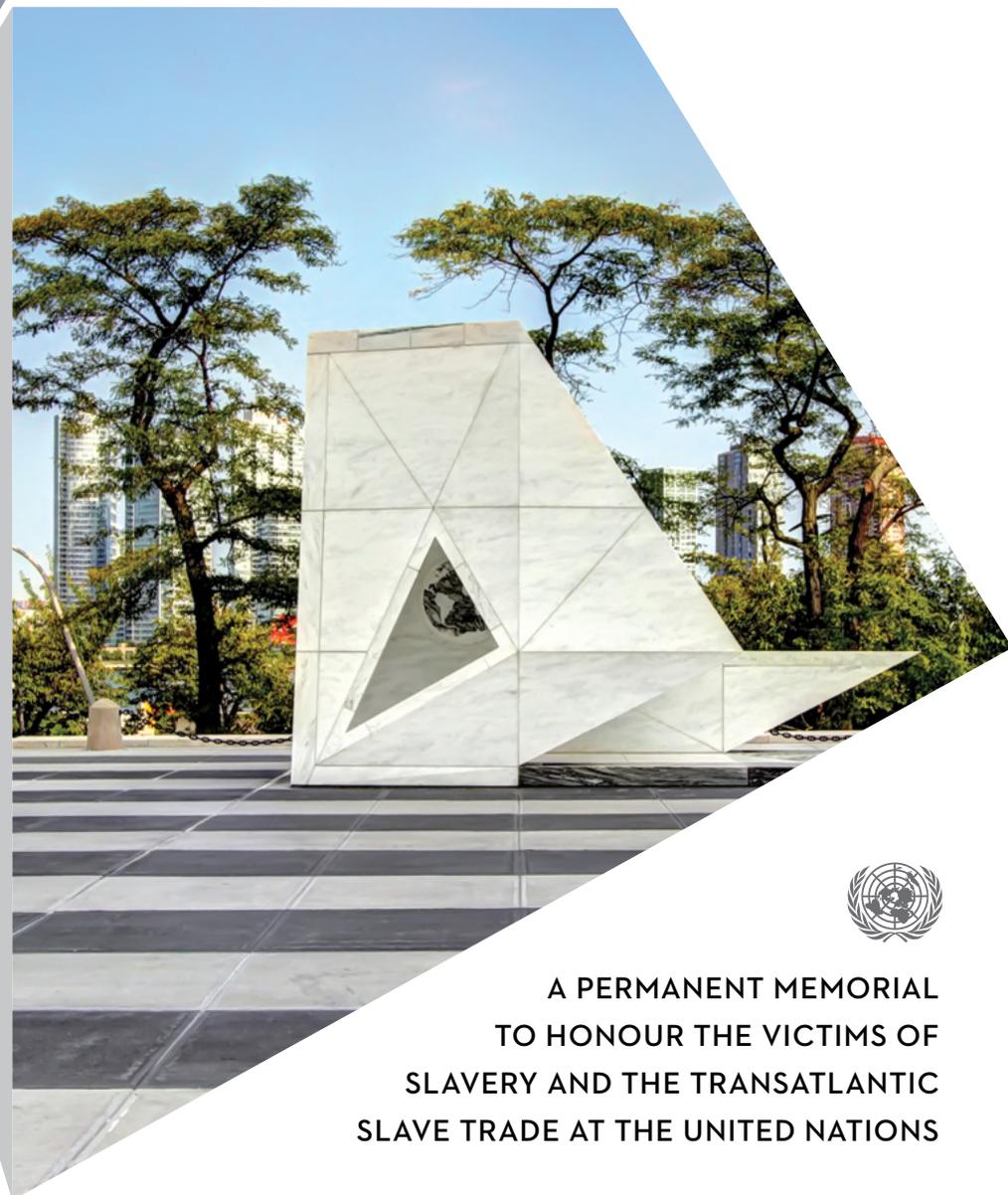


# THE ARK OF RETURN



## VISIT THE ARK OF RETURN

**ACCESS:** FREE

**VISITING HOURS:**

**Monday-Friday**  
9:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

**Saturday-Sunday**  
10:00 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

**Weekly briefings**  
Wednesdays at 10:30 a.m.

**LOCATION:**

United Nations Visitors Plaza  
1st Avenue and 46th Street  
New York, NY 10017

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

Website: [rememberslavery.un.org](http://rememberslavery.un.org)  
Twitter: @RememberSlavery  
Facebook.com/RememberSlavery  
Email: [education-outreach@un.org](mailto:education-outreach@un.org)



Front & back cover photos © Alan Stevenson



A PERMANENT MEMORIAL  
TO HONOUR THE VICTIMS OF  
SLAVERY AND THE TRANSATLANTIC  
SLAVE TRADE AT THE UNITED NATIONS

19-0002070-000

## BACKGROUND

In December 2007, the United Nations General Assembly designated 25 March the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade and welcomed the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the African Union (AU) proposal to erect a Permanent Memorial at the United Nations Headquarters that is easily accessible to delegates, United Nations staff and visitors. This Memorial acknowledges one of the most horrific tragedies of modern history and serves as a reminder of the legacy of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade.

## HISTORY

The tragedy refers back to a period of roughly 400 years (15th-19th centuries) when more than 15 million African men, women and children were enslaved and brought in slave ships under extremely harsh conditions to the colonies in North, South and Central America and the Caribbean. Many slaves died during their transport across the Atlantic Ocean.

## THE THREE ELEMENTS

**THE ARK OF RETURN** invites people to contemplate the legacy of the slave trade and to fight against racism and prejudice today. Visitors can walk through this Permanent Memorial to experience three primary elements.

**THE FIRST ELEMENT:** *Acknowledge the Tragedy* is a three dimensional map inscribed on the interior of the memorial. This map highlights the African continent at the centre of the slave trade and illustrates the global scale, complexity and impact of the triangular slave trade.

