

The Clotilda Memorial

Community Engagement 3 | September 29, 2026 | Robert Hope Community Center



CIVIC PROJECTS
ARCHITECTURE

RAA

ROOM FOR MAGIC

Welcome

Community Engagement Session 3

September 29, 2026, 6:00-7:30 pm

- Introductions & Overview
- Community Engagement Overview
- Who are the Jury Members?
- The Artist Selection Process
 - Timeline
 - Selection Criteria
 - RFQ Respondents
 - Jury Member Introductions
- Site Engineering
- Wrap Up & Next Steps

Who We Are

CIVIC PROJECTS
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ROOM FOR MAGIC

Who We Are



Project Overview

The Project

The Alabama Historical Commission is seeking site-specific proposals for an artist commission that will honor the last known African captives trafficked to the United States through the transatlantic slave trade. The memorial will pay homage to the 110 individuals forced aboard the Clotilda, the last known US slave ship. This includes the survivors of its 1860 voyage and the lives lost during the middle passage.

The Intent

The memorial will elevate the resilient and determined spirits of the Clotilda survivors and acknowledge the violent dislocation, enslavement, and discrimination they endured. It will also honor the importance of their West African identities, values, and cultures, that continue to influence the families, institutions, and communities they helped develop. This memorial will preserve collective memory, honor heritage, and offer public space for healing.

Process

The process of developing the Clotilda Memorial can be divided into four parts:

1. **Community Engagement:** Community members share stories, experiences, ideas, and inspirations to identify collective themes for the memorial.
2. **Call for Artists:** A nationwide Request for Qualifications (RFQ) identifies artists with the requisite skills and background. Selected artists respond to a Request for Proposals (RFP) developed from Community Engagement output.
3. **Preservation and Education:** A website is created to document the process of the memorial and preserve the stories surrounding the Clotilda Memorial.
4. **Design, Fabrication and Install:** Artist, AHC, and our team work together to design, build, install, and establish a preservation plan for the memorial.

Creative Objectives

Create a permanent, sensorially compelling,
and engaging public art memorial that centers
and **preserves the experiences of the**
***Clotilda* survivors.**

Promote dialogue about the injustice of the transatlantic slave trade, while offering **space for hope and inspiration** rooted in fortitude, resilience, mutual care, and spiritual/cultural continuity.

Creative Objectives

Convey the **dignity of the survivors** while honoring the gravity of the histories and experiences connected to the *Clotilda*.

Creative Objectives

Honor the specificity of the *Clotilda* survivors' experiences while **recognizing the resonance of their stories** for many local, national, and global communities.

Creative Objectives

Express a sense of place that authentically
engages past, present, and future.

Community Engagement Overview



Why Community Engagement?



We believe that the key to a successful outcome is working together.

We look to learn from community members about their stories, experiences, and ideas to develop collective themes that will guide artists in creating proposals for the memorial.

Throughout this process, we have been learning from community and descendant experiences, listening and asking questions, and fostering conversations among community members. Collectively, we call this process community engagement.

Community engagement moves us towards achieving our creative objectives and ensures that the memorial's design is informed by the experiences of community members.

Community Engagement Goals



- **Identify collective themes** for the memorial based on the ideas, desires, inspirations, and feedback communicated by community members.
- **Communicate themes and community desires** to the shortlist of artists via a synthesis presentation as well as direct quotes.
- **Learn from the personal histories and ongoing efforts of community members and descendants** in order to **highlight these voices and experiences** in the memorial.
- **Develop lasting relationships** with local partners and community leaders.
- **Maintain a line of communication** between community members and the memorial team as the project progresses.

The Role of Community Engagement in This Project



The foundation of the Clotilda Memorial is rooted in the collective voice and expertise of descendants and community members in Africatown and beyond.

Stories, experiences, and hopes for the memorial will be gathered and shared in a series of in-person and virtual collaborative sessions. The insights and summaries of these vital exchanges will be carefully channeled into the framework for the official Call for Artists, ultimately shaping the artistic expression of the memorial.

This commitment to shared memory and vision is a serious and determined effort to honor a profound legacy. As the project evolves, these powerful stories and memories will be shared with a broader audience through an accessible web platform, as an act of expanded historic preservation.



How Does Community Engagement Inform the Design of the Memorial?



