

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON**

PROCLAMATION NO. 2025-009

Proclaiming February 2025, as Black History and Black Future Month in Multnomah County, Oregon.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:

- A. Black History did not start in the United States. For Black Americans and people from the African Diaspora, Black history begins in Africa. Millions of unknown and known stolen African men, women and children came from the place where life, civilization and knowledge began. All people from the African Diaspora come from generations of people who were farmers, healers, philosophers, scholars, ironsmiths, mathematicians, scientists, historians, leaders, healers, warriors, sailors, strategists, and creatives. Enslaved Africans were stolen and sold because of their unique skills, and this theft and kidnapping has had lasting and profound effects on the continent of Africa.
- B. Enslaved African men, women, and children, who were stolen from Africa, were brought to this country with the knowledge, skills and abilities passed down from one generation to another for hundreds of thousands of years. These unique abilities have long influenced societies and cultures since the beginning of contact with other ancient civilizations such as Greece and Rome. These abilities enabled the descendants of the stolen and enslaved African people to survive slavery, Jim Crow, white supremacy, racial violence, anti-Blackness and all of the lies told about Black people in all the abominable forms, institutions and individuals that hate transforms into.
- C. Black History Month began in 1926 when historian Carter G. Woodson declared the second week of February, Negro History Week in honor of both Frederick Douglas and Abraham Lincoln who were both born in the month of February. Woodson believed that all Black people especially should know their history and be proud of who they are. Woodson founded National Negro Week as a culmination of the study of Black history by children who learned about Black history all year round. It was never intended to be just for one week or one month. He founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (ASNLH) in 1915, now known as the Association for the Study of African American Life and History(ASALH). Every year since 1926 the ASALH announces the theme of Black History Month. Eventually the association expanded the Black History Week to encompass the whole month of February in 1976.

- D. Multnomah County recognizes that Black women are disproportionately affected by poverty and violence, but they are also more likely to volunteer their time and resources to help others. Black women and Black femmes have historically played a crucial role in the Black community, providing emotional support, guidance, and strength to their families and communities. Their contributions have often been unseen and unpaid, but they are essential to the well-being of Black people. Without Black women there is no Black history or Black future. It is time for the work of Black women to be acknowledged, appreciated and applauded. Black women deserve protection, restoration, justice and support from the racial and gender disparities they have experienced for centuries. We will continue to honor the work, contributions and sacrifices of Black women and Black femmes during their season of rest and restoration.
- E. The contributions, innovation, strength and courage that Black Queer people have brought to every aspect of Black life throughout history is immeasurable. It is inconceivable to even think of Black history as a whole devoid of the strength, courage, sacrifice, creativity, imagination, ingenuity and change that was brought about by the Black Queer community. Sadly, Black Queer people are often the last ones to receive thanks, credit or accolades for their work and contributions. This is especially egregious when they are often the first people at the front lines of every fight against oppression and inequality. The Black Queer community has kept the African tradition of griots alive by remembering our elders and creatives. Without them most of our history and art would be lost. Thank you for all of the leadership, beauty, joy, creativity, music, terminology, songs, dance, fashion and style you bring.
- F. Multnomah County honors this year's Black History Month theme, "African Americans and Labor," and honors the innumerable contributions of Black Americans, which are too often obscured, overlooked, underappreciated and appropriated. Today, we take a moment to recognize and honor the remarkable work of Black people across the United States.
- G. Multnomah County recognizes the work and resiliency of our Black employees. We acknowledge the experience of navigating spaces where Black employees may sometimes feel alone and where your efforts don't always receive the acknowledgment or merit they deserve. Yet, day after day, you show up with unwavering courage and dedication. We pledge to increase our efforts in fostering and nurturing diversity, equity and inclusion throughout our departments and to continue the fight to eliminate anti-Blackness and white supremacy in our organization.
- H. Multnomah County acknowledges the fact that one month in a year cannot contain all of the history, joy, pain, ingenuity, resistance, resilience and creativity that is the Black experience. There is truth and power within Black history. This history rings so true that efforts to conceal or distort it have and will always fail; for history can only lie when liars tell it. This Black History Month we encourage

all residents of Multnomah County to learn more about Black history and the Black experience year round. Black history in this country is American history along with the true history of all its indigenous peoples and immigrants. We must do so because this country's history was created, endured and experienced by all of the people who have ever touched foot on this land.

- I. Multnomah County acknowledges the innumerable contributions Black Americans have made in the United States and that these contributions have inspired people all over the world. These contributions include music, art and writing of icons such as Langston Hughes, Toni Morrison and Aretha Franklin. The work of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, the Black Panthers brought about civil rights in our society that never existed before and have inspired the fight for freedom all over the world.
- J. Black history is all around us 365 days of the year in every aspect of society that exists today and in many ways seen and unseen. Black history has an effect on the lives of all of us every single day. The work of Dr. Charles Drew whose invention of the bloodmobile and blood donation sites coupled with perfecting the safe storage of blood has saved millions of lives worldwide enabling many of us to exist today. It is in traffic lights, your home security system, elevator doors, your color computer monitor, and in 90% of the microphones we use today, just to name a few. Black history is alive inside of the music of artists such as Billie Holiday and Kendrick Lamar, it is in voice over IP technology that we use in software such as Zoom, Teams and Skype that was developed by Dr. Marian Croak, who is currently the vice president of Engineering at Google. Black history is in the voices that cannot be silenced, in the laughter that cannot be stifled and in the humanity that can not be taken. Black history is in the highest of highs and the lowest of lows and is the culmination of every experience a human could possibly have experienced and will experience in the history of man. Black history is the possible and the achievement of the impossible.
- K. Multnomah County sends a special message in support of the Black families, seniors and especially the youths. Create, experiment, dance, sing, laugh and learn. Have pride in who you are, love yourself, believe in yourself as we believe in you. Learn the truth about your history and do not rely on others who barely know their own history to teach you anything about your own. Stand up for yourself and don't let anyone or anything stop you from achieving your dreams. You are your ancestors' greatest dream and the world holds endless possibilities for you.
- L. Multnomah County acknowledges the historical fact that Black history is American history and that this country was built upon the unpaid labor and disenfranchisement of generations of enslaved African men, women, children and their descendants. We pledge to continue efforts to support Black communities in Multnomah County build generational wealth by eradicating the barriers of systemic and institutionalized racism, implicit bias and lack of

equitable opportunities for advancement. We pledge to continue fighting against the abhorrent, cowardly and despicable specter of racism, anti-Blackness and white supremacy until there is liberty, truth and justice for all.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Proclaims:

February 2025 as Black History and Black Future Month in Multnomah County, Oregon, and encourages all residents to participate in Black History Month events and activities, to reflect on the significance of this historic day, and to continue working towards racial equity and social justice.

ADOPTED this 13th day of February, 2025.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON



Jessica Vega Pederson

Jessica Vega Pederson, Chair

REVIEWED:
JENNY M. MADKOUR, COUNTY ATTORNEY
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SUBMITTED BY: Rachael Banks, Health Department Director
Lanel Jackson, Employees of Color Events Chair