



RECKONINGS

*A local history platform for
the community-archivist*

Press Release



**Northeastern
University**

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Press Release for Northeastern University Planning Grant
“Reckonings: A Local History Platform for the Community-Archivist”

The Mellon Foundation has awarded a \$500,000 planning grant to Northeastern University for Reckonings, an innovative program of collaboration to empower BIPOC communities and citizens in the preservation, creation, and curation of community histories. This effort sees reckoning with and making the historical record more accurate. With an emphasis on digital and physical sustainability for Boston and New England, the Reckonings team of scholars will work with partner organizations and students to correct gaps and inequalities in the existing historical record, and assist communities to recover under-represented histories and cultures. Dr. Kabria Baumgartner, Dean’s Associate Professor of History and Africana Studies, and one of the principal investigators on the grant, emphasizes that collaboration between the university and cultural and social service organizations as well as museums will be crucial for this work of community co-creation and co-curation: “I’m excited about the Reckonings project because we have the incredible opportunity to expand our research on the histories of marginalized people in this region and we will be able to collaborate with students, community organizations, and other scholars.”

Building on multifaceted and multi-media work in Boston and New England, the project will scale existing pilot initiatives into innovative and reusable frameworks for humanities research and learning beyond the spaces of the university. The intent is to find common ground within and across organizations (historical societies, museums, community centers, social service organizations, community colleges, and universities) and to make analog and digital tools accessible and usable for community-archivists. The project will promote six specific goals:

- Creating a service model for the humanities that transforms aspects of scholarship and digital humanities work into replicable and easily adaptable methods that communities can use.
- Democratizing archive-making and storytelling processes for communities, drawing on and transforming frameworks of knowledge production and dissemination in the humanities, and opening new opportunities for knowledge exchange.
- Documenting, disseminating, and preserving the histories of BIPOC communities and other marginalized groups.

- Co-curating and co-creating a readily accessible and portable series of analog and digital resources where communities share their local histories.
- Training undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students in this work through classrooms, service-learning, and other experiential placements with partner organizations.
- Developing equitable compensation models for community partners at the individual and institutional levels that properly reflect their contributions as co-creators and co-curators in both the planning and implementation phases.

Community and institutional partners on Reckonings at this time include:

- The Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire <https://blackheritagetrailnh.org/>
- The West End Museum <https://thewestendmuseum.org/>
- The Leventhal Map Center <https://www.leventhalmap.org/>
- Old North Church & Historic Site <https://www.oldnorth.com/>
- ISTWA: The Haitian Women's Association of Boston/Asosiyasyon Fanm Ayisyen nan Boston (AFAB/KAFANM) <http://afab-kafanm.org/wp/>
- The Boston Research Center (BRC) <https://bostonresearchcenter.org/>
- The Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project (CRRJ) <https://crrj.org/>

We will build on lessons learned from two Mellon-funded projects – the Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project (CRRJ) and the Boston Research Center (BRC) – with which we are currently involved. Indeed, we envision Reckonings as working together with the BRC and CRRJ to expand the range of techniques neighborhoods and communities can use to recapture, reckon with, and re-represent the past in new ways.

Northeastern University collaborating faculty on Reckonings include Nicole Aljoe, Professor of English and Africana Studies; Margaret Burnham, University Distinguished Professor of Law and Director of the Civil Rights and Restorative Justice Project; Regine Jean-Charles, Director of Africana Studies, Dean's Professor of Culture and Social Justice, and Professor of Africana Studies and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies; Liza Weinstein, Associate Professor and Department Chair of Sociology; and Alexandra To, Assistant Professor in the College of Art, Media, and Design (Games) and the Khoury College of Computer Science. Partnering also on Reckonings as a faculty collaborator is Dorothy Kim, Brandeis University Assistant Professor of English.

Northeastern's lead principal investigators on Reckonings are Uta Poiger, Dean of the College of Social Sciences and Humanities and Professor of History; and Angel David Nieves, Director of Public Humanities, Director of the Public History Program, Professor of Africana Studies, History, Digital Humanities, and English. Kabria Baumgartner and Dan Cohen, Vice Provost for Information Collaboration, Dean of the Libraries, and Professor of History serve as principal investigators. Dean Cohen writes: "I'm thrilled about the intersection of the Reckonings initiative with existing efforts by the Northeastern University Library to work closely with local communities who wish to surface, preserve, and present their diverse histories and cultures. As a

historian and librarian, I am looking forward to exploring with my colleagues, and with groups and individuals in the greater Boston area, the multiple ways that this project will forge new forms for that historical record, and press society to come to terms with the past.”



About the Mellon Foundation

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