

William Starr  
for the County  
of New Haven

WITNESS STONES  
PROJECT, INC.

ANNUAL REPORT

2021



# OUR VISION

Communities committed to learning their history, dismantling current inequities, and building a just future.

# OUR MISSION

To restore the history and honor the humanity of the enslaved individuals who helped build our communities.

# OUR BELIEFS

We believe that slavery was critical to the development of our country.

We believe that slavery shaped the beliefs about race in our country.

We believe that slavery was the main cause of the Civil War.

We believe that the enslaved resisted their bonds and contributed to the cultural, social, and economic growth of our country.

We believe that telling the truth about the history of slavery is the first step toward racial reconciliation and addressing inequality.

# OUR PROJECT

I was introduced to the Witness Stones Project in its earliest days when middle school teacher Dennis Culliton and psychotherapist Douglas Nygren were contemplating an idea to uncover and acknowledge the humanity and contributions of enslaved people who had helped to build their town of Guilford, Connecticut.

Dennis described his work guiding his students at Elisabeth C. Adams Middle School to use documents, such as wills, property records, probate inventories, and census records, to piece together forgotten lives. He was teaching his students to know their own town in ways they had never done before and to read between the lines to imagine the lives of enslaved people. He told me how students worked together to piece together history like a jigsaw, teaching each other their knowledge, writing biographical sketches, and uncovering paths of history. They found my ancestors along one of those paths.

In all my years of schooling, I had never been taught the things these students were learning. I had never been taught about the existence of enslaved people in the North, the true nature of slavery and its economic contributions to our nation's wealth, the truth that Native Americans were also enslaved, and the fact that thousands of Black people lived in every American colony. I certainly never learned that more than 10,000 Black men had fought in America's revolution. Or that my fifth-great-grandfather was one of them.

When I learned this new knowledge, it reoriented me. It made me appreciate my true place in the country. America wasn't an accident that I fell into. She wasn't my country by default. She was my country because nearly 300 years of my ancestors' blood, sweat, and tears had earned her for me. My ancestors didn't inherit America; they shaped and fought for her existence and her freedom at a time when their own was denied.

The Witness Stones Project is a critical necessity for our country. The effort is not critical solely because it restores the humanity that was stolen from the enslaved. It is critical because it can change a student's empathetic orientation to the hard facts of our country's past. It is critical because we need a truthful telling of America's history that acknowledges the contributions of all Americans.

Our history is not without pain. Neither is our present. Nor will our future be unless we own our history and grow from it together. Our real history is our children's right. It is their legacy. And it must be their truth. And if we do this right, the ability to discuss, understand, acknowledge, and reconcile our collective history will be our children's power.



**Pat Wilson Pheanious, JD, MSW**  
Co-Chair of the Board of Directors  
Witness Stones Project, Inc.

# OUR WORK

Inspired by the *Stolpersteine* project in Germany, and with their blessing, the Witness Stones Project began in Guilford, Connecticut, in 2017. Our mission is to restore the history and honor the humanity of the enslaved individuals who helped build our communities.

We do this work through teacher workshops, engagement with students and the larger community, and, finally, memorializing enslaved individuals through the installation of Witness Stones.

The Project provides research assistance, teacher development, and curriculum support to help middle and high school students study the history of slavery in their own communities. The students explore the lives of enslaved individuals through primary source documents, including account books, wills, probate inventories, church and town records, indenture contracts, manumission deeds, obituaries, and other surviving archival material.

Documents from centuries ago come alive in the twenty-first century classroom. Students learn to identify the dehumanization and paternalism of slavery; the economic and legal framework that supported slavery; and the agency, resistance, and contributions of the enslaved. The students then create biographical sketches of the forgotten enslaved men, women, and children and share those stories through many mediums, including art, poetry, essays, and films.

Finally, the students bring their communities together to place Witness Stones: permanent brass markers that memorialize enslaved individuals where they lived, worked, or worshipped. At public installation ceremonies, students, faculty, administrators, historians, public officials, local clergy, and the larger community remember and honor the forgotten through music, poetry, oration, and reflection.

