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King Boston announces the selection of *The Embrace* for Boston Common memorial

Boston – King Boston is pleased to announce that after a year-long artist selection process, the King Boston Art Committee has selected *The Embrace*, by artist [Hank Willis Thomas and MASS Design Group](#), as the design for a memorial to Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King on Boston Common. *The Embrace* was chosen over two other finalists, *Boston's King Memorial* (Adam Pendleton and Adjaye Associates with Future/Pace and David Reinfurt), and *The Ripple Effects* (Wodiczko + Bonder / Maryann Thompson Architects, with Walter Hood), after community input and a thorough review of design feasibility and impact on the Common.

"On behalf of King Boston, I want to thank the remarkable slate of artists who submitted designs for consideration, and especially the finalists whose work received both thoughtful scrutiny and a positive reception from both the community and our partners," said Paul English, co-chair of [King Boston](#). "This memorial will be a core element of the multifaceted tribute to the Kings -- one that fosters discussion and provides a platform for continuing their work throughout the city."

"Hank Willis Thomas and MASS Design Group proposed a memorial that excited the greatest community support, and also met the criteria of the Art Committee and the City," said Barry Gaither, co-chair of the King Boston Art Committee. "All of the finalists presented powerful and imaginative ideas for honoring Coretta Scott and Martin Luther King, Jr., but the Committee could choose only one. It felt that *The Embrace* captured the spirit of love and community that was so central to the Kings' work, and that we want to radiate across the City from the Boston Common."

"I am proud to see a project selected that embodies the spirit of love and compassion that the Kings demonstrated throughout their lives," said Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh. "Together with the King Center for Economic Justice, and the partnership with the Twelfth Baptist Church, this memorial will serve as a gathering space for people to come together to reflect on their remarkable impact on our society, while recommitting us to continue to fulfill their dream of equality for all each and every day."

Inspired by images of the Kings locked in a powerful embrace and walking arm in arm at the frontlines of a protest or march, the sculpture depicts clasped arms in the Boston Common. "Is there a more radical act of justice than love?" asks Michael Murphy, founding principal and executive director of MASS Design Group. "The choice to love your neighbor, to love someone

that is not yourself, to go into a community and act is the foundational seed of social justice. To us, there was no better way to honor the Kings' legacy and advance collective action." Hank Willis Thomas added, "Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King are monumental examples of the capacity of love to shape society. I can only hope *The Embrace* can be a reminder and a call to action to each of us to never forget what they've taught us."

Through the sculpture and landscape, the artists chose to focus on the act rather than the individual, to highlight our collective role in advancing the vision—exactly what the Kings sought to engender. By solidifying the ideals of inclusion that the Kings sought to defend in their united life of activism, the artists aim to call people into the act of empathy and action. Passersby will be able to walk beneath the interlocked arms of the sculpture, and the artists are siting the monument to create two gathering spaces – one facing the State House, and the other facing toward the iconic Parkman Bandstand, where Dr. King addressed the Common in April 1965.

King Boston received 126 applications to design the memorial, and 5 finalists were selected by a panel of experts - renowned educators, visual artists and curators rooted in the Black art tradition. The proposals were displayed at the Boston Public Library, the Bruce C. Bolling Building and online. Around 1,000 public comments were received and catalogued. Of the five finalists, three designs were advanced to the feasibility stage, where a cooperative team of reviewers from King Boston and the City of Boston reviewed the practicality of each design.

King Boston is working toward a goal of completing and unveiling the memorial in 2020, with continued community engagement through the approval processes of the Boston Art Commission, the Boston Landmarks Commission, approval of all contractual terms, and approval of the technical specifications by the King Boston Art Committee, in conjunction with the ongoing Boston Common Master Plan process.

Next Steps: The King Center for Economic Justice

Having completed the artist selection process for the Boston Common monument, King Boston is turning its focus to the development of the King Center for Economic Justice in Roxbury. Together, these sites will advance King's vision of "the New Boston", as well as introduce visitors from around the globe to the enriched and inclusive lens for understanding Boston's history.

King Boston will soon announce plans for a series of community conversations that will gather public input on the new Center and ensure that the Center works in partnership with organizations already doing critical social and economic justice work in the city. The King Center is envisioned as a dynamic space for civic education, reflection and debate that deploys tools to help drive resident-informed strategies to promote economic mobility in Roxbury and beyond.

At a time when income and wealth disparities and economic inequality remain pervasive in the city, the Center will provide a convening space for community-led social action, driven by

research and action to reduce economic disparity, improve economic mobility and increase business ownership by people of color in Greater Boston.

In addition, King Boston seeks to fund an on-site coordinator to assist citizens and civic groups in Boston with research on Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King as well as the social issues that drove their work, and to fund a King Library Residency Program and Speaker Series, in partnership with the Twelfth Baptist Church, to bring renowned figures to Boston to lecture/perform, host workshops and meet with residents.

King Boston's plans also include a recently-commissioned film by Boston-based filmmaker Roberto Mighty, who has been selected to produce and direct America's first documentary, multimedia and online project about Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King's pivotal years in Boston in the early 1950's. The documentary will explore the early relationship between Coretta Scott and Martin Luther King Jr., where they spent time in the city, and their dreams for a life of activism and family.

King Boston has raised more than \$6 million of a \$12 million goal for the full project. To learn more or donate to the effort, visit kingboston.org.

[King Boston](#) is a privately funded effort working closely with the City of Boston and the Boston Foundation to create a new memorial and programs honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King and their time and work together in Boston. King Boston has held fourteen community meetings to solicit input from our neighbors. King Boston is now working on the following initiatives:

- A world-class memorial on the Boston Common, the location of marches and speeches for hundreds of years in our city.
- The creation of a new "King Center for Economic Justice" in Roxbury where we will work to improve economic disparities across our city.
- A \$1M partnership with the Twelfth Baptist Church in Roxbury to do MLK-related programming, honoring MLK's time preaching at Twelfth Baptist while he lived in Boston.
- A new documentary about the Kings, focused on their lives and work together in Boston.

For more information, visit kingboston.org