**THE SECOND ELEMENT:** *Consider the Legacy* features a full-scale human replica carved out of black Zimbabwean granite. This element illustrates the extreme conditions under which millions of African people were transported during the Middle Passage. The sculpture represents the spirit of the men, women and children who lost their lives in the transatlantic slave trade.

**THE THIRD ELEMENT:** *Lest we forget* is a triangular reflecting pool where visitors can honour the memory of the millions of souls that were lost.



*Acknowledge the tragedy*



*Consider the legacy*



Photos © Alan Stevenson

## UNVEILING THE PERMANENT MEMORIAL

Designed by Rodney Leon, an American architect of Haitian descent, the Permanent Memorial titled *The Ark of Return* was unveiled on 25 March 2015. This design was selected through an international competition organized in partnership with UNESCO and announced in 2013. It will stand as a constant reminder of the courage of slaves, abolitionists and unsung heroes who helped end the oppression of slavery. It will also promote greater recognition of the contributions that slaves and their descendants have made in their societies.



© UN Photo / Eskinder Debebe

## OTHER FEATURES

The triangular patterns are reminiscent of the triangular route of the slave trade which existed between the continents.

The exterior form reflects the image of a vessel or ship in acknowledgement of the millions of African people who were transported on slave ships to different parts of the world.

The white colour recalls African spirituality. In times of death, sorrow, and reflection, white attire is considered to be the most appropriate.

The title *The Ark of Return* is a deliberate contrast to the *Door of No Return* through which enslaved Africans were deported to the Americas. The *Door of No Return* is located in the “House of Slaves”, a museum and memorial on Gorée Island, Senegal. It is believed to have been the location of the largest slave-trading centre on the African coast. In 1978, the island was added to UNESCO’s World Heritage List and serves as a reminder of human exploitation and as a sanctuary for reconciliation.

*The House of Slaves (Gorée Island, Senegal).*  
© UNESCO / Dominique Rogier

