What stories remain untold on the National Mall?

A dynamic initiative bringing new perspectives and stories to the commemorative canvas that is the National Mall.

MEET THE ARTISTS
Page 8 The six artists of Beyond Granite: Pulling Together explore a range of traditional and experimental approaches to public art.

LEARN ABOUT BEYOND GRANITE
Page 2 A dynamic initiative bringing new perspectives and stories to the commemorative canvas that is the National Mall.

August 18–September 18, 2023
Welcome Station Hours: Daily 12–7 pm
On the National Mall in Washington, DC between the Lincoln Memorial and the Smithsonian/National Mall Metro Station.

ENGAGE IN NEW WAYS
Page 21 Activate new ways of engaging with the stories of our intersectional histories on the National Mall, in Washington, DC, or in your hometown!

Presented by:
Curated by:
Generously Funded by:
beyondgranite.org
CATHERINE TOWNSEND, PRESIDENT AND CEO, TRUST FOR THE NATIONAL MALL

The National Mall is an extraordinary platform where moments great and small have helped shape the course of American history. Here, in dialogue with the iconic Washington Monument and the inspiring memorials made of stone, including the Lincoln Memorial and the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial, we know that temporary installations can also have remarkable impact. In the history of the Mall, we remember the AIDS Memorial Quilt, first displayed in 1987 for just one weekend, as the seminal example of how a temporary exhibition can catch the attention of the masses, enter the national dialogue, and spark change in public policy. More recently, the In America: Remember COVID-19 memorial white flags—displayed on the Mall for 21 days in 2021—captured the public imagination and acted as a national site of healing for victims, survivors, and loved ones from around the world. The Trust for the National Mall was privileged to work with artist Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg to make that important memorial installation a reality. As the nonprofit partner of the National Park Service, the Trust for the National Mall raises funds and awareness to deliver projects and programs to elevate this important American space and ensure that it remains a vibrant public cultural commons.

The land available for permanent commemoration in the area adjacent to the Mall is finite, and where we gather, speak up, and unite. It is America’s civic stage, where all are welcome to exercise their First Amendment rights, where all voices can be heard, and where we gather, speak up, and unite. The Trust is honored to bring the inaugural exhibition Beyond Granite: Pulling Together August 18–September 18, 2023. It is an alternative to permanent structures. We are thrilled to watch these stories unfold on the Mall, our nation’s showcase for our nation’s democracy, a series of grand avenues, sweeping vistas, and memorials, but more than that—within 15,000 permitted events, celebrations, marches, festivals, and demonstrations each year. It far exceeds the intent of its original designers. It is America’s civic stage, where all are welcome to exercise their First Amendment rights, where all voices can be heard, and where we gather, speak up, and unite.

Beyond Granite expands the canvas so that the Mall will remain relevant and vibrant for generations to come. Artwork, performances, other temporary exhibitions can do what permanent memorials cannot: they can respond to current events and present our history and our freedoms, history, culture, unity, diversity, and way of life.

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Envisioning the Future of the National Mall

JEFFREY REINHOLD, SUPERINTENDENT, NATIONAL MALL AND MEMORIAL PARKS, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

As proud stewards of the National Mall, the National Park Service’s partnership on Beyond Granite ensures that our nation’s most important narratives continue to unfold in this premier civic space. For more than 200 years, the Mall has inspired people in and beyond the United States as a symbol of our nation and its democratic values. From its inception, the Mall was intended to be a grand composition of open spaces, monuments, and memorials to celebrate and commemorate the events and people in American history. While the idea for the Mall took inspiration from global capital cities, the Mall proposed the novel concept that the most important, centrally located space in the nation’s capital belongs to all. The Mall offers a central corridor connecting the people and the seat of the US government. One time, this inspirational place has become the site where “We the People” exercise our rights to free speech and assembly and celebrate our freedoms, history, culture, unity, diversity, and way of life.

While the space on the Mall is finite, Beyond Granite expands the canvas so that the Mall will remain relevant and vibrant for generations to come. Artwork, performances, other temporary exhibitions can do what permanent memorials cannot: they can respond to current events and present our history in innovative ways. Storytelling through short-term installations complements permanent memorials and provides more opportunity for artistic expression. Designed as a space for all, the Mall will continue to be a stage for the nation’s stories, discovery, and reflection.

How Monuments Emerge

MARCEL ACOSTA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, NATIONAL CAPITAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Beyond Granite: Pulling Together August 18–September 18, 2023

The National Mall is one of our country’s most prominent symbolic spaces and a permanent public stage for telling our stories. These stories convey parts of our history and recognize different topics in a variety of ways, from museums, celebrations, and protests marches to our permanent monuments and memorials.

WHERE DO MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS COME FROM?