- All shortlisted artists will have access to the community engagement outcomes while designing their proposals: This includes a package with the themes and synthesis developed over the course of the engagements as well as the “Share Your Inspiration” materials and the “Messages to the Artist.”
- **Artists are expected to internalize these materials and incorporate the spirit into their proposed designs.**

Community Engagement Process



The community engagement process was comprised of **7 community meetings and 10 one-on-one meetings**, held either in-person in Africatown or virtually online.

The community meetings were open to all and looked to identify themes, visions and objectives of the memorial. The cyclical cadence of the meetings worked to receive, process, and present synthesized feedback to the community that will eventually help guide the artist's design of the memorial.

One-on-one meetings were more open-ended, and guided by the interests and expertise of the participants. The conversations covered topics from local history and childhood memories to family lineage and cultural traditions.

Both types of meetings were integral to the results found in this document.

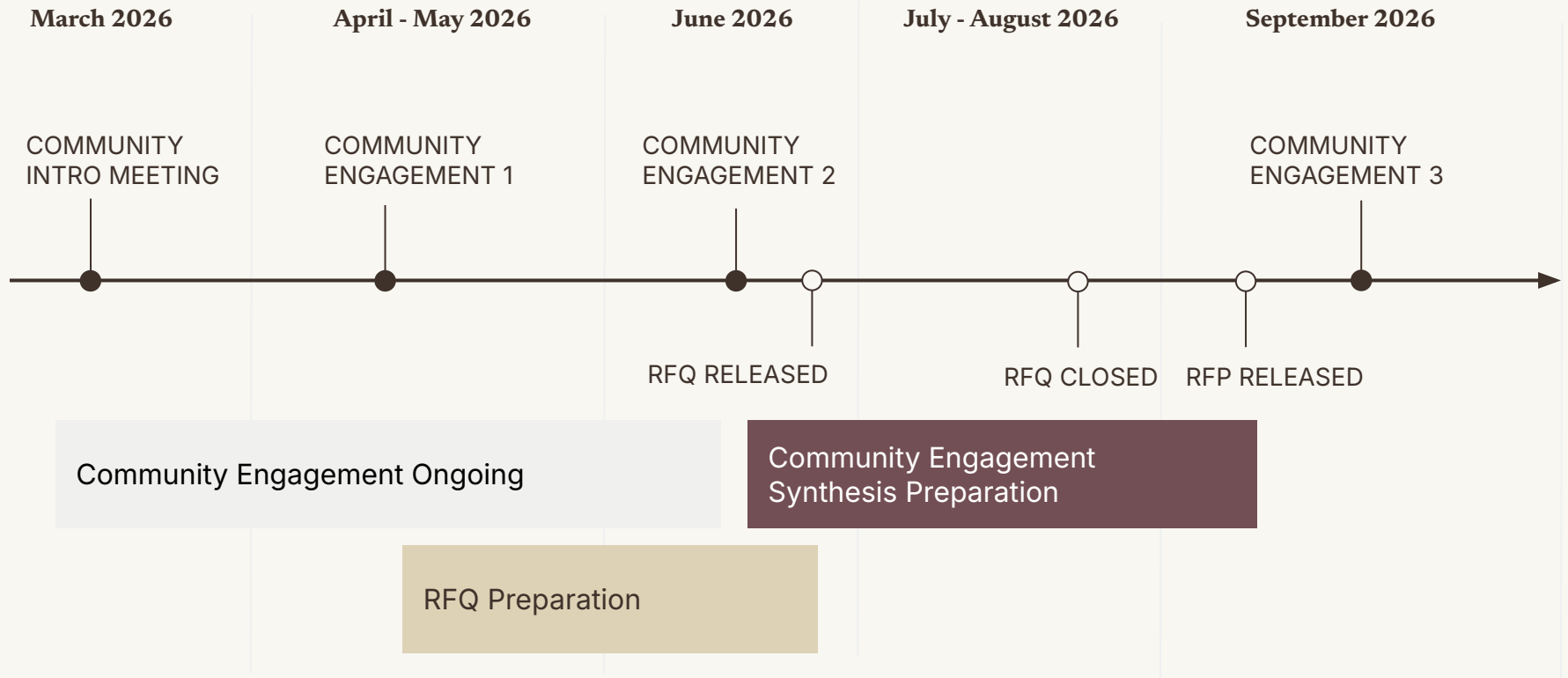
Community Engagement Sessions



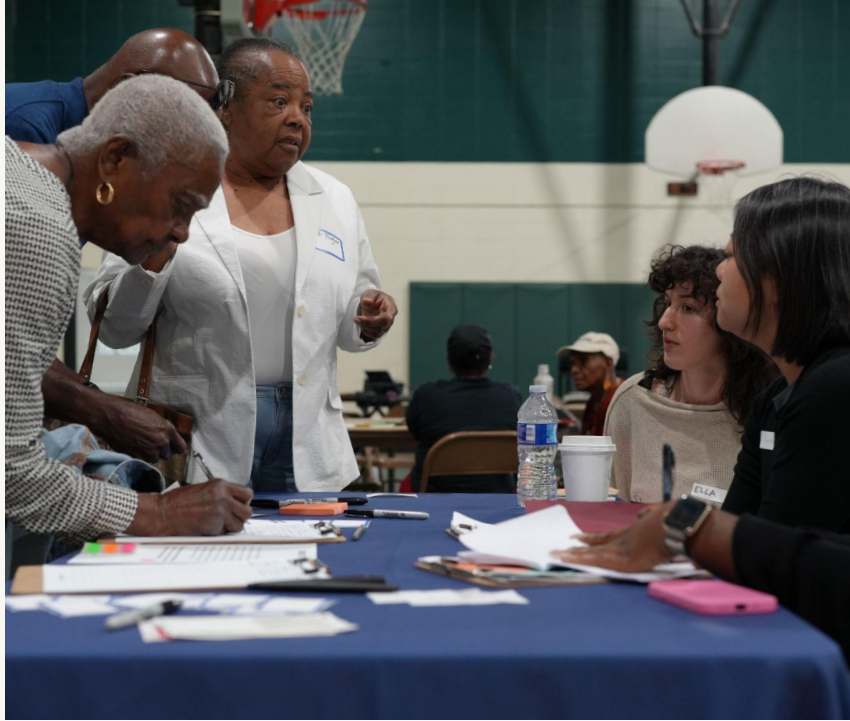
The community engagement team connected with community members on a variety of levels, from 1:1 meetings to open invitation community engagement activity sessions. Sessions that were open to the public were held on the following dates:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| March 5th, 2026 | Community Intro Meeting (Africatown) |
| April 21st, 2026 | Community Engagement 1 (Africatown) |
| April 28th, 2026 | Virtual Community Engagement 1 |
| June 4th, 2026 | Community Engagement 2 (Africatown) |
| June 11th, 2026 | Virtual Community Engagement 2 |
| Sept 29th, 2026 | Community Engagement 3 (Africatown) |
| Oct 7th, 2026 | Virtual Community Engagement 3 |

Community Engagement Timeline



Community Engagement Practices



Out of respect for the privacy of participants, and in the spirit of active listening, **1:1 conversations and virtual engagement sessions were not recorded.** Written notes captured the content and summaries are shared publicly on the project website.