Our hope is that the students' work and the public memorials inspire communities to learn their true history, dismantle current inequities, and build a just future.



Witness Stone Installation  
for Pink Primus  
at the Pardee-Morris House,  
New Haven, Connecticut



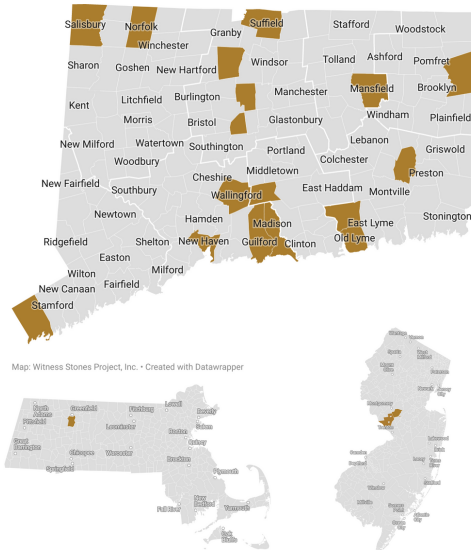
Witness Stones  
for Phillis & Montros  
at the Guilford Savings Bank,  
Guilford, Connecticut



Witness Stone Installation  
for James Mars  
at First Church of  
Christ Congregational,  
Norfolk, Connecticut

# OUR COMMUNITIES

## Connecticut Witness Stones Communities



Map: Witness Stones Project, Inc. - Created with Datawrapper

## Connecticut

Bush-Holley House, Central Connecticut State University, Cold Spring School, Conard High School, The Country School, Elisabeth C. Adams Middle School, First Church of Christ Congregational Norfolk, First Congregational Church of Old Lyme, The Foote School, Frank Ward Strong Middle School, Greenwich Academy, Greenwich Historical Society, Henry James Memorial School, Hyland House Museum, Killingly High School, King Philip Middle School, Kingswood Oxford School, Leffingwell House Museum, Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School, Mansfield Middle School, New Haven Museum, Noah Webster House, Norfolk Historical Society, North Congregational Church, Norwich Free Academy, Old Lyme Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library, Pardee-Morris House, Renbrook School, Sacred Heart Greenwich. Salisbury School, Sedgwick Middle School, Solomon Schecter Day School of Greater Hartford, Suffield Academy, Suffield Historical Society, Wallingford Historic Preservation Trust, Westfield Congregational Church, Witness Stones Old Lyme, Witness Stones West Hartford, Witness to History: Slavery in Guilford.

## Massachusetts

Historic Deerfield

## New Jersey

Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum, Timberlane Middle School

**4820** students who have explored and shared the history of slavery in their communities

**72** individuals whose stories have been restored and whose lives has been honored with a Witness Stone

**42** affiliated institutions in **3** states

# OUR IMPACT

"We have an obligation to teach students history—the good stuff and the not so good stuff—in America's and in Connecticut's past..... This is the perfect program for what we would like to promote at the State Department of Education."

—**Connecticut Department of Education Social Studies Coordinator Stephen Armstrong**

"By sharing a more complete and complex history, you've shined a light on a path to the future."

—**National Green Valley Heritage Corridor Executive Director Lois Bruinooge**

"This [installation ceremony] is such a beautiful event for us not just to embrace our history, but to do it in such a way that it brings hope and promise to our future."

—**Connecticut House Republican Leader Vincent Candelora**

"The Witness Stones Project has been a rewarding experience this year. Having the opportunity to learn about Hester has opened my eyes to the stark reality of American history and has made me think more critically about what has been recorded and what has been omitted from the records."

—**Greenwich Academy student Eliza Carroll**

"I applaud the Witness Stones Project and its partners for bringing together the community to learn, to heal, and to grow."

—**Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro**

"We hope that the Witness Stones partnership continues to engage us in ongoing and involving conversations, crucial and hard conversations, compassionate conversations."

—**First Congregational Church of Old Lyme Associate Pastor the Reverend Laura Fitzpatrick-Nager**

"Our children are going beyond their role as student and are embracing the role of historian. That they are embracing that history critically and honestly makes me proud of Guilford students."