Federal laws governing the construction of new memorials are intended to preserve the integrity of the historic plans of the City of Washington and to protect and maintain open space in and around the Mall and throughout the nation’s capital. Today, individual or organizational sponsors work with Congress on ideas for new national memorials. Issues and events require a 10- to 25-year waiting period before becoming eligible for permanent public commemoration, and Congress must determine whether the proposed memorial is of “lasting national significance.” After Congress authorizes a memorial, sponsors develop their memorial program, which includes possible locations, concepts, and designs. After a series of reviews, a final site for the memorial is determined. The memorial sponsor usually privately fundraises to cover the costs of design and construction. In addition, the sponsor provides a donation to offset the costs of perpetual maintenance and preservation of the memorial.

Developing a permanent memorial takes time and money. While the public usually becomes aware of these projects when they begin, these works take years to complete. Additionally, the average cost of a memorial over the last decade is more than $379 million* (adjusted for 2023 dollars). These conditions can make it difficult for many groups to tell their stories and seek representation on “America’s Front Yard.”

WHAT ARE IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR THE FUTURE?

The land available for permanent commemoration in the area adjacent to the Mall is limited—in fact, only a handful of sites remain. In addition, the Mall is the most actively and intensively used public space in the nation’s capital. Each year, 35 million visitors come to the Mall and more than 6,000 permitted events including 1,000 First Amendment demonstrations take place on or near the National Mall annually.

It is imperative that we balance the use of space on the Mall in ways that provide opportunities to tell stories while also providing for recreational activities, national celebrations, and visitors. Given these challenges, we are exploring the innovative concept of using temporary artworks to tell additional stories through the Beyond Granite initiative. These artworks will provide powerful experiences that are cost-effective, faster to install, and respond to recent events.

MEMORIALS INCLUDE AMERICAN VETERANS DISABLED FOR LIFE, UKRAINIAN GENOCIDE, EISENHOWER MEMORIAL, WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL, KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL WALL OF REMEMBRANCE, FRIDAY PRAYER PLAQUE AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER MEMORIAL, MONUMENT LAB. * MEMORIALS INCLUDE AMERICAN VETERANS DISABLED FOR LIFE, UKRAINIAN GENOCIDE—SCHINDLER MEMORIAL, EISENHOWER MEMORIAL, WORLD WAR II MEMORIAL, KOREAN WAR MEMORIAL WALL OF REMEMBRANCE, FRIDAY PRAYER PLAQUE AT THE WORLD TRADE CENTER MEMORIAL, MONUMENT LAB.
What Stories Remain Untold on the National Mall?

Paul Farber and Salamishah Tillet, Co-Curators

Pulling Together

This is the central question of Pulling Together, the pilot exhibition of the Beyond Granite initiative. Rather than seeking a single answer or solution, we aim to spark civic imagination through a multitude of stories and responses that are manifested through this public art and history presentation. The featured artists have envisioned their untold stories by building “prototype monuments.” Visitors are invited to answer the question in their own ways and be heard, modeling the ways in which the National Mall and other meaningful public spaces in cities and towns across the US serve as sites to listen, learn, adapt, and evolve new pathways for acknowledging our nation’s full history.

Pulling Together is inspired by the 1939 Easter Sunday performance of renowned Black contralto Marian Anderson, who sang before seventy-five thousand people on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial after being barred by the Daughters of the American Revolution from performing at nearby Constitution Hall due to segregation in the US. Anderson’s landmark performance was possible only because of the leadership of A. Philip Randolph, who died in the COVID-19 pandemic (2021), among others. We also acknowledge the complex histories others have played a role in the National Mall’s history and significance over time. The Mall bears the imprints of the heaviest and most hopeful burdens of our American experiment.

Marian Anderson’s landmark performance and Bethune’s words as enduring points of reference, Pulling Together engages artists and public storytelling to explore presence, power, and absence on the Mall. The exhibition brings together innovative and experimental approaches to monumentality and memory-making to spotlight histories of American struggle and survival that are not yet seen on a national scale. As “America’s Front Yard,” the Mall is the nation’s most recognized place to gather, commemorate, and protest. In turn, the Mall marks and symbolizes the ongoing project of US democracy. As curators, we have been inspired by profound imprints on this site by artists and organizers, including the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom (1963), the AIDS Memorial Quilt and adjacent ACT UP protest actions (1997), and the In America (Memorial Flag) installation to honor Americans who died in the COVID-19 pandemic (2021), among others. We also acknowledge the complex histories of the United States surrounding issues including ancestral land dispossession, enslavement, racial segregation, LGBTQ+ discrimination, and instances of anti-democratic violence—and underscore that many have played a role in the National Mall’s history and significance over time. The Mall bears the imprints of the heaviest and most hopeful burdens of our American experiment.

The National Mall bears the imprints of the heaviest and most hopeful burdens of our American experiment.

What Stories Remain Untold on the National Mall?