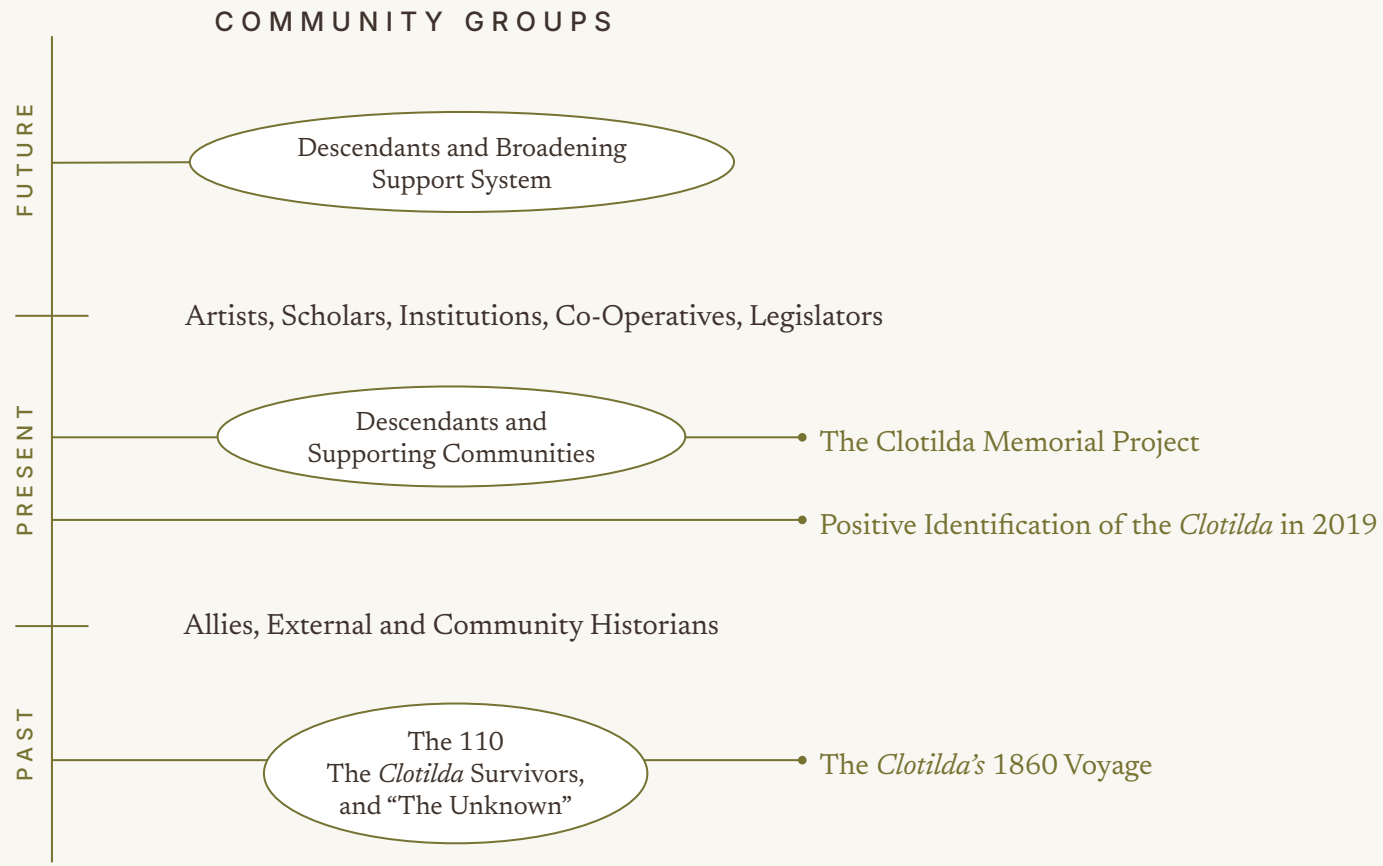
For in-person community sessions, participants indicated if they did not want their image shared. Colored dots could be added to their name tag to withhold their image from being shared.

Throughout the process, we honored the privacy of community members by asking for consent around sharing images and anecdotes, and accurately credited contributors whenever possible.

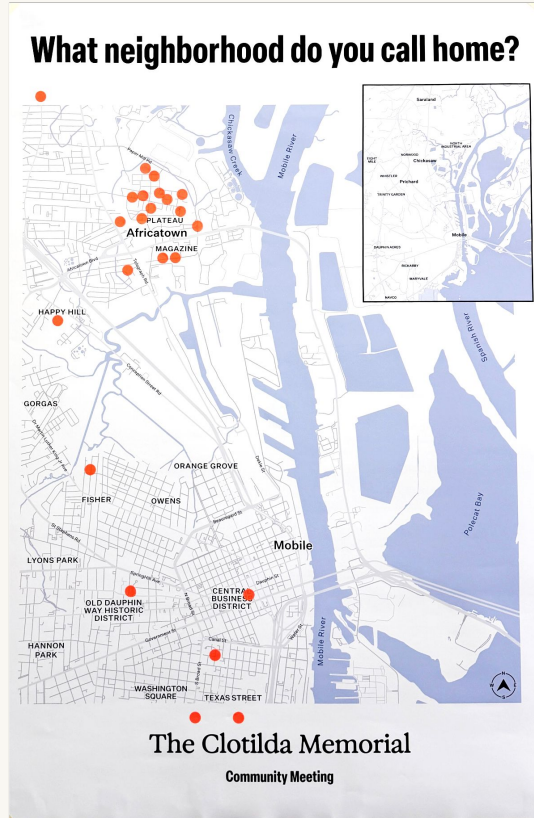


Community Context

Community Groups and Audiences



Community Context



This engagement process aimed to interact with a handful of overlapping communities: primarily the descendants of *Clotilda* survivors, Africatown/Mobile community members, and regional participants from the broader Alabama Black Belt.

