

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the  
**LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY**  
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library  
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from electronic originals  
(may include minor formatting differences from printed original)





**2023**  
ANNUAL REPORT

# JOIN THE DISCUSSION



Art: Daniel Minter



# MAINE HUMANITIES

We connect people with books,  
communities with ideas, and  
strangers with one another.

## STAFF

Samaa Abdurraqib  
**Executive Director**

Harper Batsford  
**Program Coordinator**  
Outreach & Community History

Karen Brown  
**Office Manager**

Diane Magras  
**Director of Development**

Marcela Peres  
**Operations Manager &  
Program Specialist**

Nicole Rancourt  
**Program Manager**

Meghan Reedy  
**Program Coordinator**  
Content & Narrative Development

Lizz Sinclair  
**Program Coordinator**  
Grants & Partnerships

Sampson Spadafore  
**Program Coordinator**  
Communications &  
Content Creation

Kyle Volland  
**Program Coordinator**  
Implementation & Logistics

Ian Watkins  
**Communications Manager**

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Gregory Fahy, Chair, Hallowell

Paul Buck, Vice-Chair,  
St. Agatha

Julie Sheehan, Treasurer,  
Auburn

Joseph M. Hall, Secretary, Lewiston

Lawrence Boyle, Biddeford

Reid Byers, Portland

Jean Deighan, Bangor

Martha Tod Dudman,  
Northeast Harbor

Ayesha Hall, Auburn

Tam Thanh T. Huynh, Augusta

Mazie Hough, Orono

Margery Irvine, Brooklin

Ryan Lolar, Portland

Georges Budagu Makoko,  
Portland

Luis Millones, Portland

Rosalani Moore,  
Verona Island

Mouhamédoul Niang,  
Portland

Amie Parker, Buckfield

Lise Pelletier, Fort Kent

Brendon Reay, Blue Hill

**Maine Humanities Council** is a statewide non-profit organization that uses books, poetry, and big ideas to bring people together to discuss issues of importance. We're a program partner, grantmaker, and connector of people and communities. Our connections strengthen our society and help shape the future of Maine. As Maine's affiliate of the **National Endowment for the Humanities** (NEH), we offer humanities programs and grants for all Mainers.

## HARRIET P. HENRY CENTER FOR THE BOOK

The Maine Humanities Council is home to the Harriet P. Henry Center for the Book, Maine's affiliate for the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. The Library of Congress Center for the Book was established in 1977 to promote books, reading, libraries, and literacy. In 1997 the Maine Humanities Council established the Maine Center for the Book as a state affiliate of that program. It was renamed the Harriet P. Henry Center for the Book in 2003, in honor of Maine's first female judge, a former Board chair of MHC and a longtime supporter of the humanities.

## HOW TO REACH US

**Maine Humanities Council**  
674 Brighton Avenue  
Portland, Maine 04102-1012  
(207) 773-5051  
[info@mainehumanities.org](mailto:info@mainehumanities.org)



@MaineHumanities  
#MaineHumanities

# FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

No matter how you look at it, 2023 was a dynamic year for us at Maine Humanities. It was a year full of change, connections, and community building. You came with us as we asked the year's Big Question: "What if we go on this way?" Afterwards, we heard from attendees that this question helped them in their daily and family life as they considered decisions of great importance. You also joined us on Parable Path Maine as we explored Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower* and we packed Merrill Auditorium for Toshi Reagon's *Parable of the Sower Opera*. And you were with us for our first ever author headlined Readers Retreat with Rivers Solomon. Here at the office, our staff grew by two and we said a late spring goodbye to our colleague of 10 years, Hayden Anderson. It was a big year for us.

We are still feeling the weight and remnants of 2023 all around us — through massive loss, large scale death, and a lingering pandemic. At Big Question 2024, we asked "What do we hold onto? What do we let go?" as a way for us to imagine straddling the present and the past as we do our best to move forward. Moving forward means continuing to grow our humanities programming in ways that help people in Maine connect with each other, their cultures, and their histories. One way that our programming is growing is the introduction of a new program: Community History — a program that will be one part community history and one part storytelling. It's our hope that this program will help communities across Maine as they bring their stories and histories into the spotlight. As a part of this work, our staff will be visiting different regions of Maine as we develop and design this program. We're excited to connect with you in 2024!