Create a context of welcome and care for collective monumental storytelling in collaboration with artists and audiences on the National Mall.

Advance a form of public art and history exhibition interpretation that knits together artistic practice and programming.

Stage a hands-on, collaborative, inviting, and exploratory exhibition that highlights the future of public art in this monumental landscape.

Learn from this pilot exhibition to help inform and evolve the Beyond Granite initiative and its future iterations.

Exhibition Goals

FEATURED ARTISTS

Derrick Adams, Tiffany Chung, Ashon T. Crawford, Vanessa German, Paul Ramírez Jonas, and Wendy Red Star respond to the exhibition’s central question with a range of traditional and experimental approaches. In addition, pop-up Welcome Stations staffed by local artists and educators invite participation, conversation, and collected responses to the question to be shared with project sponsors. Finally, a slate of public programs centered around each artwork broadens the vision for the exhibition as a platform for joy, play, reflection, and coalition building.

Alongside the purposeful framing of the central question, we recognize that many “untold” stories have long been remembered by individuals and communities across generations but not yet elevated to places of official national memory. Our hope is that this prompt spotlights and offers a point of access to these many stories passed down from generation to generation, especially those that may offer a guiding light to the ongoing work of “pulling together.” This exhibition and the broader Beyond Granite initiative reflect on the state of our democracy as a means to inspire new perspectives on our nation’s past, present, and future through art and storytelling. By situating artworks and public engagement in conversation with the enduring monuments and memories of the National Mall, Pulling Together aims to tell and live out our many American stories.

Beyond Granite: Pulling Together

New Perspectives on the National Mall

August 18–September 18, 2023

PULLING TOGETHER

Co-Curators, Salamishah Tillet, Paul Farber and

Pilot Exhibition: Curatorial Statement
Beyond Granite presents a dynamic new series of installations designed to expand the canvas for additional storytelling on the National Mall. Its pilot exhibition, Pulling Together, features installations from six leading public artists—Derrick Adams, Tiffany Chung, Ashon T. Crawley, vanessa german, Paul Ramírez Jonas, and Wendy Red Star—that respond to a central question: What stories remain untold on the National Mall?

Pulling Together is inspired by the 1939 performance of renowned Black opera singer Marian Anderson, who sang before 75,000 people on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial after being barred from performing at nearby Constitution Hall due to segregation. Civil rights activist and educator Mary McLeod Bethune remarked that the event “told a story of hope for tomorrow—a story of triumph—a story of pulling together, a story of splendor and real democracy.”

Pulling Together is co-curated by Paul Farber and Salamishah Tillet for Monument Lab.

For more information, visit beyondgranite.org.

Beyond Granite
AMERICA’S PLAYGROUND: DC
A monumental playground that reflects the story of desegregated playgrounds in the nation’s capital

ASHON T. CRAWLEY
HOMEGOING
An audiovisual memorial about the impact of the AIDS crisis that centers spirituality as a means of honoring fallen Black queer church musicians

vanessa german
OF THEE WE SING
An innovative statue of Marian Anderson and her powerful 1939 concert at the Lincoln Memorial, held up by a sea of hands and historic images of the attendees

TIFFANY CHUNG
FOR THE LIVING
A sprawling map of the world that traces the global routes of Southeast Asian immigrants and refugees from the Vietnam War, adjacent to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

WENDY RED STAR
THE SOIL YOU SEE...
A monumental fingerprint with the names of the Apsáalooke (Crow) Nation chiefs who signed treaties with the US government, in dialogue with the nearby 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial

PAUL RAMÍREZ JONAS
LET FREEDOM RING
An interactive bell tower where passersby can ring a giant bell to complete an unfinished version of “My Country ‘Tis of Thee” and declare their own visions for freedom

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Pullying Together is co-curated by Paul Farber and Salamishah Tillet for Monument Lab.

beyondgranite.org
ARTIST FEATURES

What Stories Remain Untold on the National Mall?

Six artists interpret this question through their work, while focusing on the concepts of storytelling, narrative change, and national identity, monumentality and democracy, and public memory and memory making. Their public artworks can be found near the Lincoln Memorial, Constitution Gardens, the Sylvan Theater, and the Smithsonian/National Mall Metro Station.

ARTIST

DERRICK ADAMS

AMERICA’S PLAYGROUND: DC (2023)

A monumental playground that reflects the story of desegregated playgrounds in the nation’s capital

LOCATION

Constitution Gardens-East

MATERIALS

Powder-coated steel, polymer printed panel, and thermoplastic Vulcanizate (surfacing)

CREDITS


DERRICK ADAMS is an artist whose work spans painting, collage, sculpture, performance, video, sound, and public activation. He explores how identity and personal narrative intersect with American iconography, art history, urban culture, and Black experiences. Adams’s work is in the collections of the Brooklyn Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Studio Museum in Harlem, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and other museums, and has been shown in public spaces such as Rockefeller Center and Chicago’s Navy Pier.

