

# Protest & Politics: The Bostonian Legacy

“In every human Breast, God has implanted a Principle, which we call Love of Freedom; it is impatient of Oppression, and pants for Deliverance.” — Phillis Wheatley

Lined down Commonwealth Avenue Mall lies the prodigious sculptures of celebrated Bostonians we pay homage to in recognition and remembrance. Of which include the founding fathers of our great nation, and leading abolitionists of the Antebellum period. Progressive Massachusetts statesmen Charles Sumner and reformative journalist William Lloyd Garrison stand tall, etched in bronze stone, serving as a reminder of anti-slavery political protest that defines a great pillar of our democracy. Sculptor Meredith Burgmann similarly commemorates leading abolitionary and suffragette feminists Abigail Adams, Lucy Stone, and Phillis Wheatley at the Women’s Memorial, representing Boston’s illustrious history of protest against oppression. The academic accomplishments of former slave and poet Phillis Wheatley (pictured on the top left) redefined racist attitudes regarding the intellectual capabilities of African slaves. Her educational fortitude was inherently rebellious, and serves as a reminder of African-American endeavors against long-held prejudices. This legacy of anti-slavery advocacy reigns in physical monuments at the heart of Boston, where children and families gather on the remnants of their movements across the Common’s fields. Boston served as a breeding ground for progressive social activism into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with leading civil rights figureheads amassing traction within the city. Martin Luther King Jr., graduate of Boston University’s school of theology, held gripping speeches to crowds of 22,000 under the gazebo of Beacon Hill in April of 1965. Now the magnanimous monument serves as a kissing booth for shameless couples. While the bronze statues of the Women’s Memorial transparently remind viewers of Boston’s role in initiating reformative social justice policies throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century and into the civil war, the gazebo (pictured on the bottom left) is a silent (and often forgotten) memorial and facilitator of uprisings against racial discrimination during the civil rights movement. Though their initial built intentions serve differing functions, both their legacies are tied to the commemoration of protest against white nationalism. In today’s contemptuous political climate, with fascist fervor running rampant in a post-Trump era, progressive Bostonian liberals remain up-in-arms, mirroring New-England’s foundational legacy of civil disobedience. At the steps of the Massachusetts State House, protestors still congregate fighting for equality and social justice. Just this past Saturday, protestors gathered to demand the state grant rights to obtain a licenses on behalf of illegal immigrants. As we continue to advocate for the equality of black lives in the Northeast, we must remember the legacy of abolitionists and civil rights leaders before us that have paved the way since 1630 in this epicenter of American democracy.

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