**Samaa Abdurraqib**  
Executive Director

## BOOKS & BIG IDEAS

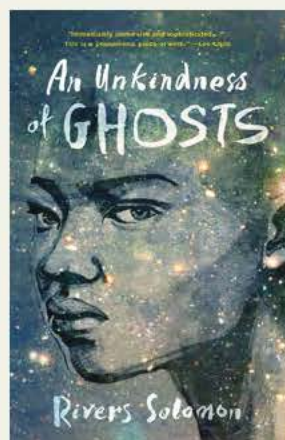
In 2023, two novels that offered communities a starting place for connecting to larger themes and initiatives across our work were Rivers Solomon's *An Unkindness of Ghosts* and Octavia Butler's *Parable of the Sower*. Both books continued our engagement with Afrofuturism and Africanfuturism as we dove deeper into the project of imagining new ways of being, new ways to engage with natural environments, new ways to create community, and new ways to survive and thrive.

*An Unkindness of Ghosts* was the featured book for Readers Retreat and also used as the core text of several programs in preparation for the annual

spring event. And *Parable of the Sower* was read in Discussion Projects across the state as part of Parable Path Maine, a framework for community organizing and artistic engagement based on Octavia Butler's award-winning novel and lead by multi-hyphenate musician Toshi Reagon. The initiative culminated with a sold-out performance of Reagon's *Parable of the Sower Opera* at Merrill Auditorium in Portland.

## Over 200

copies each in communities across Maine



Featured Read for  
Readers Retreat



Featured Read for  
Parable Path Maine



# OPENING UP DISCUSSION

Facilitated discussion of books and texts is a way for people to refine, unsettle, and expand their understanding of their own lives and the lives of others. Whether the people in a group are linked by their work, their place, or their lived experience, every one of our Discussion Projects fosters real communication and connection among participants through listening and being listened to. And the people who facilitate each group value and enjoy reading and exploring poems, stories, and ideas and drawing other people into meaningful discussions about them. In 2023 the Discussion Project continued to be our most requested program — with over sixty groups meeting in communities statewide.

*“The ability to connect with others over a text is incredible. It has the potential to take hold and create change.”*

**Discussion Project Participant,  
Waterboro Public Library**

*“There is something really magical about having a facilitator...it brings a whole different depth to the discussion, especially when you're talking about big subjects.”*

**Discussion Project Participant,  
Healthy Lincoln County**



# GRANTS

*Supporting humanities programs that engage Maine communities*

**Over \$135,000**

in support to Maine  
nonprofits and communities

**24** towns  
represented

**21** grantees awarded an MHC  
grant for the first time

# FEATURED GRANTEE

## THE KNEELING ART PHOTOGRAPHY

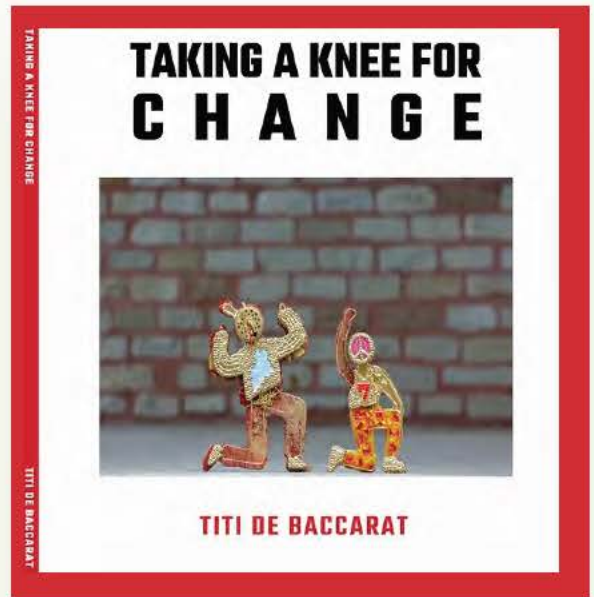
### *Taking a Knee for Change Workshops*

#### MAJOR GRANT - \$7,500

Engaging Maine communities in social justice through interactive workshops led by Mainers who are working to end racism in Maine.

