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Bristol Middle Passage Project to host slavery remembrance event



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The Andrade family, through Jody & Billy Andrade's Foundation, and the John Andrade Insurance Agency Inc., donated funds for a call to artists to design the memorial being installed at Independence Park.

Posted Friday, August 11, 2023 12:59 pm

Many changes have occurred to the former Middle Passage committee of volunteers working toward the installation of a memorial acknowledging Bristol's role in the slave trade and to honor the people impacted.

The committee is no longer an ad hoc group, rather it has become a Section 501c-3 tax exempt Rhode Island nonprofit corporation. This past spring, it officially became the Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker Project and it elected a board of directors and established a set of bylaws for governance as a charitable organization.

The board of directors thank Catherine Zipf and the Bristol Historic & Preservation Society for their past support in acting as the sponsoring organization for the nonprofit for several years, and for assisting it toward attaining autonomy.

The organization's primary goal has been to install the memorial at a town-approved site within Independence Park. In February, the organization placed a temporary sign at an approved site in the park. Recently in May, it put out a public Call for Artists' to submit proposals for the memorial design, allowing for a two-month period of submissions along with site visits for interested artists. An independent jury of professionals has been appointed to select three artist finalists in September. The finalists will receive a stipend

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to refine their designs and make models, which will then be presented to the community in a public forum. The organization will be seeking input from neighbors and citizens of Bristol to assist in the selection of the final artist, and for approval of the design for the permanent memorial.

Funding for the Call for Artists process has been made through the generosity of Jody & Billy Andrade's Foundation, and also the John Andrade Insurance Agency Inc.

The organization will sponsor an event in Independence Park on Wednesday, Aug. 23, at 6 p.m., commemorating the International Day for the Remembrance of the Abolition of Slavery. There are similar events occurring around the world. There will be a land acknowledgement from a member of the Pokanoket Nation and a short talk by Bernard K. Freamon, professor of law at Roger Williams University, on the importance of remembering the abolition of slavery.

The board of directors will soon embark on a major fund-raising effort to collect funding for the fabrication and installation of the memorial. It is seeking grants from various sources, and donations from individual citizens will be requested. The board said the memorial will be an important touchstone toward healing and reconciliation for Bristol, which has a legacy in the history of slavery and slave trading in the United States that should not be forgotten.

The board will also be involved in implementing an educational program to bring speakers to town in an open community forum to share discourse on history and human rights. An event is planned on Wednesday, Sept. 20, at St. Michael's parish house with guest speaker Keith Stokes on "Creative Survival: African Heritage, Enslavement & Freedom in Early Rhode Island." More details will follow.

Work has also been done to establish a website for the organization. There are two URLs for reference, <https://www.bmppmp.org> (<https://www.bmppmp.org>) and the full name: <https://www.bristolmiddlepassageportmarkerproject.org> (<https://www.bristolmiddlepassageportmarkerproject.org>). The organization can be contacted directly through its website.

For more information, contact Stephan Brigidi at stephanbrigidi12@gmail.com or Bernard Freamon at bfreamon@rwu.edu.

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Eden Sprent

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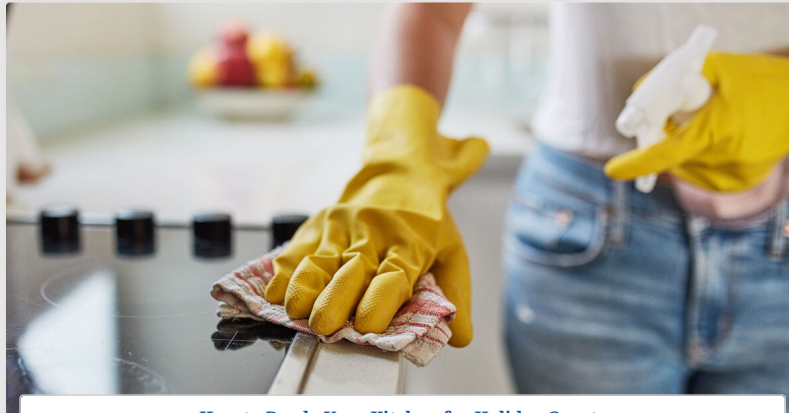
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MEET OUR STAFF



Mike Rego

Mike Rego has worked at East Bay Newspapers since 2001, helping the company launch The Westport Shorelines. He soon after became a Sports Editor, spending the next 10-plus years in that role before taking over as editor of The East Providence Post in February of 2012. To contact Mike about The Post or to submit information, suggest story ideas or photo opportunities, etc. in East Providence, email mrego@eastbaymediagroup.com.

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