Ashon T. Crawley

HOMEGOING (2023)

An audiovisual memorial about the impact of the AIDS crisis that centers spirituality as a means of honoring fallen Black queer church musicians

LOCATION

Washington Monument-South

MATERIALS

Mixed-media sound installation

CREDITS


BORN 1970 in Baltimore, Maryland

Razed in Brooklyn, New York

Ashon T. Crawley is a writer, artist, and teacher, exploring the intersection of performance, Blackness, queerness, and spirituality. He moves in and out of multiple genres to critique the normative world, but also to stage alternatives, to produce otherwise possible. His audiovisual art has been featured at Second Street Gallery, Bridge Projects, and the California African American Museum. He is also a professor of Religious Studies and African American and African Studies at the University of Virginia.

TIFFANY CHUNG

FOR THE LIVING (2023)

A sprawling map of the world that traces the global routes of Southeast Asian immigrants and refugees from the Vietnam War, adjacent to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

LOCATION

Constitution Gardens-West

MATERIALS

Mixed-media earthenwork

CREDITS


Born 1990 in Da Nang, Vietnam

Based in Houston, Texas

TIFFANY CHUNG is a Vietnamese American visual artist known for her map-based drawings, embroideries, paintings, sculptures, photographs, and videos that examine conflict, geopolitical partitioning, spatial transformation, environmental crisis, and forced migration in relation to history and cultural memory. Her work has been presented in a solo exhibition at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and at biennials and museums worldwide, including the 56th Venice Biennale, the Museum of Modern Art, the British Museum, and the Nobel Peace Center. Chung’s solo show Rise into the Atmosphere is on view at the Dallas Museum of Art through August 2023.

Born 1969 in Da Nang, Vietnam

Based in Brooklyn, New York

Tiffany Chung’s FOR THE LIVING is a monumental world map based on routes of exile, including those taken by the South-East Asian diaspora as a result of the Vietnam War. Chung explores this narrative of immigrant and refugee movement by inviting viewers to reimagine how these pathways contribute to the story of US geography and belonging. Each line on the map, conveyed through a color-coded calibrated rope, corresponds to routes by boat, land, or air. Placed in proximity to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Chung’s work uses, as she notes, “the Vietnamese experience as an anchor point and reminder of America being a second chance that many people have risked their lives for.”

ASHON T. CRAWLEY is a writer, artist, and teacher, exploring the intersection of performance, Blackness, queerness, and spirituality. He moves in and out of multiple genres to critique the normative world, but also to stage alternatives, to produce otherwise possible. His audiovisual art has been featured at Second Street Gallery, Bridge Projects, and the California African American Museum. He is also a professor of Religious Studies and African American and African Studies at the University of Virginia.
vanessa german conjures the history of Marian Anderson's iconic 1939 Easter Sunday performance on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial through an inventive, communal sculpture. Anderson's operatic image, taken from historic photographs, is repeated around the top edge of the work. "I want to see the figure of a Black woman in sculpture at the Mall," German notes, "something more joyful than commemoration: an invitation to take up space.

LOCATION Lincoln Memorial Plaza
MATERIALS Steel, resin sculpture, bronze, 35 automated bells, voice, light, sound, and digital technology
CREDITS Studio team: Vanessa German, Brianna Lyon, Jordan Whitten, Nico Rodriguez Melo
Special thanks: Apsáalooke Nation Council, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian, and the National Mall

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Paul Ramírez Jonas focuses on ways to inspire civic participation and exchange. Let Freedom Ring features an interactive bell tower that plays the iconic song "My Country 'Tis of Thee," performed by Marian Anderson on Easter Sunday in 1939 and quoted and rephrased by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963. The song is played in its entirety except for the final note. Passersby are invited to play the final note on a 6,500-pound bell and to proclaim for what or whom they ring this bell of freedom.

LOCATION Smithsonian/National Mall Station–12th Street North
MATERIALS Steel, bronze, 32 automated bells, participant-activated bell, and patrician song
CREDITS Project manager: Nico Rodríguez Melo
Fabricator: B.A. Sudderth Ball

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Wendy Red Star is an avid researcher of archives and historical narratives who seeks to recast the information she finds within them to offer new and unexpected perspectives in works that is inquisitive, witty, and unsettling. She was raised on the Apsáalooke (Crow) reservation in Montana, and her work is informed by both her cultural heritage and her engagement with many forms of creative expression, including photography, sculpture, video, fiber arts, and performance. Her work is in the collections of the British Museum and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

LOCATION Constitution Gardens, Signers Island
MATERIALS Glass and granite rock
CREDITS Project manager: Gina Crist
Fabricator: Bulbeye Glass Co.
Special thanks: Sargent’s Daughters, Tippet Rise Art Center, and Team Henry Enterprises

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The Soil You See... (2023)

A monumental fingerprint with the names of the Apsáalooke (Crow) Nation chiefs who signed treaties with the US government, in dialogue with the nearby 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial.