—**Superintendent of Guilford Public Schools Dr. Paul Freeman**

"We hope that these people will not be forgotten and these histories will be revealed."

—**Old Lyme First Selectman Tim Griswold**

"Rich and robust history is made up of many stories. The only way that we can move forward is to tell the truth about those stories."

—**Congresswoman Jahana Hayes**

"The students are learning and thinking deeply about topics that we didn't learn about until we were adults... We owe it to the history of our town and to our students for them to have the full history."

—**Lyme-Old Lyme Middle School teacher Olivia Hersant**

"I am proud of a community and school district that teaches history as it really was, not as we wished it was."

—**Guilford First Selectman Matt Hooley**

# OUR IMPACT

"I am grateful that we can acknowledge the tragedy of our history while also celebrating the life of a special, unique human being."

—**Madison First Selectwoman Peggy Lyons**

"It makes me feel proud to be able to tell these stories. We are giving a voice back to these people."

—**Khalil Quotap, Director of Education & Engagement, New Haven Museum**

"These young men and women will be much better off having worked on the Witness Stones Project."

—**Connecticut State Representative Sean Scanlon**

"By placing a Witness Stone, we witness it. We see it. When you see, you cannot unsee."

—**West Hartford Board of Education Vice-Chair Dr. Lorna Thomas-Farquharson**

"The work on the Witness Stones has just been fantastic.... History needs to be told, and that's what you're doing."

—**West Hartford Town Councilor Ben Wenograd**

"This project had an effect on me. We can't move forward unless we understand the past."

—**Chief Deputy Connecticut Senate Republican Leader Kevin Witkos**

"Learning about the fact that there were slaves in West Hartford, an area that I have been in my whole life, is profound. As an African American living in West Hartford, Peleg's story struck me deeply."

—**Kingswood Oxford student Isais Wooden**

## —SELECTED MEDIA—

[New Haven Register, July 31, 2021, "Look at the Whole Story: Connecticut Educators Rethink Lessons on Racism, Slavery"](#)

[WFSB-TV Channel 3 Eyewitness News, June 10, 2021, "West Hartford Holding Juneteenth Celebration"](#)

[WNPR-Radio Where We Live, May 21, 2021, "Commemorating the Lives of Enslaved People in Connecticut"](#)

[WTIC-TV Fox61 News, June 4, 2021, "Honoring the Forgotten"](#)

[WTNH-TV News 8, June 14, 2021, "Witness Stones' School Project Highlights Lyme-Old Lyme's History of Slavery ahead of Juneteenth"](#)

[WVIT-TV NBC Connecticut, June 5, 2021, "Old Lyme Installs Witness Stones"](#)

[WVPR-Vermont Public Radio, September 17, 2020, "New England's Abolitionist History At Odds With Racist Realities"](#)

# OUR GROWTH

## Statement of Activity

June 30, 2021 and 2020

	2021	2020
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Workshop & License Fees	\$78,925.00	\$15,250.00
Donations	\$10,499.97	\$10,059.45
Pro Bono Services	\$3,225.00	\$12,095.42
Grants	\$4,500.00	\$0.00
Lecture Fees	\$2,050.00	\$0.00
<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>\$99,199.97</b>	<b>\$37,404.87</b>
<b>EXPENDITURES</b>		
Employee Compensation	\$33,261.20	\$0.00
Program Materials	\$5,912.10	\$145.00
Legal & Professional Services	\$3,275.00	\$12,575.42
Office Supplies & Software	\$1,247.21	\$615.21
Advertising & Marketing	\$883.19	\$4,626.74
Payroll Services	\$745.95	\$0.00
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$45,324.65</b>	<b>\$17,962.37</b>
<b>Net Revenue</b>	<b>\$53,875.32</b>	<b>\$19,442.50</b>

