

Proclamation

Board of Commissioners for Washington County

A PROCLAMATION IN HONOR OF BLACK HISTORY MONTH 2024

WHEREAS, the Washington County Board of Commissioners takes pride in recognizing February 2024 as Black History Month, honoring the many notable contributions that people of African descent have made to our country; and

WHEREAS, we celebrate the diversity of Black people in Washington County, the State of Oregon, our nation and the Black diaspora, whether they self-identify as African, African American, Afro-Latino, Afro-Caribbean, or Black; and

WHEREAS, we celebrate this year's Black History Month theme of "African Americans and the Arts," shining a light on visual and performing arts, literature, fashion, folklore, language, film, music, architecture, culinary and other forms of cultural expression in which the African American influence has been paramount; and

WHEREAS, African American artists have used art to preserve history and community memory as well as for empowerment; and

WHEREAS, artistic and cultural movements such as the New Negro, Black Arts, Black Renaissance, Hip-Hop and Afrofuturism, have been led by people of African descent and set the standard for popular trends around the world; and

WHEREAS, for centuries Western intellectuals denied or minimized the contributions of people of African descent to the arts as well as history, even as their artistry in many genres was mimicked and/or stolen; and

WHEREAS, we can still see the unbroken chain of Black art production from antiquity to the present, from across the African continent, from Europe to the New World. For example, prior to the American Revolution, enslaved Africans of the Lowcountry began their more than three-hundred-year tradition of making sweetgrass baskets, revealing their visual artistry via craft; and

WHEREAS, the suffering of those in bondage gave birth to the spirituals, the nation's first contribution to music; and

WHEREAS, Blues musicians such as Robert Johnson, McKinley 'Muddy Waters' Morganfield and Riley "BB" B. King created and nurtured a style of music that became the bedrock for gospel, soul, rock and roll and other still popular (and evolving) forms of music, including hip-hop which continues to be a pivotal force in political, social and cultural spaces, lifting up issues such as racial violence, sexism, economic disinvestment; and

WHEREAS, Black contributions to literature include works by poets like Phillis Wheatley, essays, autobiographies, and novels by writers such as David Walker, Maria Stewart and Octavia Butler.

Black aesthetics have also manifested themselves through sculptors like Edmonia Lewis and Wangechi Mutu and painters like Henry O. Tanner and Lina Iris Viktor; and

WHEREAS, In the 1920s and 30s, the rise of the Black Renaissance and New Negro Movement brought the Black Arts to an international stage. Members of the armed forces, such as James Reese Europe, and artists such as Langston Hughes, Josephine Baker and Lois Mailou Jones shared Black culture and Black American aesthetics with international audiences, and Black culture began its ascent to becoming a dominant cultural movement to the world; and

WHEREAS, the Afrofuturism movement has evolved over the past 30 years to define cultural and artistic productions that imagine a future for Black people without oppressive systems and examines how Black history and knowledge intersects with technology and science; and

WHEREAS, despite these accomplishments, systemic racism persists in the United States, generating continued calls for lasting institutional and societal change so desperately needed in our country; and

WHEREAS, today and every day, we celebrate African Americans and the Arts, and encourage all people to recognize and confront systemic racism in our neighborhoods and the wider community by standing in the gap at every opportunity, bridging barriers with fearlessness and determination to fight against racism and bigotry and improve representation of Black people, not only in the arts but all facets of our society.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Washington County Board of Commissioners do hereby proclaim February 1st – February 29th, 2024, as Black History Month and calls upon the people of Washington County to observe this month with appropriate programs, activities and reflections and to continue our efforts to create a world that is more just, equitable and prosperous for all.



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kathryn Harrington", written over a horizontal line.

Kathryn Harrington, Washington County Board Chair

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin Maff", written over a horizontal line.

Recording Secretary

24-31

Minute Order