The Kneeling Art Photography is a community social justice art project exploring the meaning and evolution of the Take-A-Knee gesture. The project engages Maine communities through interactive workshops and the book *Taking a Knee for Change*, which highlights inspiring photographs and reflections of Mainers fighting to end racism both locally and nationally.

Funded by a Maine Humanities Major Grant, The *Taking a Knee for Change* workshops include discussions on civic engagement with photographers and activists featured in the book — inspiring participants to become agents of change and commit to justice and equality in their communities.



*“What is the relationship between taking a knee to express love...and protesting for your rights?”*

**Titi De Baccarat,**  
The Kneeling Art Photography

## HOW DO WE KEEP TALKING WITH OUR NEIGHBORS?

### **Making Room for Curiosity and Connection Even When There's Fear and Extremity in the Air**

How do we keep talking with our neighbors, even when...they have ideas that frighten us? Even when we live really different lives? Even when it's difficult? Asking and answering questions like these is what libraries are for. Every day, librarians create chances for people to connect with each other about complex and challenging issues.

That's why in October of 2023 we hosted a special online panel discussion with a group of extraordinary people working with and in Maine's libraries, who shared how they do this vital thing— make room for curiosity and connection around difficult things.

*This program was generously supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the United We Stand: Connecting Through Culture initiative. Any views, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this program do not necessarily represent those of the National Endowment for the Humanities.*

*“I take comfort in knowing that people are more complex and interesting than the veneers we see online and scan on bumpers.”*

**Panelist Heather Perkinson,**  
Maine Association of School Libraries



# WE'RE IN THIS TOGETHER

**This is the work that we're doing together. We're grateful to have you along with us for this wonderful journey.**

Supporting Maine Humanities also supports the idea that this work matters. It expresses the belief that the humanities can encourage critical thinking and public democracy. It celebrates the community we're fostering together; the agency that we're heightening; and the engagement we invite.

Supporting the Maine Humanities with a financial gift is an important kind of partnership. It helps pay for essential costs: books that anchor the ideas of our programs; facilitators and speakers who draw out the discussion that comes from those ideas, weaving powerful sails; and the staff, advisors, and operations that provide a sleek craft beneath it — all of which carries participants to extraordinary places in their own minds.

*The list below includes the people and organizations that made financial gifts during the 2023 fiscal year (between 11/1/2022 and 10/31/23), the year of this report. If you'd like to join this group of partners, go to [mainehumanities.org/donate](https://mainehumanities.org/donate).*

## ANNUAL GIVING – FISCAL YEAR 2023

Anonymous (6)  
Susan Abt  
Friends of the Albion Public Library  
William W. Alcorn  
Nancy Aldrich  
Douglas Allen  
Miles and Jennifer Archer  
in memory of Hayden Anderson  
Lelania Harpal Kaur Avila  
Sally and Ron Bancroft  
Richard E. Barnes  
Stephen P. Beale  
Carol M. Beaumier  
Peter Bellis  
in honor of Patti and Eric Bixel  
Lori Benson  
Patricia Bixel  
Constance Bloomfield and William McFarlane  
Victoria and Erno Bonebakker  
Victoria and Allen Bornheimer  
Dania Bowie  
Jim and Sarah Bowie  
Peter Bowman  
in honor of Steve Rowe  
(former ED/CEO/Maine AG)  
Marjorie A. Boyd, MD  
Dr. Lawrence A. Boyle and Victoria Russell  
Craig Bramley  
Emily and Norman Breitner  
Kathleen and William Brittain  
Rick and Anne Brown  
Elizabeth A. Burdick  
in honor of Hayden and Meredith Anderson  
and in memory of Hayden Anderson  
Paul E. Brunelle  
Paul Buck  
Michael D. Burke  
Margaret E. Burnham Charitable Trust  
Midge and John Burns  
Reid and Patty Byers  
through the Fred C. Rummel Foundation  
Corley Anne Byras