Wendy Red Star, who is Apsáalooke (Crow), highlights the legacy of treaties with Indigenous tribes through American history to its conclusion. "Illuminate the fact that every tribe in America has their own experience with treaties and the complexities of the decisions made by their tribal leaders." Using her own fingerprint as the model, Red Star created a giant thumbprint on an island in Constitution Gardens, next to the 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial. In doing so, she highlights the fact that many treaties with Indigenous leaders regarding the cession of their tribal lands were ratified not with their names but with a thumbprint or an X. Using her own fingerprint as the model, the sculpture ridges include the names of 50 Apsáalooke chiefs and tribal representatives who brokered treaties with the US government between 1826 and 1880. Red Star invites viewers to glimpse this founding story of belonging, land appropriation, and displacement on and through the National Mall.

LOCATION Constitution Gardens, Signers Island
CREDITS Project manager: Gina Crist
Fabricator: Bulbeye Glass Co.
Special thanks: Sargent’s Daughters, Tippet Rise Art Center, and Team Henry Enterprises

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Let Freedom Ring (2023)

An interactive bell tower where passersby can ring a giant bell to complete an unfinished version of "My Country 'Tis of Thee" and declare their own visions for freedom.

As an artist, Paul Ramírez Jonas focuses on ways to inspire civic participation and exchange. Let Freedom Ring features an interactive bell tower that plays the iconic song "My Country 'Tis of Thee," performed by Marian Anderson on Easter Sunday in 1939 and quoted and rephrased by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his "I Have a Dream" speech in 1963. The song is played in its entirety except for the final note. Passersby are invited to play the final note on a 6,500-pound bell and to proclaim for what or whom they ring this bell of freedom.

LOCATION Smithsonian/National Mall Station–12th Street North
MATERIALS Steel, bronze, 32 automated bells, participant-activated bell, and patrician song
CREDITS Project manager: Nico Rodríguez Melo
Fabricator: B.A. Sudderth Ball

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Selection Criteria

1. **Engage** The Trust for the National Mall invited Monument Lab to curate the pilot exhibition for the Beyond Granite initiative, seeking to expand artistic storytelling opportunities and experiment with new perspectives for the National Mall.

2. **Research** Monument Lab conducted curatorial research on the history of the National Mall. Under the guidance of Monument Lab co-curators Paul Fairer and Sahelahan Tillet, the team created a title and theme for the pilot exhibition: Pulling Together Building on its ongoing research and expertise in working with artists who specialize in memorialization practices that transcend conventional monuments. Monument Lab proposed an artist roster that included individuals whose work centers on public memory and civic participation; democracy and dissent; and the imagining of monuments that are interactive, accessible, and multisensory.

3. **Curate** In coordination with the Trust for the National Mall, six artists were invited to participate in the pilot exhibition. Monument Lab asked the artists to submit proposals for projects that would respond to the question, “What stories remain untold on the National Mall?” Artists conducted site visits on the Mall and held initial conversations with the curatorial team and lead partners toward project development.

4. **Guide** Once the artists’ proposals were fully developed, the Trust for the National Mall, the National Park Service, the National Capital Planning Commission, and Monument Lab worked with a 12-person Curatorial Advisory Board to review them. This multi-disciplinary group was composed of leaders in the monument, museum, and public space sectors. The Curatorial Advisory Board made suggestions for improvements and connections for the artists around interpretive opportunities to explore with local archives, constituencies, and organizations. The final artworks of Beyond Granite: Pulling Together were ultimately shaped by the artists and guided by curatorial feedback in consultation with the National Park Service around matters of feasibility.

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Accessiblity

Jen Cleary and Auriere Penney

Accessiblity Leads, Monument Lab

Works have been placed near accessible pathways, and meh has been installed to form paths at grassy exhibition sites, facilitating easier navigation for those with mobility impairments as much as possible. For additional accessibility resources, including descriptions of artwork images and sounds, specifics about the Welcome Stations and programming, and AI-assisted translations of exhibition materials, visit beyondgranite.org.
WHAT STORIES REMAIN UNTOLD ON THE NATIONAL MALL?
The National Mall: When Permanence Evolves, Democracy Begins

KIRK SAVAGE, HISTORIAN AND AUTHOR, MONUMENT WARS AND STANDING SOLDIERS, KNEELING SLAVES

A visitor to the National Mall in 1900 would not have seen the great expanse of open space we see today, with its gridded vistas punctuated by huge stone monuments to soldiers and presidents. They would have instead seen a “noble pleasure-ground” filled idiosyncratically with woods, gardens, and occasional statues to obscure men. The Mall of today was born in 1901 as the dream of a handful of designers but did not take shape until the 1930s, when the federal government demolished the much-loved Civil War. It was anchored by giant monuments to the Union Army on one end and Abraham Lincoln on the other. With its gleaming white neoclassical architecture, uninterrupted grass and water, and regimented rows of identical trees, this new Mall declared the nation’s great crisis resolved and unity and order restored. Like all great monumental undertakings, this Mall told a story of closure; its idea of America was now complete.

