

27 February 2023

Nomination of Devon Henry for ASLA Honorary Member 2023
By the Virginia Chapter of the ASLA

"I asked my administration to go out and seek contracts and bids for those who would be willing to remove these monuments. And in the summer of 2020, we got rejected all across the board ... There were contractors who said that their parents would write them out of their will if they would ever take a contract to remove any of these Confederate memorials. So, when we finally found a contractor ... to remove the monuments I knew that, first, this took a lot of bravery because I knew that threats to his life, threats to his livelihood were all coming. And sure enough, he was brave enough to step up and do it." - Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney (D)

https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/washington-post-live/wplive/stoney-on-devon-henrys-courage-to-remove-confederate-statue/2023/02/15/2f120423-67fb-41f1-a77a-f037241bd862_video.html

On behalf of the Virginia Chapter of the ASLA, we nominate Mr. Devon Henry for his craft and courage in the transformation of several public spaces in Richmond and Charlottesville over the past five years. His heroic and beautifully executed work has done more than anyone else—racial equity advocates, landscape architects or politicians—to change the racialized topography of these two cities, the Capital of the Confederacy (1861-1865) and our Commonwealth, and the home of the University of Virginia, a UN World Heritage site founded and designed by a slave owner and built by enslaved people (1826). Henry's construction firm played different roles in these projects; sometimes he was the contractor building a landscape. At other times, he was the contractor disassembling and removing Lost Cause statues of Confederate Army Generals as well as those of oppressors of Native Americans, such as Lewis and Clark.

The project constructed by Team Henry Enterprises is the Enslaved Laborers Memorial (2020) in the east corner of the UVA Academical Village. The memorial sits within sight of Thomas Jefferson's Rotunda and serpentine garden walls. A partial circle of worked granite, the same diameter as the Rotunda, contains marks and names when known, of the four thousand enslaved people who were owned by, or rented by, the University's administration and faculty. The memorial has received several awards for the design team—architects Howeler Yoon, landscape architect Gregg Bleam, FASLA, and historian Mabel Wilson. More importantly, it has been a major acknowledgement on the part of the University of the role that enslaved Africans and their descendants played in the construction and maintenance of this site from the 1810s through the mid 1860s.

Henry was the general contractor on this project. He collaborated on the material selection of the Virginia Mist granite and its fabrication in Wisconsin, and coordinated all the subconsultants on the project. The care and craft with which this memorial was constructed is astounding, especially given the scrutiny and hostility of some members of the community to siting this memorial in such a prominent place on campus. This project is worthy of praise, but it is really the precursor to Mr. Henry's decision to accept several difficult and dangerous commissions from 2020-2021—the removal of numerous statues from Monument Avenue (1887) in Richmond and Lee Park, Jackson Park, Lewis and Clark plaza and George Rogers Park (1920s) in Charlottesville.

The history and bravery of Mr. Henry's work was chronicled in the 2 January 2023 Washington Post.

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/dc-md-va/2023/01/02/devon-henry-confederate-statues-richmond/>



This is how many of us learned Mr. Henry's name and came to appreciate the bravery and tenacity it took for him to remove these statues. Both cities were the sites of political events and protests in public space, and had been in the national and international press. The *Unite the Right* Rally in Charlottesville (2017) brought thousands of white supremacists to town to protest our City Council's decision to remove two Lost Cause Confederate statues from our historic public parks downtown. That weekend's chaotic and violent confrontation between white supremacists and counter protestors resulted in the death of one innocent Charlottesville resident and the serious injuries of dozens (including UVA School of Architecture students and landscape architects in prominent local firms in town). During the Summer 2020, Richmond's Monument Avenue, a 140' wide boulevard centered on a tree lined median accentuated with five statues, was a magnet for Black Lives Matter protestors. This historic site, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, has been described as one of the most beautiful boulevards in the United States in many design and planning history texts. Few of those texts spoke to the ongoing harm caused by the form and meaning of the statues that punctuated the linearity of this 1.5 mile long street.

We raise the recent history of racial equity protests and white supremacist gatherings and counter protests from 2017-2020 to underscore the scrutiny Mr. Henry and his employees were under, the bravery and conviction it took to accept this job and to perform the work, and the ingenuity Mr. Henry had in implementing the statue removals. He had to go to Connecticut to find a crane as his regular source in Virginia refused to lease it to him when learning about which statues were to be removed. There are numerous examples of his craft, professionalism and determination chronicled in the Washington Post and the local Charlottesville newspapers, the Daily Progress and CVILLE. One last story captures Mr. Henry's grace and generosity as well. After removing two Charlottesville statues of General RE Lee and General Jackson early one Saturday morning, and completing the project much more quickly than estimated (as Team Henry was gaining expertise in the disassembly of these statues), he called the City to see if they would like the Lewis and Clark Statue (with a *cowering Sacagawea*) removed for no extra cost. By Sunday, all four Lost Cause/White supremacist statues in Charlottesville's "City Beautiful" parks were gone. And there was no extra fee charged.

