

OFFERED BY COUNCILORS BENJAMIN J. WEBER, RUTHZEE LOUIJEUNE, BREADON, COLETTA ZAPATA, DURKAN, FITZGERALD, FLYNN, MEJIA, MURPHY, PEPÉN, SANTANA, AND WORRELL



CITY OF BOSTON

IN THE YEAR TWO THOUSAND TWENTY FIVE

RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE “HOPE OUT OF DARKNESS” ART INSTALLATION COMMEMORATING 170 YEARS SINCE SOLOMON NORTHUP’S VISIT TO BOSTON

WHEREAS, The Boston City Council recognizes that Boston is a city shaped by both the legacies of slavery and the courageous efforts of abolitionists, affirming its duty to preserve and celebrate the voices of those who fought for justice and freedom; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston in the 19th century, while a thriving center of commerce, education, and culture, was also entwined with the economic structures of slavery, yet became a hub of abolitionist activism, including societies, lectures, and newspapers dedicated to ending slavery—creating the civic landscape in which Solomon Northup’s story resonated; *and*

WHEREAS, Solomon Northup, born a free man in Minerva, New York in 1807, endured kidnapping and 12 years of enslavement in Louisiana before regaining his freedom on January 4, 1853, and throughout his life demonstrated resilience, moral courage, and steadfast dedication to the cause of liberty; *and*

WHEREAS, Northup’s activism was multi-faceted: he published his landmark memoir, *Twelve Years a Slave*, in 1853, providing a powerful firsthand account of the cruelty of slavery; he delivered lectures across New England, including in Boston, Worcester, Springfield, and Fitchburg, educating citizens and strengthening the abolitionist movement; and he dramatized the struggle for freedom through the stage production *The Free Slave* in 1855 and 1856, which brought the realities of enslavement to life for audiences across the Northern states; *and*

WHEREAS, Northup’s activism made him a leader in the abolitionist movement and inspired contemporaries such as Senator Charles Sumner, William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, reinforcing Boston’s role as a center of progressive action and anti-slavery advocacy; *and*

WHEREAS, Boston’s abolitionist movement led to its resistance to the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act, which included the creation of the Boston Vigilance Committee that worked to prevent the capture and return of freedom seekers. Notable acts of resistance included the successful 1851 rescue of Shadrach Minkins from a Boston courthouse and the 1854 attempt to free Anthony Burns. Boston’s resistance to the Fugitive Slave Act fueled public anti-slavery sentiment across the North; *and*

WHEREAS, The enduring impact of Northup's life and advocacy is recognized in the creation of a bronze sculpture, *Hope Out of Darkness*, commissioned by the Solomon Northup Committee for Commemorative Works of Marksville, Louisiana, and crafted by sculptor Wesley Wofford of Wofford Sculpture Studios; *and*

WHEREAS, This sculpture will be temporarily installed on the Rose Kennedy Greenway in Boston from October through December 2025, honoring Northup's impact on the City of Boston, inviting reflection on civic responsibility, the fight for justice, and the transformative power of art, before finding its permanent home in Marksville, Louisiana, the city where Northup was freed; ***NOW, THEREFORE BE IT***

RESOLVED: That the Boston City Council honors and commemorates Solomon Northup, a man of courage and resilience, for his remarkable life, his steadfast commitment to the abolition of slavery, his influential lectures and dramatic works across Massachusetts, and his enduring authorship of *Twelve Years A Slave*; and further recognizes the temporary installation of the bronze sculpture *Hope Out of Darkness* as a landmark occasion for the City of Boston, celebrating the city's role in preserving his legacy and in promoting justice, memory, healing and the enduring values of freedom; ***BE IT FURTHER***

RESOLVED: That a copy of this resolution be transmitted by the Boston City Clerk to the Solomon Northup Committee for Commemorative Works, the North American Indian Center of Boston and Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy, as a testament of the City's enduring respect, admiration, and gratitude.

Filed on: October 20, 2025