And like all monumental undertakings, this story was a fiction. A visitor didn’t have to walk far to see the huge cracks in its façade. Racial segregation ruled the day. Black and Indigenous citizens were disenfranchised, some disempowered. The promise of democracy, promised by the Civil War and Reconstruction, was so deeply buried that it struggles to emerge even today. Ironically, the 1901 plan unintentionally created the conditions for a counternarrative to flourish, defying the Mall’s story of closure. Starting with the Marian Anderson concert at the Lincoln Memorial in 1939—a direct challenge to segregation—the vast empty spaces of the new Mall became the nation’s premier stage for democratic protest. Activists demonstrated that the idea and promise of the United States were far from complete.

The Mall has changed dramatically since 1919, filling with more memorials and more protests. As a nation we might try to stop this change and hold onto the fiction of completeness, or we can embrace change in the knowledge that democracy demands it. New stories deserve to be told, especially from those who had no say in the Mall’s grand plan, and democratic speech deserves to be strengthened here in this unique national forum. Our future depends on it.

Like all great monumental undertakings, this Mall told a story of closure; its idea of America was now complete. And like all monumental undertakings, this story was a fiction.

Timeline of the National Mall

1609: Part of the Mall is swampy and unsuitable for development, it is low-lying land, where the marshes of the Tiber Creek flow into the Potomac River. Most residents are likely members of the Nacotchtank people.

1610s: The Mall is swampland and unsuitable for development. It is low-lying, on the marshes of the Tiber Creek.

1791: Pierre Charles L’Enfant proposes to President Washington the creation of a grand, tree-lined avenue with buildings on either side, known as the National Mall.

1792: Benning Banneker is selected as the official assistant surveyor for the new capital city, making him one of the first official Black civil servants in the United States.

1847: The Smithsonian Institution is established.

1855–1866: Construction of the US Capitol (later called the White House) is completed.

1865: Construction of the Statue of Liberty is completed.

1866: Construction of the US Capitol (later called the White House) is completed.

1870: The Washington Monument is erected.

1892: The McMillan Commission produces a plan to beautify the Mall and surrounding areas with the creation of formal gardens, open spaces, and the restoration of L’Enfant’s original vision. The Mall, which was doubled in size due to a 30-year land reclamation project, establishes the Washington Monument on what was then its western boundary as the centerpiece.

1900: The Mall is twice its original size due to a 30-year land reclamation project, establishing the Washington Monument on what was then its western boundary as the centerpiece.

1901: The Mall is conceived as a grand avenue connecting the US Capitol and the President’s House (later called the White House). One time it has evolved into a prominent symbol of American democracy and a focal point for national events and celebrations.

1902: The Mall has been doubled in size due to a 30-year land reclamation project, establishing the Washington Monument on what was then its western boundary as the centerpiece.
On April 5, 1968, at 4:05 p.m., a nineteen-year-old typist in the US Department of the Treasury found herself suddenly waiting for a bus at the corner of Independence Avenue and 14th Street NW in Washington, DC. Moments before, she was working in her typing pool when a co-worker announced, “The whole city is about to be on fire. We gotta go!”

The evening before, the young typist had just received her freshly printed wedding invitations when a radio broadcast announced that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was dead. Moments before, she was working in her typing pool as a career typist often tasked with transcribing dictation, my mom seldom recorded her own perspectives and experiences. I wondered, if she was given the opportunity, what would she type for herself? Maybe together, with her words, we could make a paper monument. So I sat with her as she typed from dictation a snippet of her own life—an adjacent to the National Mall.

As she waited for the bus, her eyes followed along the edges of the Washington Monument, visible above the treeline. Martin Luther King, Jr., was born and grew to the cherished remains of Washington’s “Black Broadway,” an ode to the chapel. My parents and thousands of Black Washingtonians rode the shockwave of anguish, despair, and grief that followed the murder of Dr. King while getting ready for work, walking to church on Easter Sunday, or even planning a wedding. As an artist, I am drawn to macro and macro narratives like these—those that nestled between joy and pain, beauty and sadness. They reveal a quiet resistance and resilience of spirit, a refusal often cloaked in unaestheticizing narratives. As a career typist often tasked with transcribing dictation, my mom seldom recorded her own perspectives and experiences. I wondered, if she was given the opportunity, what would she type for herself? Maybe together, with her words, we could make a paper monument. So I sat with her as she typed from dictation a snippet of her own life—a life adjacent to the National Mall.