At the start of every in-person engagement session, participants were asked to place a sticker on the map to show where they were coming from. On the left is a map from the April engagement session.

Community Context



The *Clotilda* descendant diaspora is an international community with members residing throughout the Black Belt of Alabama, across the United States and beyond.

In order to reach a large breadth of communities, we conducted community engagement sessions both in-person (in Africatown) and virtually.

Descendants have ancestral relationship with the West African area known as Yorubaland, in current-day Nigeria and Benin. Ouidah is the location of the captives' disembarkment from Africa.

Themes & Synthesis:

What we're hearing

Synthesis Overview

Throughout the community engagement process, the team gathered and synthesized the thoughts, ideas, and aspirations of various communities. The synthesis was refined as the number and breadth of conversations progressed.

What follows is an effort to convey the outcomes of this community engagement in a way that is digestible and succinct while respecting the nuance and complexity inherent in this project. This synthesis is presented as a series of four themes with supporting quotes taken directly from community conversations.

To supplement this synthesis, the selected artist(s) will be provided with the “Message to the Artist” letters and “Share Your Inspiration” materials.

Synthesis Process

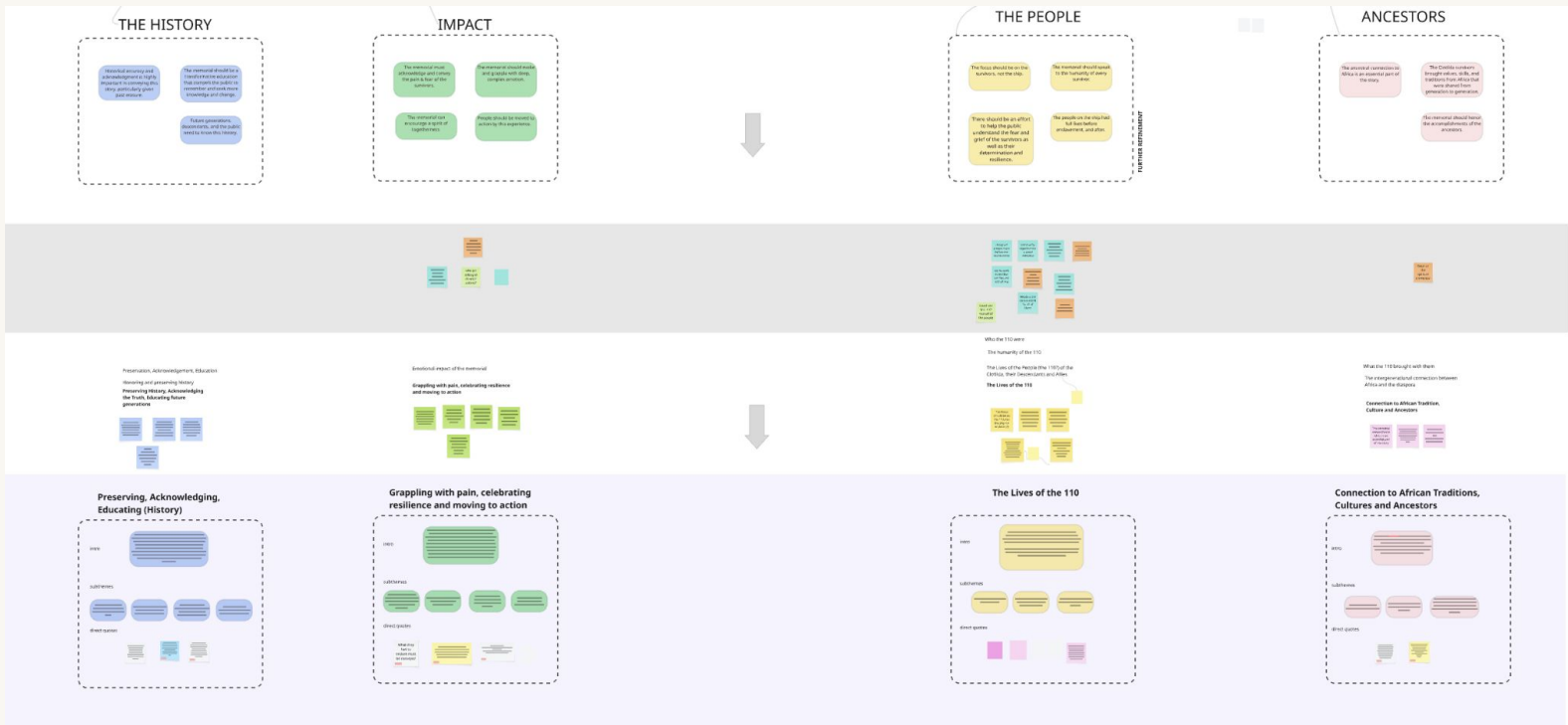
- **Step 1:** Collect and transcribe information from community engagement sessions and one-on-one conversations (drawing from comment cards, meeting notes, audio and video recording)
- **Step 2:** Assemble and review collected information (quotes, comments, ideas, feedback etc.) on a digital board
- **Step 3:** Identify commonalities, key ideas, and concerns
- **Step 4:** Present these key ideas to community members and receive feedback
- **Step 5:** Refine, rework, note recurring ideas and add new themes based on feedback

