

## MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

### PROCLAMATION NO. 47

Recognizing the 100-Year Centennial of Black History Commemorations in Multnomah County, Oregon.

#### **Multnomah County Finds:**

- A. On February 7, 1926, historian Carter G. Woodson, a Harvard-trained scholar and one of the foremost intellectuals of his time, established the first formal observance dedicated to the study and recognition of African American history, in response to the widespread exclusion and misrepresentation of African American contributions within American historical scholarship.
- B. Dr. Woodson intentionally designated the second week of February for this observance to coincide with the birthdays of President Abraham Lincoln and renowned abolitionist and orator Frederick Douglass, recognizing their symbolic importance within the African American community and anchoring the commemoration in both national history and cultural memory.
- C. This observance was celebrated for fifty years as a focused week of study and reflection, emphasizing education, scholarly rigor, and historical correction, consistent with Dr. Woodson's original vision of elevating truth, accuracy, and intellectual integrity in the telling of American history.
- D. In February 1976, during the nation's Bicentennial year, President Gerald Ford formally expanded this observance from a week to a month, calling upon Americans to honor the often-overlooked contributions of the African American people throughout the full span of the nation's history and affirming the observance as a matter of national importance.
- E. The County further recognizes Matthew Dishman Jr., the first African American Deputy Sheriff in Multnomah County, whose legacy of service and community leadership lives on through the Matt Dishman Community Center, operated by Portland Parks & Recreation.
- F. Over the past one hundred years, this commemoration has evolved into a nationally recognized period of education and reflection, serving as a cornerstone of civic awareness and affirming that African American history is not separate from American history, but foundational to it.

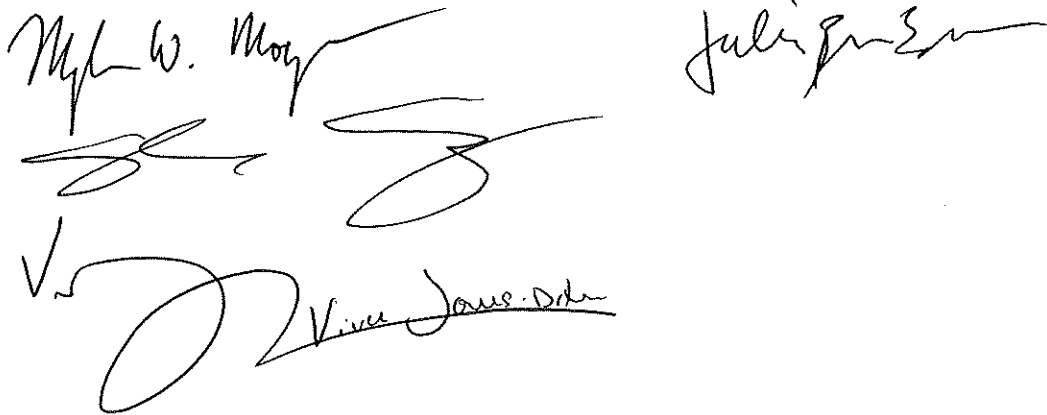
- G. African American communities have played a vital and enduring role in shaping Multnomah County's cultural, civic, educational, and economic life, contributing leadership, scholarship, creativity, labor, and advocacy that continue to strengthen this county and its future.
- H. The earliest confirmed Black person documented in what is now Oregon was Markus Lopeus, who arrived in the region in 1788 near present-day Tillamook, establishing an early and enduring Black presence in Oregon's history.
- I. The history of African American Oregonians reflects both resilience and contribution, as African American residents have helped shape communities across the state while advancing progress toward equity, representation, and full civic participation within Oregon.
- J. The observance of this 100-year centennial represents a rare and consequential milestone, reflecting a full century of intentional documentation, preservation, and public recognition, and underscoring the responsibility to honor this history with accuracy, dignity, and care.
- K. A centennial commemoration signifies not merely the passage of time, but a shared obligation to acknowledge the perseverance of individuals and communities whose stories were long marginalized, and to ensure that this legacy is preserved and carried forward for future generations within Multnomah County.

**Multnomah County Proclaims:**

The observance of the 100-Year Centennial of Black History Commemorations, recognizing its historical origins, its evolution, and its enduring significance to this county, the state of Oregon, and the nation.


Furthermore, the Board of County Commissioners calls upon residents, educators, cultural institutions, community organizations, and civic partners to observe this centennial through education, reflection, and meaningful engagement that honors African American history and ensures its preservation as an essential and enduring part of Multnomah County's collective legacy.

**SIGNED this 4th day of February, 2026.**



Mike W. May  
Julie Jones  
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**REVIEWED:**  
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By: 

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