When a co-worker announced, “The whole city is about to be on fire.” We gotta go.” If this were true, she and the other passengers on the bus were about to be right inside the loudspeaker. Within seconds of her boarding, the bus was swallowed up by a sea of the unheard. The marchers’ collective grief and anger produced a wave of energy so powerful that it physically rocked her and the other passengers in their seats. They were all around and she felt the power in the free world” and “a haven to colored men.”

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Yet, somewhere in that building, Black men and women were being stacked neat mountains of cash that they might never have equitable access to. The iconic Reflecting Pool is also built in the 1920s. The Lincoln Memorial, dedicated to President Abraham Lincoln, is constructed on the site of the remains of Washington’s “Black Broadway,” an ode to the chapel. My parents and thousands of Black Washingtonians rode the shockwave of anguish, despair, and grief that followed the murder of Dr. King while getting ready for work, walking to church on Easter Sunday, or even planning a wedding. As an artist, I am drawn to macro and macro narratives like these—those that nestled between joy and pain, beauty and sadness. They reveal a quiet resistance and resilience of spirit, a refusal often cloaked in unaestheticizing narratives.

As a career typist often tasked with transcribing dictation, my mom seldom recorded her own perspectives and experiences. I wondered, if she was given the opportunity, what would she type for herself? Maybe together, with her words, we could make a paper monument. So I sat with her as she typed from dictation a snippet of her own life—a life adjacent to the National Mall.

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Behind the Scenes

A look at the creation of the artworks of Beyond Granite: Pulling Together

1963: On August 28, more than a quarter of a million people participate in the historic March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom, gathering near the Lincoln Memorial. The peaceful protest advocates for the civil and economic rights of African Americans. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. delivers his “I Have a Dream” speech.

1971: Temporary structures, including munitions buildings, erected on the Mall during World War I and World War II for War Department uses, are removed.

1974: Activist and educator Mary McLeod Bethune is honored in DC’s Lincoln Park with the first statue of a Black person erected on federal lands in the United States.

1976: The US Bicentennial sparks additional development on the Mall, including Constitution Gardens (1976), the National Air and Space Museum (1976), the US Park Police Horse Stables (1976), and the National Gallery of Art East Wing (1978).

1982: The Vietnam Veterans Memorial, a solid black marble wall listing more than 58,000 names of those who died in the conflict, is completed.

1986: Congress passes the Commemorative Works Act, which specifies requirements for the development, approval, and location of new memorials and monuments in the District of Columbia and its vicinity.

1987: On October 11, the AIDS Memorial Quilt is displayed for the first time on the Mall during the National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights. The quilt display on the Mall covers a space larger than a football field and includes 1920 panels.

1997: The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, dedicated to the 32nd US president, is completed. It is located on the Tidal Basin and features a series of outdoor rooms that depict significant events from Roosevelt’s time in office.

2000–2004: The World War II Memorial is dedicated, honoring the 16 million people who served in the US Armed Forces during World War II. Constructed over four years and located on the eastern end of the Reflecting Pool, it commemorates the sacrifices made by the nation during the war.

1997: The Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, dedicated to the 32nd US president, is completed.

2001: After a campaign led by disability activists, the Prologue Room of the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, complete with a statue of the president in his wheelchair, is dedicated.

2000–2004: The World War II Memorial is dedicated, honoring the 16 million people who served in the US Armed Forces during World War II. Constructed over four years and located on the eastern end of the Reflecting Pool, it commemorates the sacrifices made by the nation during the war.

1918

1971

1977

1974

1976

1982

1997

2000–2004

Beyond Granite: Pulling Together

New Perspectives on the National Mall

18

August 18–September 18, 2023
The Everyday DC photo initiative presents a visual narrative of Washington, DC through the eyes of over 100 DC students from public middle schools in all four quadrants of the city. Students produce these images as part of a photojournalism course and designed by the Pulitzer Center and DC Public Schools Arts and taught by DCPS visual arts teachers.

Now in its seventh year, Everyday DC was inspired by the Pulitzer Center-supported Everyday Africa project and challenges students to analyze how Washington, DC is portrayed in the media and how they can compose images that more accurately visualize their everyday experiences.

The project is made possible by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities, an agency supported by the National Endowment for the Arts and DCPS Visual Arts.

In compliance with DCPS requirements, the images taken by students from various middle schools (including C-Stunner Brookland Middle School; Untitled); Walker Jones Educational Campus (The Happy Lady); Kaiser Jones Educational Campus (Iyae); System Academy (Almighty School); Memorial Acting As A Mirror); Woodward Middle School; St. Anthony and St. B. Wells Middle School (Still Live);...
Newspaper Credits

Paul Farber and Salamishah Tillet Co-Editors
Patricia Eunji Kim Managing Editor
Aubrey Penney Editorial Coordinator
Connie Harvey Designer
Blair Richardson, MiniSuper Studio Designer, Illustrator

Typography The logo for Pulling Together is based on the font Colorful by Vocal Type, a foundry by Tré Seals dedicated to developing typefaces that highlight a piece of history from a specific underrepresented race, ethnicity, or gender. Other fonts used in this publication include TT Commers and Aeroplane.