## Statement of Financial Position

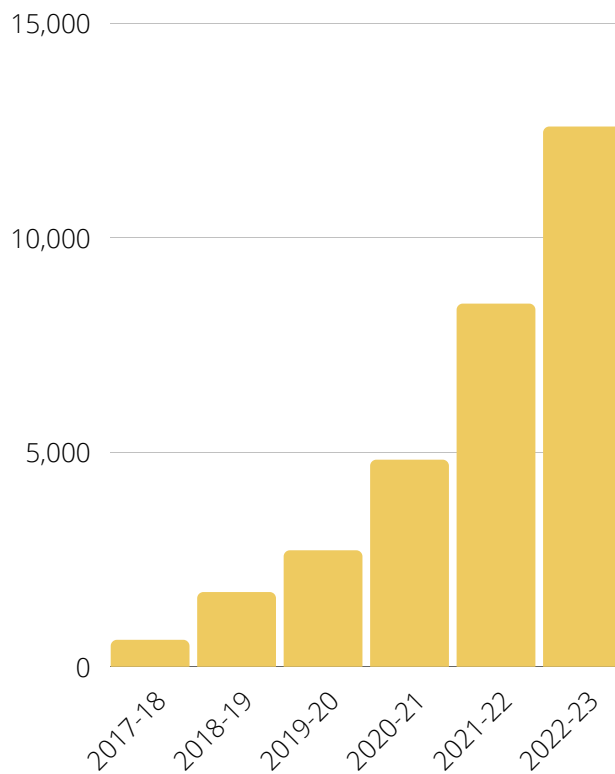
June 30, 2021 and 2020

	2021	2020
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Cash	\$34,366.82	\$13,292.50
Accounts Receivable	\$38,126.00	\$6,150.00
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$72,492.82</b>	<b>\$19,442.50</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Accounts Payable	\$675.00	\$0.00
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$675.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
Retained Earnings	\$62,770.51	\$14,868.19
Net Revenue	\$9,047.31	\$4,574.31
<b>Total Net Assets</b>	<b>\$71,817.82</b>	<b>\$19,442.50</b>
<b>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</b>	<b>\$72,492.82</b>	<b>\$19,442.50</b>



Students, teachers, and honored guests at the Witness Stones Ceremony in Greenwich. This ceremony was one of ten Witness Stones installation ceremonies held during spring 2021. (Courtesy of the Greenwich Historical Society)

# OUR POSSIBILITIES



**Projected Students Reached**

In our first four years, the Project reached more than 4,800 students in 18 schools. When the school year begins in autumn 2021, we will be working in 28 schools.

During fiscal year 2021, 82% of our revenue came directly from affiliated schools and historic institutions. Donations from individuals, foundations, and corporations contributed a critical 18% of our resources. We spent 86% of our resources on our core work of research, teacher development, and student programs.

We believe that the Witness Stones Project's impact is only limited by the receptiveness and support of our communities.

The Project's Board of Directors has approved a [2021-2024 Strategic Plan](#) which includes three primary objectives: to expand the number of schools and standardize the curriculum to reach a broader group of students by age, geography, and racial composition; to strengthen communications and increase network engagement for schools and research affiliates; and to build organizational capacity to scale and meet the demand for its programs.

The Witness Stones Project is incorporated in Connecticut and is designated a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Audited financial statements are available upon request.

# OUR SUPPORTERS

The Witness Stones Project is made possible through the support of its affiliates and the generosity of the Friends of the Project. You can become a Friend by visiting our website.

## Platinum

Giudice Family Foundation  
Pro Bono Partnership  
Rogers Family Foundation  
William Casper Graustein  
Memorial Foundation

## Gold

Guilford Savings Bank  
Kevin Brett Jennings  
Terry and Sandy Kensler  
Carl and Grace Zimmer

## Granite

Elizabeth Allen  
Chittenden Family  
Connecticut Explored  
Corvette Family Foundation  
David Knapp  
Mary Beth Forshaw and Thomas G. Merrill

Courtney King Murphy  
Elizabeth Norman  
Pat Wilson Pheanious  
Blake Ruddock

## Stone

Sarah Antine  
Rita Coté  
Pauline MacLeod Farley  
Erin French  
Sylvia Gafford-Alexander  
Barrie and Maggie Grove  
Lazette Jackson  
Heather Mackenzie  
Marketplace at Guilford Food Center  
John Mills  
Alice Ridgway  
Eric Sejourne  
Bruce Sylvester  
John Tully  
Keith Wilson  
Ador Yano