Helen Cafferty and Otto Emersleben  
William L. Case III  
in memory of Betsey Brewster Case  
of Bangor, Maine  
Douglas Chamberlain  
in honor of Hayden Anderson - with profound  
respect and appreciation!  
Paulette Chernack  
Jacqueline and Irvin Cohen Jr.  
Joseph A. Conforti  
in memory of Hayden Anderson  
Claire Connor  
Anthony Corrado  
Brad and Anita Coupe  
Nancy E. Crowell  
in memory of Bill and Mary Ellen Crowell  
Cynthia Freeman Cyr  
Richard and Bonnie D'Abate  
Sally J. Daggett  
Judy and Chuck Danielson  
Jay Davis  
Davis Family Foundation  
Carla Delude  
Craig and Sherry Dietrich  
Diversified Communications  
Linda J. Docherty  
Deborah Downs and Jon Gale  
in honor of Hayden Anderson  
Martha Tod Dudman  
Mimi Dunn  
Harland Eastman  
Tina and Caleb Elfenbein  
John and Beverly Emerson  
in memory of Hayden Anderson  
Susan Emmet  
Greg and Deborah Fahy  
Melody Fitch  
Robert and Kathleen Flory  
Ardelle Foss  
Donald and Elizabeth Fox  
Ed Friedman

Al and Phyllis Fuchs  
Gisela Gamper  
in memory of Dorothy Schwartz  
Noel J. Genova  
Phyllis and Bernard Givertz  
Nancy Glover  
Carolyn Gontoski  
Dennis Grafflin and Jan Phillips  
Geoffrey M. Gratwick and Lucy G. Quimby  
Landis Green and Bruce Norelius  
Charlie and Sue Grosjean  
Ann Armstrong Guild  
Catharine W. Guiles  
Dr. Emily A. Haddad  
Judy Hakola  
Ayesha Hall  
Joe Hall and Melissa Sundell  
Ruth Hannan  
Melinda and Ralph Harder  
Ann Havener  
Stephen Hayes and Carol McCarthy  
Michael and Bridget Healy  
Joyce and Wesley Hedlund  
Douglas M. and Laura A. Henry  
in memory of Harriet P. Henry on what  
would have been her 100th birthday  
Janet Henry and Vernon Moore  
Erica Hirshler  
in memory of Marilyn and Eric Hirshler  
William and Mary Jean Holt  
The Honorable D. Brock and Mrs. Hornby  
Mazie Hough  
Beth Howe & Mac Passano  
Marcia Howell  
Tam Thanh Huynh  
Ramón Jesús Rodríguez Iglesias  
Margery Y. Irvine  
Erik C. Jorgensen and Tamara M. Risser  
Theodora J. Kalikow  
Beth and Joel Kane  
in memory of Hayden Anderson

Susan A. Kaplan  
 Sheldon Katz  
 Deborah Keefe  
 Janet Kehl  
 Edward J. Kelleher, Esq.  
 Frederic R. Kellogg  
 James and Beth Kilbreth  
 Cornelia Kittredge  
 Molly Kizer  
 Stephanie Kumble  
 Gloria Williams Ladd  
   in memory of Lincoln F. Ladd  
 Helen & George Ladd Charitable Corp.  
 Neil and Cathy Lamb  
 Kristin Langellier  
 Catherine and Gary Larkin  
 Alice Larrea  
 William H. Laubenstein III  
 Theodate Lawlor  
 Michele Lettiere  
 Dale and Rich Lewis  
 Carl Little  
 Thomas and Leslie Lizotte  
 Linda Lord  
 Dr. Ben and Barbara Lounsbury  
 Mary Sue and John Love  
 Kit Lunney & Rick Barton  
 Eric Lupfer  
   in memory of Hayden Anderson  
 Esther Mackintosh  
   in memory of Hayden Anderson  
 Nancy M. MacKnight  
   in memory of Hayden Anderson  
 Robert and Marlene Mailloux  
 Larissa Malone  
 Peggy and Roger Marchand  
 Ray Marcotte  
 Karen Massey and Jeff Thaler  
 Audrey Maynard  
   in honor of my mother, Pamela Lord,  
   on her 80th birthday  
 Blainor McGough and Brian Arlet  
 Alan McIlhenry and Elizabeth Ackerson  
 James McKenna and Jane Orbeton  
 Sarah F. McMahon