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Beyond Granite: Pulling Together New Perspectives on the National Mall

Throughout the exhibition, Monument Lab will be operating Welcome Stations at key points across the National Mall, staffed by DC-based artists, educators, and students. As Monument Lab has done in many of our previous projects, we ask participants and passersby to respond to an exhibition’s central question on handwritten art forms. We want to learn from the multitude of possible responses and share insights with the project lead partners for future iterations of this program. To fill out a paper form and share your story from your perspective, visit one of the Welcome Stations from 12 pm to 7 pm during the exhibition. This is an in-person activity, but feel free to do this exercise where you are and share your stores with classmates, colleagues, neighbors, or friends.

NAME YOUR STORY
Offer a title for your response.

QUESTION
Share your response to the central question of the exhibition.

WHERE DOES YOUR STORY BELONG?
Imagine a location for your story on, near, or off the National Mall.

FUNDATION
Generously Funded by:
Mellon Foundation

Beyond Granite: Pulling Together New Perspectives on the National Mall

August 18–September 18, 2023
vanessa german
**OF THEE WE SING**
An innovative statue of Marian Anderson and her powerful 1939 concert at the Lincoln Memorial, held up by a sea of hands and historic images of the attendees

TIFFANY CHUNG
**FOR THE LIVING**
A sprawling map of the world that traces the global routes of South-east Asian immigrants and refugees from the Vietnam War, adjacent to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial

WENDY RED STAR
**THE SOIL YOU SEE**
A monumental fingerprint with the names of the Apsáalooke (Crow) Nation chiefs who signed treaties with the US government, in dialogue with the nearby 56 Signers of the Declaration of Independence Memorial

DERICK ADAMS
**AMERICA’S PLAYGROUND: DC**
A monumental playground that reflects the story of desegregated playgrounds in the nation’s capital

ASHON T. CRAWLEY
**HOME GOING**
An audiovisual memorial about the impact of the AIDS crisis that centers spirituality as a means of honoring fallen Black queer church musicians

PAUL RAMÍREZ JONAS
**LET FREEDOM RING**
An interactive bell tower where passersby can ring a giant bell to complete an unfinished version of “My Country ’Tis of Thee” and declare their own visions for freedom

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**Calendar of Events**

**DAILY**

**Welcome Stations**
Daily 12–7 pm
On the National Mall in Washington, DC between the Lincoln Memorial and the Smithsonian/National Mall Metro Station.

**SATURDAY, AUG 19**

10am–12pm
vanessa german, **OF THEE WE SING**
“Blue Walk” ritual of redemption and grace in movement and song
Location: Processing along the reflecting pool perimeter, culminating at the Lincoln Memorial

12–4pm
Paul Ramirez Jonas, **LET FREEDOM RING**
Bell Giveaway and Song Rewriting Workshop
Location: Project site, Smithsonian/National Mall Metro–12th Street North

12–4pm
Derrick Adams, **AMERICA’S PLAYGROUND: DC**
Youth and Intergenerational Play Day activation in collaboration with A Long Walk Home’s Scheherazade Tillet
Location: Project site, Constitution Gardens–East

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**FRIDAY, AUG 25**

9am–5pm
**Pulling Together Convening**
Pre-registration required at beyondgranite.org
Featuring: Marcel Acosta, Holly Bass, Tiffany Chung, Teresa Durkin, Paul Farber, Suzanne Brennan Firstenberg, Natalie Hopkinson, Laura Huerta Migus, Maria del Carmen Montoya, Paul Ramirez Jonas, Jeffrey Reinbold, Lauren Savoy, Kirk Savage, Salamishah Tillett, Catherine Townsend, Amber Wiley, and an Indigenous archives conversation with Wendy Red Star and Elizabeth Rule
Location: United States Institute of Peace, 2301 Constitution Avenue NW, Washington, DC

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**SATURDAY, SEPT 9**

10am–12pm
Tiffany Chung, **FOR THE LIVING**
Public Conversation and Mapping Workshop
Location: Project site, Constitution Gardens–West

7:30–9pm
Ashon T. Crawley, **HOME GOING**
Twilight Live Musical Performance
Location: Sylvan Theater, Washington Monument–South

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All events are free and open to the public. To register for all public programs and receive updates, visit beyondgranite.org.

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For more information, scan the QR code or visit beyondgranite.org

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BEYOND GRANITE

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Exhibition Sites: August 18–September 18, 2023

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