## Brass

Susan Benjamin  
Dennis and Linda Culliton  
Lauren Cutuli  
Susan Hedgpeth  
Melissa Houston  
Kay Matthews-Sussman  
Estelle Nussbaum  
Sarah Torff  
Doris Uzasas

## Student/Senior

Kerry Erlanger  
Katherine Frydenborg  
Kate Klein  
Robin Whitney

Sponsorship Levels: Platinum \$2,000, Gold \$1,000, Granite \$500, Stone \$100, Brass \$50, Student/Senior \$15.00. List reflects annual donations received through June 30, 2021

We would also like to thank the following supporters for their contributions to the Witness Stones Project this year.

ABAR Suffield  
Atlantic Black Box Project  
Anti-Racist Teaching & Learning Collective  
Rebekah Beaulieu, Director, Florence  
Griswold Museum  
David Blight, Sterling Professor of History of  
African American Studies, and of  
American Studies, Yale University  
Kelly Bridges, teacher, Sacred Heart  
Greenwich  
Antoinette Brim-Bell, poet  
Lois Bruinooge, Executive Director, The Last  
Green Valley National Heritage Corridor  
John B. Buck, President, Stoutsburg  
Sourland African American Museum

Joy Burns, Physician Assistant, Smilow  
Cancer Center; Member, Amistad  
Committee & Yale and Slavery  
Working Group  
Thomas Bushnell, teacher, Elisabeth C.  
Adams Middle School  
Heather Butler, teacher, The Country  
School  
Fred Camillo, First Selectman of  
Greenwich  
Sheri Cantor, Mayor of West Hartford  
Central Connecticut State University  
Jonathan Chapman, Pastor, Westfield  
Congregational Church  
Church of Christ Congregational,  
Norfolk

Connecticut Association of  
Independent Schools  
Connecticut's Old State House  
Judith Cooke, Pastor, North Guilford  
Congregational Church  
Michael Craig, teacher, Killingly High  
School  
Denise deMello, Co-Director, Witness  
Stones West Hartford  
Liz Devine, Co-Director, Witness  
Stones West Hartford  
Kristen Erickson, teacher, Sacred  
Heart Greenwich  
Tammy Exum, Connecticut State  
Representative  
First Congregational Church of  
Madison

# OUR SUPPORTERS

First Congregational Church of Old Lyme  
Laura Fitzpatrick-Nager, Associate  
Pastor, First Congregational Church  
of Old Lyme  
Florence Griswold Museum  
Robert Pierce Forbes  
Paul Freeman, Superintendent of  
Guilford Public Schools  
Anna Marie Greco, Director of  
Education, Greenwich Historical  
Society  
Tim Griswold, First Selectman, Old Lyme,  
Elise Guari, Principal, Killingly High  
School  
Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of  
Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition at  
Yale University  
Cleo Graham, Pastor, Faith  
Congregational Church  
Guilford Free Library  
Jahana Hayes, U.S. Representative  
Maria Horn, Connecticut State  
Representative  
Katie Huffman, Director of the Old Lyme  
Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library  
Kella Kandra Hughes, Director of  
Community and Creativity, Church of  
Christ Congregational, Norfolk  
Indigo Arts Alliance  
Frederick-Douglass Knowles II, Hartford  
Poet Laureate  
Tamara Lanier  
Last Green Valley National Heritage  
Corridor  
Sheila Lavey, teacher, Foote School  
Skye Lee, teacher, Foote School  
Leffingwell House Museum  
Joseph Lewerk, Teacher, Killingly High  
School  
Liz Lightfoot, Teacher, The Country  
School  
Kristin Liu, teacher, The Country School  
Heather Lodge, Manager of Youth and  
Family Programs, Greenwich  
Historical Society

