

Un MONUMENT

Boston's *Un-Monument* Initiative Announces Fall 2025 Lineup for Public Conversations Series

Year Two of Conversation Series at The Embrace

Curated by Harvard Professor Brandon Terry; Featuring Cornel West, Clint Smith, Noah Feldman, Aziz Rana, Robert George, and Juliet Hooker

Free and Open to the Public



"Poetry, Public Art, and the Politics of Memory" with Professor Joshua Bennett and Professor Imani Perry, curated by Professor Brandon Terry at The Embrace in the Boston Common, July 31, 2024, as part of *Un-monument | Re-monument | De-monument: Transforming Boston*. Courtesy of the Boston Art Commission, Mayor's Office of Arts & Culture, City of Boston. Photo: Malakhai Pearson.

BOSTON, MA — August 12, 2025 — Today, the Boston Mayor’s Office of Arts & Culture, in collaboration with **The Hutchins Center for African and African American Research** at Harvard University, announces the Fall 2025 lineup for a series of public discussions on democracy and justice. This is the second year of the *Un-monument* public conversation series, which aims to invigorate Boston’s public space, encouraging individuals to reflect on the interconnections between monuments, public memories, and daily lives. These conversations are free and open to the public, followed by free dinner receptions facilitated by local artists and cultural leaders.

In May 2025, Boston **Mayor Michelle Wu** and **MOAC** announced the grantees and public art projects for Year Two of the City’s **Un-monument | Re-monument | De-monument: Transforming Boston** program, which invites artists and organizations to reimagine monuments through a multi-year, city-wide campaign featuring public art installations and accompanying programming. Through a \$3 million grant from **the Mellon Foundation**—the largest-ever investment into public art programming in Boston—this multi-year, citywide program continues to spark conversations about public memory, monuments, and collective history through free public art installations, community programming, and interactive experiences.

Last summer, *Un-monument* hosted a series of three public discussions featuring leading academics, poets, and historians, such as a conversation about “The Future of American Democracy” with Professor Michael Sandel, “Poetry, Public Art, and the Politics of Memory” between Professor Joshua Bennett and Professor Imani Perry, at *The Embrace*. As Boston prepares to mark the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution in 2026, *Un-monument* underscores the City’s commitment to sharing a more inclusive and expansive story of Boston’s past, present, and future.

“Public conversations are the origin story of the *Un-Monument* initiative, borne out of a growing public reckoning with monuments both locally and nationally,” said **Karin Goodfellow, Director of Transformative Art and Monuments for the City of Boston** and lead for the *Un-monument* initiative. “Over the last few years, through hours of discussion and public testimony, the people of Boston have come together to enact cultural change, culminating in a process of collective commemorative revision we continue to build upon with *Un-monument*.”

“*The Embrace* is our inspiration. Our goal is to live up to Martin Luther King’s call to “turn every street corner into a forum” and remind people of the excitement and importance of free public debate about the most vital questions of the day.” said **Brandon Terry**, the John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Social Sciences at **Harvard University** and the co-director of the Institute on Policing, Incarceration, and Public Safety at the Hutchins Center for African and African American Research and curator of the public conversations. “What better way than to invite some of our country’s greatest thinkers to engage with the residents of one of America’s great cities in America’s oldest public park?”

In the upcoming season, *Un-Monument* re-commits to enlivening Boston's public spaces with relevant, timely, and sometimes thorny topics, providing a platform for leading contemporary academics and thinkers to engage in healthy dialogue.

Upcoming Public Conversations

Wednesday, August 20th

5:15 PM–9:00 PM; Dinner 6:30 PM

“Truth Matters: Disagreement in an Age of Division”

Profs. Cornel West and Robert P. George

This conversation will bring together Robert George and Cornel West to explore the possibilities of meaningful discourse amid political fragmentation. George is a prominent American legal scholar and Professor of Jurisprudence at Princeton University. His most recent book, written with Cornel West, *Truth Matters: A Dialogue on Fruitful Disagreement in an Age of Division* (Post Hill Press). West is a world-famous American philosopher, theologian, political activist, and intellectual, and Emeritus Professor at Princeton University for the Center for African American Studies. Despite their diverging intellectual traditions and political disagreements, their academic fortitude and longstanding friendship demonstrate a practice of democratic engagement. [RSVP HERE](#)

Wednesday September 10

5:15 PM–9:00 PM; Dinner 6:30 PM

“Constitutional Crossroads: Is the Constitution Broken?”

Professors Aziz Rana and Noah Feldman

This conversation confronts a fundamental question: *Does democratic renewal require reimagining the founding principles and documents that supposedly bound us?* Distinguished legal scholars Aziz Rana and Noah Feldman, arguably the two most influential constitutional law scholars of their generation, will discuss whether the American Constitution can sustain democratic life in the face of today's challenges. This discussion marks the first time these two have ever debated in an open forum at the focal point of such crises. Rana is J. Donald Monan, S.J., University Professor of Law and Government at Boston College, specializing in constitutional law and political development. He focuses on how shifting notions of race, citizenship, and settler colonialism have shaped legal and political identity. He will address these core themes in his published work, *The Constitutional Bind: How Americans Came to Idolize a Document That Fails Them* (The University of Chicago Press). Feldman is Felix Frankfurter Professor of Law, Chair of the Society of Fellows, and founding director of the Julis-Rabinowitz Program on Jewish and Israeli Law at Harvard University. He specializes in constitutional studies, with an emphasis on power and ethics, design of innovative governance solutions, law, religion, and the history of legal ideas. In his recent work, *The Broken Constitution. Lincoln, Slavery, and the Refounding of America* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux Press), Feldman takes a closer look at the US Constitution and Abraham Lincoln's actions in the refounding of the nation based on the ideals of liberation and equality. Collectively, the scholars will explore how the Constitution's promises contend with its historical compromises and limitations. [RSVP HERE](#).

Wednesday, September 24

5:15 PM–9:00 PM; Dinner 6:30 PM

“More Than Stone: How Monuments Speak to and About Us”

Professor Juliet Hooker and Doctor Clint Smith

Clint Smith and Juliet Hooker will explore the complex relationship between monuments and civic life, examining how these structures shape collective memory and identity. Smith is a celebrated American writer, poet, and scholar known for *How the Word is Passed: A Reckoning with the History of Slavery Across America*, which won the 2021 National Book Critics Circle Award for Nonfiction, and his influential writing for The Atlantic. Hooker is Royce Family Professor of Teaching Excellence in Political Science at Brown University. A rising star in political theory, her work is specialized in racial justice, Black and Latin American political thought, democratic theory, and public art. The conversation will encourage participants to reflect on the impact of public art in shaping societal values in an ongoing effort to redefine civic spaces and honor various histories, questioning the role of monuments in promoting a more inclusive democracy. [RSVP HERE](#).

To learn more about *Un-monument*, visit boston.gov/un-monument.

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