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The pulpit of Howard Thurman
of the legacy of MLK Jr.

"Service of Celebration"

Sunday November 16th

with Guest Preacher Rev. Raphael Warnock, PhD



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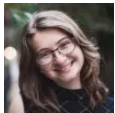
Marsh Chapel & Religious Life

ARTS & CULTURE

October 23rd, 2025

Boston Public Library launches first major exhibition in 10 years

'Revolution!' explores history's overlooked narratives



Celina Colby

Celina Colby is an arts and travel reporter with a fondness for Russian novels.... [VIEW BIO](#)





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This week the Boston Public Library launches its first major exhibition in nearly a decade. [“Revolution! 250 Years of Art & Activism in Boston”](#) showcases more than 100 art and documentary objects from the library’s collection exploring the idea of revolution both then and now.

While contemplating the direction of the exhibition, Kristin Parker, lead curator of the arts was inspired by Dorchester-based photographer AbdoulNasser Mika.

Mika did a fellowship with the library in 2023 and was surprised to learn in his research about some of the small, early activist groups in Boston, particularly those composed of Black women. As a documentary photographer working primarily in the Dorchester, Roxbury and Mattapan neighborhoods, it was exciting for Mika to see how far back the activist roots went.

Inspired by how that discovery impacted Mika, Parker decided to focus the exhibition on those small, local activist groups and people of color often left out of the big narratives like the Boston Massacre and the Battle of Bunker Hill.

“Who was left out of the narrative of the Revolutionary War and what do people continue to fight for now?” said Parker. “That helped us root ourselves in the kind of curatorial thesis, which is the narrative of people working together to enact change and contemporary artists imagining another world is possible.”



Boston Public Library opens “Revolution! 250 Years of Art & Activism in Boston” on Oct.23. The exhibition showcases more than 100 art and documentary objects from the library’s collection exploring the idea of revolution both then and now. PHOTO: MEL TAING

Mika now teaches humanities at the Urban Achievers high school in Dorchester and hopes to take his students to see the exhibition.

The exhibition is also an opportunity to spread awareness about the library’s visual art collection. The collection includes one million objects, among them an 1852 oil portrait of George Washington by Emanuel Leutze that Boston Public School students raised funds to purchase for the library in the 1950s. Also featured are contemporary works acquired in the past couple years.

That Leutze painting, “Washington at Dorchester Heights,” is one of the central discussion points of the

enslaver in the library public space.

To address that discourse, Newton-born Black artist Michael Thorpe created “Out of Order, Fortification of Dorchester Heights,” a vibrant textile reinterpretation of the Washington painting. Throughout the exhibition Thorpe will periodically rearrange the squares of his quilt to illustrate how history is an ever-changing narrative and discussion.

Many of the works will address current issues facing the United States, such as immigration, queer and transgender rights and women’s bodily autonomy. Some of the rights Bostonians were fighting for during the Revolutionary War continue to resonate strongly today.

“When the Boston Public Library first opened its doors, the very idea of a free public library was revolutionary,” said BPL President David Leonard. “With ‘Revolution!’ we carry that spirit forward, inviting visitors to explore how the ideals of liberty and justice have evolved over the past 250 years.”

“Revolution!” is on view at the Boston Public Library exhibition hall Oct. 23 through April 21, 2026. It is free to visit and open to all. The library is planning extensive public programming around the exhibition, including artist talks, a digital guide to the exhibition and librarian-made reading lists for further research.

Parker hopes the exhibition will inspire viewers and cause reflection about our current moment.

“Everyone has a part to play in enacting the change they hope for,” Parker said. “Small efforts can equal big results and we’re building off the legacy of those who have come before us.”

Boston Public Library, Revolutionary War