Katie McCarthy, Teacher, Kingswood  
Oxford School  
Jumoke McDuffie-Thurmond  
Debra Mecky, Executive Director,  
Greenwich Historical Society  
Rockley Miller  
Rhonan Mokriski, Teacher, Salisbury  
School  
Angaza Mwando, Co-founder, Our  
Culture Is Beautiful  
Effie Mwando, Co-founder, Our Culture  
Is Beautiful  
Michael Negrón  
New Haven Museum  
Marilyn Nelson, former Connecticut  
Poet Laureate,; Professor Emerita,  
University of Connecticut;  
Thomas Nins, Pastor, First Baptist  
Church, Greenwich  
Noah Webster House  
Norfolk Historical Society  
Norwalk Historical Society  
Kaitlyn Oberndorfer  
Sean O'Connor, teacher, Conard High  
School  
Old Lyme Phoebe Griffin Noyes Library  
Erick Olsen, Pastor, Church of Christ  
Congregational, Norfolk  
Jerrad Pacatte  
Pardee-Morris House  
Beth Payne, Director, Dudley Farm  
Museum  
Phelps-Hathaway House  
Dennis Powell, President, NAACP  
Berkshire County Branch  
Preservation Connecticut  
Khalil Quotap, Director of Education  
and Engagement, New Haven  
Museum  
Michael Regan, Principal, Elisabeth C.  
Adams Middle School  
Susan Ruddock  
Kate Rushin  
Hallie Sorensen, Choir Director, North  
Guilford Congregational Church  
*Stolpersteine*

Stoutsburg Surland African American  
Museum  
Suffield Historical Society  
Bill Sullivan, Teacher, Suffield Academy  
Lynn Thomas, Retired OB-GYN; Member,  
West Hartford African American  
Social & Cultural Organization  
Lorna Thomas-Farquharson, Vice Chair,  
West Hartford Board of Education  
Margaret Anne Tockarshewsky, Executive  
Director, New Haven Museum  
Jon Van Epps, North Guilford  
Congregational Church 300  
Committee  
Teresa Vega  
Laura Ventres, Director, Old Lyme Middle  
School Chorus  
Sarah Vetter, Minister of Community Life,  
First Congregation Church of  
Madison  
Todd Vetter, Senior Minister, First  
Congregational Church of Madison  
Rhonda Ward, New London Poet  
Laureate  
Carolyn Wakeman, Chair, Witness Stones  
Old Lyme  
Wallingford Historic Preservation Trust  
Margaret M. Weaver, Municipal Historian,  
Killingly  
Westfield Congregational Church  
Lisa Williamson  
Tracey Wilson, Co-Director, Witness  
Stones West Hartford  
Kevin Witkos, Connecticut State Senator  
Witness Stones Old Lyme  
Witness Stones West Hartford  
Witness to History: Slavery in Guilford

# OUR TEAM



**Dennis Culliton**, MAT, CAGS  
Founder & Executive Director  
Retired teacher and local historian.



**Rita Coté**, MLS, MAT  
Secretary  
Retired teacher and librarian.



**Pat Wilson Pheanious**, JD, MSW  
Co-Chair.  
Former Member of the Connecticut House of Representatives and Connecticut Commissioner of the State Department of Social Services.



**Grace Zimmer**  
Treasurer  
Former editor and publisher. President Emerita, Hyland House Museum.



**Lauren Cutuli**  
Co-Chair. Educational and non-profit consultant.

**Sylvia Gafford-Alexander**, MSW  
Director  
Retired, UCONN School of Social Work, Organizational and Skill Development (DSS), Executive Program Director.



**Kevin Jennings**, MAT, MBA  
Vice-Chair  
Executive Director, Lambda Legal Defense Fund, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Education 2009-2011.



**Courtney King Murphy**  
Director  
Independent Social Impact and Corporate Social Responsibility Consultant; Director, Strategic Partnerships and Development, Social Venture Partners CT.

## Cover credits:



The word Sankofa, from the Asante Twi language of the Akan people of Western Africa, means "to return and get it." The Sankofa symbol is associated with the proverb "*Se wo were fi na wosankofa a yenkyi*," which translates to "It is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten." Our rendering was created by Cathi Bosco.

The cover features the 1793 manumission document for Candace (1751-1826).. Guilford Town Property Records, Vol. 14, p. 233.

## Contact Us

Dennis Culliton, Executive Director

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Mail: P.O.Box 250, Guilford, CT 06437

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