Synthesis Process



After each conversation, we organized themes and direct quotes on a digital board. Quotes were tagged according to their original speaker or meeting session.

Synthesis Process



As we moved through the process, these themes become more refined and nuanced in accordance with community feedback.

Synthesis Process



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Memorial Themes

Notes on Language

In refining these themes, we heard feedback from community members around language and inclusion. Based on this feedback, our synthesis includes the following:

- Acknowledge and honor the “Unknown”: the name descendants use to refer to the African captives who died during the *Clotilda*’s voyage on the Middle Passage. Based on suggestions from community members, **we chose to refer to this group as “the 110” in order to acknowledge all of the individuals forced aboard the *Clotilda*.**
- **Acknowledge the breadth of communities who contributed to this legacy:** this includes those who may not be direct descendants of *Clotilda* survivors but lived alongside and in community with them.

Memorial Themes

Community Goals for the Memorial

Through the community engagement process, four primary goals emerged. These goals connect to the themes presented

- **Humanize and remember the survivors**
- **Honor and connect with ancestors**
- **Educate and preserve history**
- **Evoke empathy and lasting emotional reflection**

Memorial Themes

The Clotilda Memorial Themes

The engagement synthesis process, taking into account conversations, meetings, and virtual sessions, led us to these four overarching themes. These themes will inform the design of the memorial.

- **The Lives of the 110**
- **Connecting to African Traditions, Cultures & Ancestors**
- **Preserving, Acknowledging & Educating**
- **The Memorial as a Transformative Emotional Experience**

Memorial Themes

The Lives of the 110

Who they were, where they came from, what they accomplished:

A resounding theme throughout our conversations was that this story is not about the *Clotilda* ship—it is about the humanity of the individuals forced aboard—their lives and legacies.

Despite hardship and discrimination, the *Clotilda* survivors, alongside other freedpeople, created flourishing and enduring communities in Africatown, Mobile, and across Alabama. These communities live on through the efforts of descendants and local community members.

Memorial Themes

Connecting to African Traditions & Ancestors

Celebrating ancestral roots and legacies

- Ancestral connection to Africa is essential to the story.
- The memorial should honor the accomplishments of the ancestors.
- African spirituality, traditions, skills, and values were brought here by the *Clotilda* survivors, passed down generations, and continue to be an important part of life today.

Memorial Themes

Preserving, Acknowledging & Educating

Acknowledging the past so it will be preserved for the future

- Historical accuracy and acknowledgment are highly important in conveying this story.
- This history has been carried on by descendants and the broader community from generation to generation.
- The memorial should connect to ongoing efforts to preserve and acknowledge this history.
- Future generations, descendants, and the public need to know this history.

Memorial Themes

The Memorial as a Transformative Emotional Experience

The memorial must engage with complex emotions and move visitors to reflect

The memorial should...

- Evoke a breadth of emotions: acknowledging the pain and fear that captives endured and elevating the strength and resilience of survivors.
- Compel visitors to remember this history and seek more knowledge.
- Encourage a spirit of togetherness and healing.