The daily experience of walking and driving by these public spaces no longer reminds Black and Brown Virginians of the lingering celebration of white supremacy during the Jim Crow era in America. To date Team Henry Enterprises has removed 24 statues across the United States, including 15 pieces from Richmond and 4 from Charlottesville. These physical symbols are in storage, or awaiting court cases to be reconfigured—one to be melted down and given to a Black artists to reconfigure. Additionally, the future roles of landscape architects to contribute to the reimagination of these prominent public spaces in Virginia, significantly hampered if these statues were still in place, is now full of possibility. We owe Mr. Henry the recognition for his remarkable work in Charlottesville and Richmond over the past five years. He, as much as unknown future designers, has opened up the scope and vision possible for future public space design and experience in Virginia.

Thank you for your careful consideration of Mr. Devon Henry for ASLA Honorary Membership!

Kind regards,



Elizabeth K. Meyer, FASLA, FCEL
Merrill D. Peterson Professor of Landscape Architecture
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February 28, 2023

American Society of Landscape Architects
Honorary Membership Nominations
c/o Honors and Awards
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Colleagues,

Wearing a bullet proof vest on a job site isn't the norm unless you're in law enforcement. But that, according to a [recent article in the Washington Post](#), is what Devon Henry, who is African American, has taken to doing as part of his job, which includes overseeing the dismantling of memorials to the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia, and elsewhere. Mr. Henry and his firm Team Henry Enterprises were also responsible for constructing the Enslaved Laborers Memorial in the east corner of the University of Virginia Academical Village in 2020. His actions have been integral to transforming the cultural landscape of the heart of the Confederacy and to the broader national reckoning with racial injustice making him worthy of becoming an Honorary American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Member.

The past three years have seen an acceleration of how we individually and as a profession address race, racism, memorialization, commemoration, and equity. This ongoing catharsis has manifested itself in many ways, among them the removal of physical reminders of oppression in the likeness of members of the Confederacy. The conversations over removal were caustic, divisive, ugly, and violent. Then, when it came to the actual job taking down the statuary, no one stepped forward. As Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney told the *Washington Post*: "I asked my administration to go out and seek contracts and bids for those who would be willing to remove these monuments. And in the summer of 2020, we got rejected all across the board ... There were contractors who said that their parents would write them out of their will if they would ever take a contract to remove any of these Confederate memorials."

Devon Henry and Team Henry Enterprises took on the job. As the general contractor on the Enslaved Laborers Memorial, he was known as a skilled and resourceful collaborator working with the design team including architects Howeler Yoon, landscape architect Gregg Bleam, FASLA, and historian Mabel Wilson. To undertake the removal of monuments, which turned out to be unnecessarily difficult and dangerous commissions, would also require courage and bravery. He and his colleagues have faced death threats and acts of overt racism. They even had to go to Connecticut to get the crane they needed because their source in Virginia wouldn't lease them one for the monument removals. Nevertheless, to date he has overseen the removal of 24 statues and symbols of the Confederacy and oppression, including fifteen in Richmond. These daily reminders, which for years taunted and stung, are now gone.

The evolution of our cultural landscape legacy is made up of moments and events that collectively yield narratives and histories. Devon Henry has contributed in a fundamental way to that evolution. I urge you to welcome Devon Henry as an Honorary Member of our profession.

Sincerely,

Charles A. Birnbaum, FASLA FAAR
President and CEO



February 16, 2023

ASLA Honorary Membership Nomination Committee:

It is with great pride and pleasure that I offer this letter of endorsement in support of Honorary ASLA Membership for Devon Henry. Devon and I have worked alongside one another for many years, both as board members for Venture Richmond, and as colleagues in pursuit of compelling and purpose-driven work in the memorialization space. He shares my calling to provide voice to the voiceless; to leave our cities and communities better than we found them. All of which to say: **Devon Henry has, without question, done more in the last three years to meaningfully reshape our shared landscape than most anyone else.**

Work in the memorial and monument space is not for the faint of heart—not in the development and construction of new artifacts, and certainly not in the removal of old ones. Devon has done both. He is fundamentally committed to work that changes the narrative and leaves a legacy. Since July 1, 2020, Devon and his team have removed over two dozen Confederate monuments, among them the monuments of Robert E. Lee, J.E.B. Stuart, Jefferson Davis, Stonewall Jackson, and Matthew Fontaine Maury that lined Richmond's famed Monument Avenue. His work not just changed the aesthetics of our city, but fundamentally shifted our perspective. His work made history.

