous peoples who were severely impacted by the practice of human bondage.

I have a great interest and desire for community reconciliation. I understand the impact that monumentalism has on the societies it inhabits. Monuments and memorials serve as an inverted time capsule that allows viewers to pass through and around them-inviting them into a glimpse of a particular time and circumstance despite the fact that everything surrounding them is constantly changing. Memorials offer the opportunity for the viewer to slow down and consider the messages that history may be giving them; while this interaction takes place, time itself seems to slow down within it. I find it important to reference time and space with regard to this project because both them have proven to be cyclical-which may have been a factor that birthed the need/desire for a marker to serve as a new spark of reconciliation for this generation *and* reminder for the next.

In my public art practice, it is part of my process to converse with the community members who are intended to be represented in the work before any of the work begins. This helps me to add layers to my approach, which serve as respect and recognition for those directly connected to the finished piece. The layers also serve as rewarding communication to any and everyone who spends more time interacting with them as the layers reveal themselves with further investigation.

My concept for the Bristol Memorial is based in the love and respect for my ancestors who endured the Middle Passage as well as a life in bondage long enough to be emancipated, which resulted in generations of descendants being able to live and thrive on this land today. For ethnic context, most of the Africans in bondage in New England were brought over from the Caribbean-over 70% of their enslaved population was from the region known as the D.R. of Congo, with the remaining population spread across the further West African coastal region. My concept is also rooted in the same respect for the ancestors and descendants of Pokanoket people who lived in harmony with this land before any of us. Due to this love and respect, this project will *not* depict trauma. Our people are much more than stories of suffering, both of these groups have rich cultural identities without the lens of oppression *and* in spite of it. The context of the hardships endured will reveal itself through the layers. The ancestors will be depicted with their true identity intact. Visually, the monument will include 3 bronze figures-two adults and one child. Both adult figures will have their bodies facing the Bristol Harbor, the first will be a woman. The position of her body will serve as a metaphor for the Pokanoket women who stood at the Cliffs of Sorrow waiting for their stolen families to return. The second figure, a man, will symbolize every African ancestor and descendent who possesses the viscerally sensational reminder that we are not in our home land. However, *both* their gazes will be fixed toward the child as the second points inland at the direction that the child is moving. The dynamically twisted posture of the adult figures will also symbolize the task of circumstantial endurance while possessing a radical love and hope for future generations despite their reality of living in bondage, displacement, and oppression.

Name: *Spencer Evans*

Phone Number: 713-291-7556

Email: spencerevansart@gmail.com

Website: spencerevansart.com

EDUCATION

2017 MFA University of Texas at Arlington. Arlington, TX

2009 BFA Drawing, Painting. University of Missouri, Columbia, MO

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

2019-Present Assistant Professor, Rhode Island School of Design. Providence, Rhode Island. Experimental Foundation Studies, Drawing Area

2018-19 Adjunct Professor, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX (courses taught: Life Drawing-Spring 2018, Beginning Painting-Summer 2018, Intermediate Painting-Spring 2018. Fall 2018, Drawing Concepts-Fall 2018, Advanced Figure Painting-Fall 2018) Visiting Artist, Sudan University of Fine and Applied Art, Khartoum, Sudan. (Workshop on Mural Construction and concept development/connection to visual depiction April 2018)

2015-2017 Teaching Assistant, University of Texas at Arlington, Arlington, TX (courses taught: Life Drawing-Fall 2016, Art Factory Seminar-Spring 2017, Drawing Fundamentals-Fall 2017) Instructor of Record

2013-2014 Teacher, North Forest High School, Houston, TX (Drawing I,II, Advanced Placement, Visual Art I, II, III)

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2023 "Echoes of Our Ancestors". Kinfolk House Collaborative Space. Fort Worth, Texas

"Edward Mitchell Bannister National Exhibition". Providence Art Club. Providence, Rhode Island

2022 "3rd Annual Sculpture Exhibition". The In Art Gallery

2020 "Exquisite Corpse". Conduit Gallery. Dallas, Texas

2019

"Three the Hard Way". The Houston Museum of African American Culture. Houston, Texas

2018

"Evolution Art Exhibit". Dallas City Hall. Dallas, Texas.

"Black History Month Exhibition". Capital One Headquarters. Plano, Texas

"Oso Bay Biennial XX". Wiel Gallery. Corpus Christi, Texas

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2019 "In My Image". Dallas Museum of Art.

Dallas, Texas

2018 "I Am Because We Are". Conduit Gallery.