Reflection

Reflection

The community engagement team feels immense gratitude for the opportunity to connect with a wide range of individuals who care deeply about the past, present, and future of their communities. Throughout this journey, the team had the privilege of meeting local historians, activists, organizers, community developers, land stewards, business-owners, and artists. **We are grateful for the trust extended to us and the willingness of community members to share their knowledge, ideas, feelings, concerns and aspirations.**

Continued community engagement is essential to the success of this project. We hope that artists keep these themes at the forefront of their design process and engage sincerely with the thoughts that community members have to convey.

Jury Members

Jury Members

- Altevese Rosario** President, Clotilda Descendants Association
- Anderson Flen** Invested Community, Eldest Generation
- Cleon Jones Jr.** Invested Community, Middle Generation
- Eddie Griffith** Vice Chair, Alabama Historical Commission
- Emmett Lewis** Descendant, Younger Generation
- John Crear** Descendant, Eldest Generation
- Joycelyn Davis** Descendant, Middle Generation
- Kamau Sadiki** Shipwreck and Diving Specialist
- LaStarsha Mcgarity** Regional Arts and Conservation Specialist
- Merceria Ludgood** Commissioner, Mobile County
- T.C. Coley** Black Heritage Council

Artist Selection Process

Artist Selection Process



Selection Criteria

Selection Criteria: Jury Deliberation Process

The selection criteria, or rubric, was developed with the jury. The rubric is a scorecard to measure the quality of the artist's submission. The jury will use that rubric to score the artist's submissions to help determine the final selection.

1. Each jury member will evaluate and score every applicant independently.
2. Once the individual review process is complete, the project team will compile the scores and reconvene the jury for collective deliberation.

Selection Criteria: Rubric Categories

The rubric includes the following categories:

- **Artistic Excellence & Quality of Past Work**
- **Relevant Experience, Technical Capacity & Project Readiness**
- **Community Engagement & Collaborative Practice**
- **Cultural Understanding & Alignment with Project Goals**

Selection Criteria: Community Connection

Artists' work that demonstrate community collaboration and cultural understanding are highlighted as important qualities for selection. The following is taken from the rubric:

"While all evaluation categories are important, particular consideration should be given to applicants who demonstrate a sustained history of meaningful community engagement, collaborative practice, and culturally sensitive approaches to public art.

Artists receiving the highest overall scores will be considered for advancement to the finalist stage of the selection process. We will select 3-5 artist finalists to engage in the Request for Proposal process (RFP)."

Who Responded to the RFQ?

RFQ Respondents

The Request for Qualifications, or RFQ, opened on June 29th and closed on August 9th.

Artists were asked to submit the following materials for the jury to review:

- Letter of Interest
- Resume or CV
- Images of Past Work
- Annotated Image List

RFQ Respondent Data

We have received a total

206

Artist RFQ Submissions

Call for Artists: RFQ Application Summary

206

Total Applicants

176

United States
85.4%

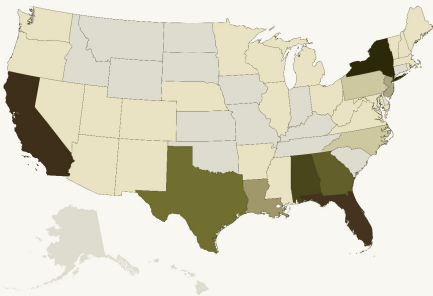
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International
14.6%