Abbott and Nancy Meader  
 Patricia Messler  
 Mr. and Mrs. George Metcalf  
 Daphne S. Meyer  
 Lynne Miller and Lawrence Simon  
 Rebecca Millett and Kevin Kobel  
 Luis Millones  
 Joanne and Earl Morse  
 Morton-Kelly Charitable Trust  
 Ann Nelson  
 Mamie Anthoine Ney  
   in memory of Thomas and Margaret  
   Anthoine and in memory of  
   Hayden Anderson  
 Peter O'Brien  
   in honor of Hayden Anderson  
 Onion Foundation  
 Edward A. Barrett and Nancy H. Orr  
 Dorothy Osher  
   through the D. Osher Foundation Trust  
 Harold and Peggy Osher Norumbega Fund  
   of the Maine Community Foundation  
 Carol Parks  
 Haste Family Fund  
   in memory of Harriet S. Passerman  
 Rosalie Tyler Paul  
 Margaret and John Peacock  
 Lise Pelletier  
 David Pence  
 Rita Kay and Richard Bergeron  
 Glen Porter and Jean Deighan  
 Lynne Priest  
 Jane and Jim Pringle  
 Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Prinn III  
 Erica Quin-Easter  
 Jo Radner  
   in honor of Joe Conforti  
 David Richards  
   in memory of Hayden Anderson  
 Marta Rieman  
 Liam Riordan and Susan Thibedeau  
 James and Loretta Risner  
 Winfield and Victoria Robinson  
 Liv Rockefeller and Kenneth Shure

Mary Jane and Howard Rosenfield  
 Thomas Rumpf  
 John Ryan and Jenny Scheu  
 Jean Sanborn  
 Patricia Sanborn  
 Ted and Sharon Sharp  
 Valerie Sherman  
 Bonnie Shulman  
 Linda Silka and Laurence Smith  
 Douglas B. Sinclair  
 Ursula and William Slavick  
 Beth Snyder  
 Stephen Sokol and Gerda Neu-Sokol  
 Benjamin Soule  
 Rick Speer and Judy Frost  
 Seth and Laura Sprague  
 Didi Stockly  
 Paul and Sarah Strickland  
 Lucy Stroble  
 Sarah Margaret and Mark Stuart Fund  
 Iva Sussman  
 Pamela Taylor  
 Theresa Telenga  
 Denise A Tepler  
 Alalia Thaler  
 Linden Thigpen  
 Bob and Judy Tredwell  
 Miriam Kellogg Truslow  
 Diane C. Vatne  
 Julia Walkling  
 John and Maryanne Ward  
 Peter and Margie Webster  
   in memory of Hayden Anderson  
 Shannon Webster  
 Susan Wegner and John Fischer  
 Roberta and Gordon Weil  
 Welch Charitable Fund of the Maine  
   Community Foundation  
 Carol Wishcamper  
 Rosie Wohl  
 Doug and Judy Woodbury  
 Kartika Wright  
 Nancy Ziegler and Kermit Lipez

## THE STATE OF OUR STORY 2023



**MAINE  
HUMANITIES  
COUNCIL**

Harriet P. Henry  
Center for the Book

674 Brighton Avenue  
Portland, Maine 04102-1012  
(207) 773-5051  
info@mainehumanities.org