Dallas, Texas

2017 "The Veil's Farewell". Brazos Gallery. Dallas, Texas

"Journey Mercies". Arthello Beck, Jr. Gallery. Dallas, Texas

2016 "My Dear". Imago Gallery and Cultural Center. Columbia Missouri

2015 "Color Me Different". Gallery 343. Arlington, Texas



The UNESCO Slave Route project: Resistance, Liberty, Heritage

Launched in 1994, the international and inter-regional project 'The Slave Route: Resistance, Liberty, Heritage' addresses the history of the slave trade and slavery through the prism of intercultural dialogue, a culture of peace and reconciliation. It thereby endeavours to improve the understanding and transmission of this human tragedy by making better known its deep-seated causes, its consequences for societies today and the cultural interactions born of this history. The project is structured around five key fields of activity: scientific research, development of educational materials, preservation of written archives and oral traditions, promotion of living cultures and contributions by the African diaspora and, lastly, preservation of sites of memory.

The promotion of the memorial heritage related to the slave trade and slavery plays a decisive role not only in educating the general public, and young people in particular, but also in facilitating national reconciliation and social cohesion processes in societies.

It is in this perspective that 'The Slave Route project has created a label to encourage the preservation of sites of memories and the establishment of itineraries that can tell this story and ensure that this heritage receives due attention at the national, regional and international levels.

This site fulfils the quality criteria set by the UNESCO Slave Route Project in conjunction with the International Network of Managers of Sites and Itineraries of Memory.



Middle Passage Ceremonies & Port Markers Project

Remembering Ancestors

July 31, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

Ann C. Cobb: Executive Director
Ann L. Chinn: Founder

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The **Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers Project (MPCPMP)**, a national organization established in 2011 to commemorate the 2 million captive African children, women and men who died in the ocean crossing known as the Middle Passage and the 10 million who survived and built the Americas. **MPCPMP** researches, encourages and advises communities of the documented U.S. Middle Passage arrival locations to conduct memorial ceremonies and install markers that acknowledge their connection to this history of human trade.

Since 2013 **MPCPMP** has worked with the local residents of Bristol, RI, in a years' long process to acknowledge the city's relationship to the trans-Atlantic human trade spanning centuries of economic development. During that time research has revealed beyond the shipping families, a broad and inclusive narrative of African settlement and community involvement. The descendants, both African and European, have overcome challenges in decision-making and interpretation of this local history.

It is with pleasure that **MPCPMP** supports the efforts of the Bristol Middle Passage Committee in creating a memorial to captive Africans of the Middle Passage in a publicly accessible space. We believe this is significant in a city that was intricately involved in the trans-Atlantic trade to the Americas for more than a century. Evidence of this history and legacy exists presently in its people and structures. Based on its Middle Passage record, in 2019 Bristol was designated by the UNESCO Routes of Enslaved Peoples Project as a Site of Memory. This raises the city to an international status.

Intentionally, the planned memorial will heighten awareness of the city's role in the business of enslavement as well as enable residents, the African descendant community and visitors to commit to a path of much-needed reconciliation and healing.

Sincerely,

Ann Chinn
Project Director

P.O. Box 3071 • Jacksonville, Florida 32206 • (202) 460-2446
middlepassagemarkers@gmail.com • www.middlepassageproject.org

MPCPMP 2007



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
pour l'éducation,
la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
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Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
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منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

The Assistant Director-General for
Social and Human Sciences

Ms Ann L. Chinn
Chair
Executive Director
Middle Passage Ceremonies and
Port Markers Project
P.O. Box 3071
Jacksonville, Florida 32206
United States of America

12 December 2018

Ref. SHS/PPD/HMD/18/9692

Dear Ms Chinn,

I would like to thank you for your letter of 11 August 2018 transmitting the requests of local authorities for permission to use the "Site of memory associated with the UNESCO Slave Route project" logo.

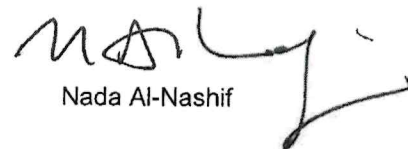
UNESCO warmly welcomes this initiative, which endeavours to protect and promote the sites of deep significance. It demonstrates the important contributions made by African Americans to the historical and cultural heritage in those areas where the captive Africans arrived. It also offers an opportunity to publicize the remarkable achievements of African American communities in struggling for dignity and freedom and preserving their history and memory.

Given the symbolic impact of these sites, and within the commemoration of the 400th Anniversary of the Arrival of the First Captive Africans in the British North American Colonies in 1619, I am pleased to inform you that the 'Site of memory associated with the UNESCO Slave Route Project logo' is granted for all the sites listed by Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Markers Project in the attached document.

Please find enclosed the logo to be used on the sites and all materials linked to the project, as well as the official text on the Slave Route that should accompany the logo when they are displayed at each site. This label is granted only for these sites and should not be confused with UNESCO Patronage, which necessitates a different procedure to be granted.