20

Countries

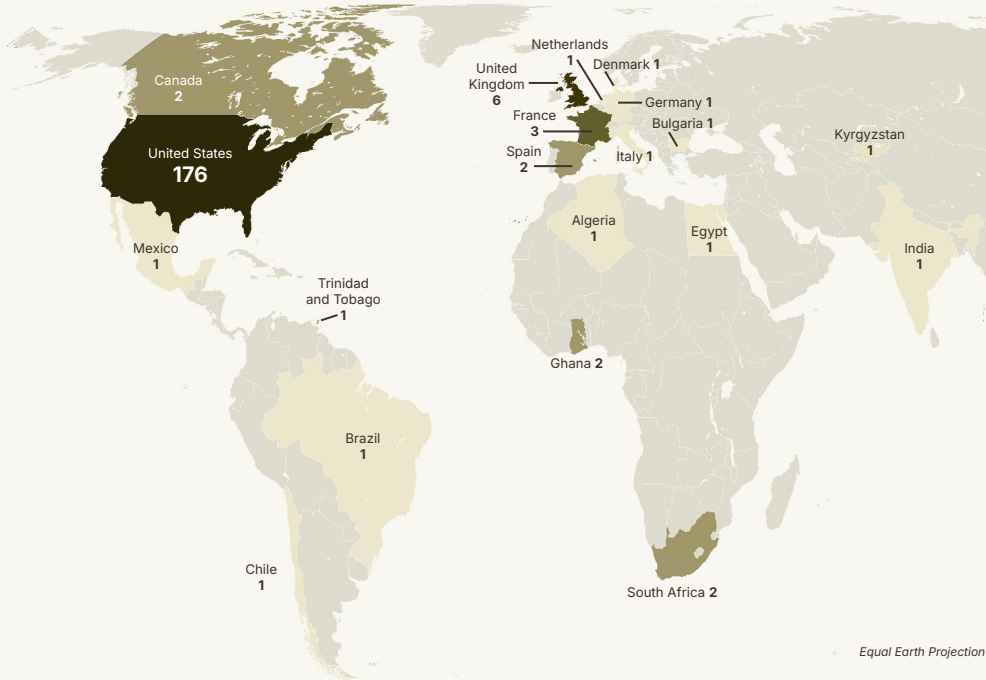
Applicants Across the United States



Top States by Number of Applicants

● New York	25	● Texas	11
● California	19	● Louisiana	9
● Florida	15	● New Jersey	6
● Alabama	13	● North Carolina	5
● Georgia	12	● Pennsylvania	5

● States with 1-4 applicants



International Applicants

● United Kingdom	6
● France	3
● Canada	2
● Ghana	2
● South Africa	2
● Spain	2
● Algeria	1
● Brazil	1
● Bulgaria	1
● Chile	1
● Denmark	1
● Egypt	1
● Germany	1
● India	1
● Italy	1
● Kyrgyzstan	1
● Mexico	1
● Netherlands	1
● Trinidad and Tobago	1

Total

30

Jury Members

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Cleon Jones Jr. Invested Community, Middle Generation
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Merceria Ludgood Commissioner, Mobile County
T.C. Coley Black Heritage Council

Questions?

AHC



Daniel Fiore is an Emmy Award-winning cinematographer and director whose work has spanned television, documentary, and advertising for over 16 years.

State Archaeology Update

Engineering Update





Stantec Team



Carl Ferraro

*Principal, Senior Environmental Scientist
Project Manager*



Luis Maristany, PE, PMP

*Principal, Coastal Engineer
Senior Coastal Engineer*



Chris Lashley, PhD., PE, PMP

*Senior Coastal Engineer
Engineering Team Leader*

Past Clotilda Experience

- Wetlands and T&E Species Assessments
- USACE Permitting
- Sediment Sampling Protocol Development and Oversight
- Geotechnical Engineering Analysis and USACE Permitting for Marker Piles





Our Team



SEARCH

Global Leader in Maritime Archaeology



James P. Delgado, PhD. *

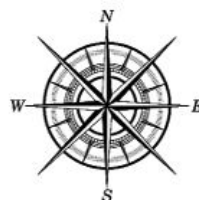
World-Renowned Archeologist & Historian



**SOUTHERN
EARTH SCIENCES**
Geotechnical | Environmental | Materials Testing

Southern Earth Sciences

Geotechnical Investigations



ROWE
ENGINEERING & SURVEYING

Rowe Engineering & Surveying

Topographic and Bathymetric Survey

*headshot from James' website: [James Delgado – Underwater Explorer & Storyteller](#)



Stantec's Current Scope of Work

Site Assessment: Conduct surveys, analysis, and modeling to assess the stability of the Clotilda and the surrounding river bottoms.

Memorial Team Support: Provide planning, engineering and design, environmental permitting, and construction oversight support services to the AHC and the Memorial team.



Questions?

Next Steps

Virtual Meeting Invitation

Next week we will be holding a virtual meeting with the same presentation.

Virtual Meeting Details:

- Date: Wednesday, October 7 at 6pm
- Time: 6:00 PM – 7:30 PM CST
- Location: Zoom

To RSVP, please email **TheClotildaMemorial@gmail.com**