I hope you'll join me in celebrating the commitment and character of Devon Henry with an Honorary ASLA Membership. It is more than well deserved.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Burt Pinnock". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Burt Pinnock, FAIA, NOMA
Principal | Chairman of the Board



18 February 2023

LETTER OF EVALUATION OF SUPPORT

Devon Henry for Honorary ASLA

Dear colleagues,

Devon Henry embodies the dignity, conviction, and sense of purpose required to participate in the design and construction of public space in the United States in these times. I have invited him to deliver our 2023 Alfred Caldwell Lecture for the Landscape Architecture + Urbanism Program at Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT) this Spring and he will contribute to our ongoing series, "Alfred Caldwell and the Performance of Democracy"

Alfred Caldwell was a teacher and professor at IIT where, as a landscape architect, he provoked students toward consideration of environmental and social ethics in their work. He was known to annoy other faculty whose students would listen to Caldwell's strong voice project across IIT's Crown Hall with recitations of poems of Walt Whitman, lessons from Pepoon's Flora of the Chicago Area, or the follies of politicians. Caldwell held spirited positions on knowledge and its necessity to grow minds. It is an honor, therefore, for Devon Henry to accept our invitation for the Caldwell Lecture and to speak with our students and the Bronzeville community, the historic Black Metropolis, in which our university is situated.

Recognition of Devon Henry with Honorary ASLA seems modest given the impact that he has had on one of the strongest issues of landscape architects – commemoration and our collective memory that is expressed in our work in the public realm. There are few problems more challenging, and critically essential, as this commemoration. Devon Henry's work, and courage, has both helped bring to fruition new commemorative works – as well as set the record straight on others. His purpose and commitment to working with landscape architects to accomplish new narratives of commemoration are inspiring and humbling.

Respectfully,

Ron Henderson, FASLA

Professor, Landscape Architecture + Urbanism Program, Illinois Institute of Technology

Founding Principal, LIRIO Landscape Architecture

Japan-US Friendship Commission, Creative Artist Fellow

Dumbarton Oaks, Senior Fellow 2016-2011

National Park Service, Artist-in-Residence

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February 22, 2022

Honorary Membership Nominations
c/o Honors and Awards
636 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001-3736

Dear Awards Committee members:

I am pleased and honored to write a letter in support of the Virginia Chapter's nomination of Devon Henry for Honorary Membership in ASLA. In my position as University Landscape Architect at The University of Virginia, I worked closely with Mr. Henry and his team during the construction of UVA's Memorial to Enslaved Workers. Mr. Henry and his crews put their heart and soul into building this very special project, sometimes at the risk of their lives. Not only were they skilled and competent in the construction of this highly technical project, but they were always willing to serve as "ambassadors" for a project that aspired to heal the racial divide in our community. To this end, they gave countless tours for local public school groups and the descendants of the enslaved workers who were honored at the Memorial. In particular, Mr. Henry traveled across the Commonwealth speaking about the project and its personal meaning to him at alumni events and fund-raising gatherings.

Mr. Henry's dedication to the success of the project was critical to its realization. I believe this project, in addition to his other important work, has provided notable service to the profession of landscape architecture and he deserves to be recognized as an honorary member of ASLA. I enthusiastically recommend him to the committee for this consideration.

Sincerely,


Mary V. Hughes, FASLA
University Landscape Architect, Emerita
The University of Virginia
Charlottesville, VA 22903



ORBIS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

2023.02.27

Dear Awards Committee members:

It is with great pleasure that I offer this letter of endorsement in support of the nomination of Honorary ASLA Membership for Mr. Devon Henry. I first learned of Mr. Henry, an African American, and his business, Team Henry Enterprises, in 2020 when they began the work of removing confederate monuments from Richmond, Virginia. To date, this team has removed 24 statues of confederate soldiers or indigenous oppressors across the United States. With 15 of these pieces being removed from Richmond. This work is in addition to his role as general contractor during the construction of the Memorial to Enslaved Laborers at the University of Virginia, dedicated 2021. Over these last three years Mr. Henry's work has reshaped our public landscape in ways that few others have. Despite overt racism and threats of violence, Mr. Henry has continued to show up when other (white) contractors simply would not even consider taking on these projects.

Recognition of Devon Henry with Honorary ASLA would acknowledge the significant contributions he has made to reshaping our public spaces and changing the aesthetics of our capital city and grounds of a state university. Devon has established new narratives in our public spaces and changed our collective perspective of spaces of commemoration.

I hope you'll join me in my belief that Devon Henry has significantly contributed to the profession of landscape architecture by supporting his nomination as an honorary member of ASLA.

Sincerely,

Nathan A. Lahy, ASLA
VA ASLA Chapter President

Nominee Contact Details

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