Wishing every success to your project and looking forward to receiving information on the events to be organized at these sites, I remain,

Yours sincerely,



Nada Al-Nashif

cc: Permanent Delegation of the United States of America to UNESCO
U.S. National Commission for UNESCO



The UNESCO Routes of Enslaved Peoples: Resistance, Liberty and Heritage

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This site fulfils the quality criteria set by UNESCO in conjunction with the International Network of Managers of Sites and Itineraries of Memory.





**TEMPORARY SIGN
INSTALLED AT APPROVED SITE**

Independence Park, Bristol, Rhode Island

**POKANOKET
LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

This is the ancestral homeland of the Pokanoket tribe.

Our people existed on this land for more than 10,000 years before colonialization. The Creator put our people on this land to care for it and everything on it, and to live in peace and harmony.

We acknowledge the Pokanoket people who still today are trying to restore balance and to benefit from these waterways and the lands thereof.



PLEASE DONATE

We greatly appreciate your support to honor the memory of those impacted by the Transatlantic human trade and Bristol's role in the Middle Passage

Kindly send your gift to:

BRISTOL MIDDLE PASSAGE PROJECT
PO Box 871
Bristol, RI 02809

Contact us at:

bristolmiddlepassage@gmail.com

BMPPM.org



Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project

The Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project (BMPP) is a 501-c (3) non-profit volunteer organization. Donations are tax-deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.



**BRISTOL
MIDDLE PASSAGE
PORT MARKER
PROJECT**

MEMORIAL MARKER

The Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project seeks to **acknowledge the history and memory** of Bristol's participation in the transatlantic slave trade and **its resounding effects** on the region's Indigenous peoples and on those taken from Africa to the Americas via the Middle Passage. **Erecting a memorial marker and educating people** about Bristol's involvement in slavery and the human trade, and hosting **reconciliation and healing ceremonies** are the goals.



Between 1789 and 1793, the **slave trade grew by 30 percent in the State**, and the town of Bristol saw tremendous growth as the DeWolfs along with other local businessmen **sponsored seventeen slaving voyages...** Between 1784 and 1807, members of the **DeWolf family underwrote eighty-eight African slave-trading voyages.**

Christy Clark-Pujara, PhD
 Dark Work: The Business of Slavery in Rhode Island
 Published in 2016

Beginning in 1793, Bristol replaced Newport as the State's principal slaving port, a position Bristol retained for the duration of the trade.

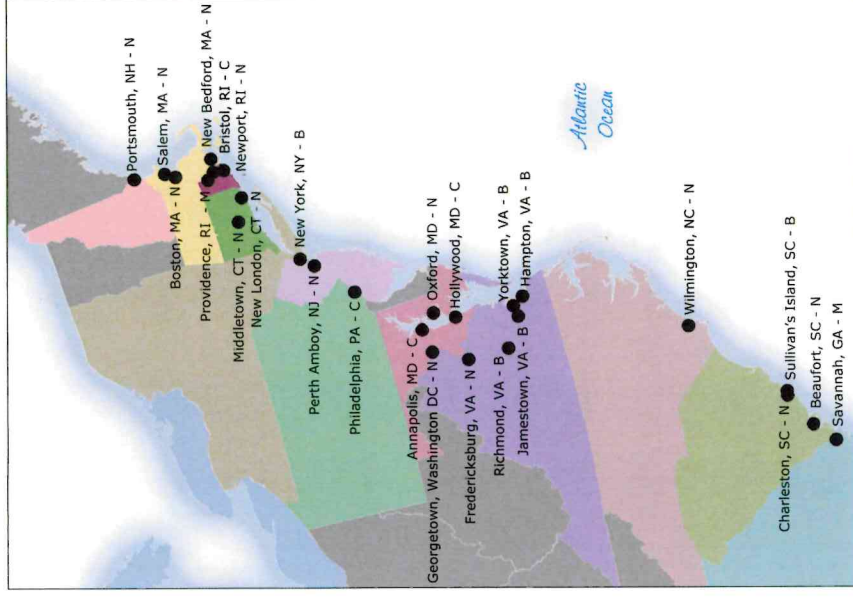
Jay Coughtry, PhD
 The Notorious Triangle: Rhode Island and the African Slave Trade 1700-1807, Published in 1981



The Sankofa, our logo, is the African bird symbol that tells us of the importance of reflecting on our past in order to look forward to the future.

A NATIONAL PROJECT

Founded in 2018, Bristol Middle Passage is part of the national organization, The Middle Passage Ceremonies and Port Marker Project, which has identified fifty-two ports along the eastern coast of the United States which were destinations in the Middle Passage.



Some of the Documented middle passage sites in the continental United States.

B - Ports where a marker has been placed and a ceremony has been held
C - Ports where a ceremony has been held
M - Ports where a marker has been placed
N - Ports with neither a marker nor a ceremony