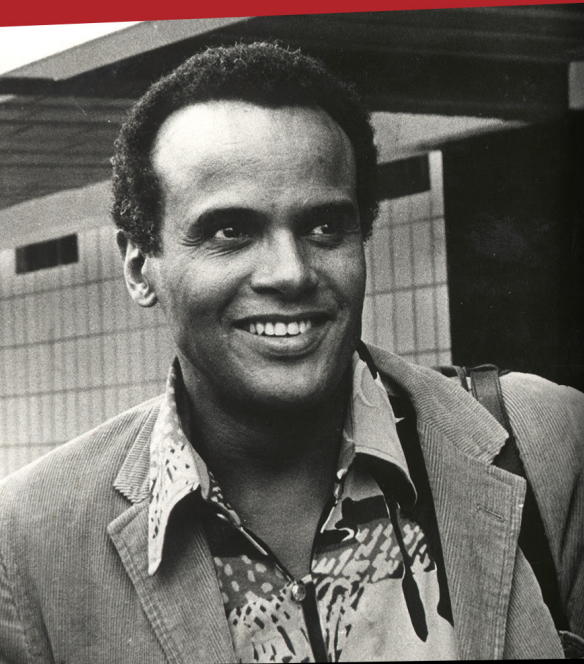


Final Report to Governor Hochul and the New York State Legislature



*“Reflecting
on the Past,
Building the
Future”*



Inspiring



New York State
Commission on
African American
History

Enriching



20
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Empowering

Continuing

About the Department of State

The New York State Department of State — one of the oldest and most diverse agencies in state government — works to make New York State a more welcoming, equitable, and prosperous place.

Mission

The agency's core mission is to provide a better quality of life and expand opportunities for all New Yorkers by fostering community revitalization, catalyzing economic growth through business formation, protecting consumers, helping new Americans, supporting local governments, assisting individuals and families to achieve upward economic mobility, and ensuring safety and integrity through the regulation of licensed occupations and the development of building standards and codes. The mission serves the agency's vision of being New York State's leading opportunity creator, an accessible and friendly partner to all who seek economic opportunity in order to strengthen our communities.

New York State Commission on African American History

On March 9, 2022, Governor Hochul signed an Executive Order (No. 15) to create the New York State Commission on African American History. The New York State Commission on African American History is housed within the Department of State per Executive Order 15 which established the Commission.

The Commission serves to highlight contributions by Africans and African Americans to our country and to New York State. The Commission has partnered with community-based organizations to bring New Yorkers together through events, cultural programming, scholarly research, and other activities that promote a greater understanding of the history and achievements of African Americans throughout the State.



“For every reminder of the pivotal role New York has played in the fight for civil rights, there is another, more painful reminder of why that fight was necessary in the first place. We must recognize and acknowledge shameful chapters in our state’s past, ensure New Yorkers have a better understanding of our history, and fight racism and bigotry in all forms.”

— Governor Kathy Hochul

Acknowledgments

The work undertaken by the New York State Commission on African American History would not have been possible without the tremendous insights, time, knowledge, and support provided.

With gratitude, we acknowledge and thank:

- Governor Hochul and her administration
- Members of the New York State Legislature
- The Members of the New York State Commission on African American History
- New York State Department of State – including Secretary of State Walter T. Mosley; former Secretary of State and inaugural Chairperson of the New York State Commission on African American History Robert J. Rodriguez; former Chief of Staff Joanne Fernandez; and Department of State Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer Nicole Jean Christian
- External Advisor to the New York State Commission on African American History Maria Dautruche
- The community based not-for-profit organizations that served as a partner to the New York State Commission on African American History to develop, plan, and execute public meetings throughout the State of New York
 - » Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture—including all the personnel and with special gratitude to Director Joy Bivins and Kevin Matthews, Deputy Director of Operations & External Engagement
 - » Philipse Manor Hall State Historic Site under the auspices of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation. A special thank you to former Commissioner Erik Kulleseid; Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation R. Daniel Mackay; Chief Diversity Officer Yolanda Bostic-Williams; Lavada Nahon, Interpreter of African American History; and Philipse Manor Hall Site Director Michael Lord

- University at Albany – including Dr. Jeanette Altaribba and the Africana Studies Department under the leadership of Dr. Marcia Sutherland and the immense assistance and contributions provided by Dr. Jennifer Burns
- Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor—including all the personnel and with special gratitude to Executive Director Terry Alford and Program Manager Audrey Clark
- 2024 New York State Commission on African American History Spring Webinar participants:
 - » Reverend Malcolm Byrd, Senior Pastor, Mother AME Zion Church
 - » Professor Katherine Merriman, University of Detroit Mercy
 - » Professor Nikki Brown, Associate Professor at the University of Kentucky
 - » Anthony F. Gero, Historian and Author
- And New Yorkers for their support and insightful comments!

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Message From the Chairperson of the New York State Commission on African American History



Historically, a full inclusion of stories about Black heritage, culture, and community have been missing or excluded from the American story.

Under the leadership of Governor Hochul, the State of New York has made it a priority to highlight the contributions of Africans and African Americans to our country and to New York State by creating the New York State Commission on African American History.

Sharing a common bond and objective, the Commission, consisting of highly accomplished and dedicated public servants, has spent the last two years traveling across the state listening to New Yorkers and hearing their ideas. They strategized and brainstormed, leading to a presentation of ideas that recognize the full histories, rich legacies, and cultural contributions made by African Americans and people of African descent to New York State and our nation despite every barrier, obstacle, and persecution faced.

The Commission has been working to ensure that African Americans and Black New Yorkers are uplifted and recognized for their beneficial impact on the health, economic prosperity, public safety, and general welfare of all New Yorkers. And we have done this by partnering with community-based organizations and by bringing New Yorkers into the conversation through events, cultural programming, scholarly research, and other activities.

As a child, I grew up watching my grandparents persevere and fight for equality and justice, making this endeavor deeply personal. I'm incredibly proud of what this Commission has accomplished. I thank Governor Hochul for making this a priority and former Secretary of State, Robert J. Rodriguez for his role as the inaugural Chair of the Commission. We must learn from our past and draw inspiration and guidance from our histories as we work toward building an inclusive present and stronger future.

Walter T. Mosley


Secretary of State

Executive Summary

In the summer of 1619, at Old Point Comfort, the first enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia, marking the beginning of a period of hundreds of years during which people from Africa were involuntarily taken from their homelands and brought to the colonies that eventually became the United States. Historical records reveal that the first non-Native settler of color to what is now New York arrived in 1613 and that captive Africans brought to what is now New York for purchase arrived in 1626. The dynamic and widely unknown and overlooked state history of Black and African presence in New York plays a significant role in understanding New York State history and its influence and role within national and global development.

Recognizing this pivotal moment in our country's history, New York State Governor Kathy Hochul signed Executive Order Number 15 in 2022 and established the 400 Years of African American History Commission. The Executive Order recognized that African Americans were “forced to endure lifetimes of enslavement and discrimination, and that African American and Black New Yorkers still suffer from disparate outcomes in health, economic prosperity, public safety, and general welfare.” The Executive Order charged the Commission with “ensuring that the expansive contributions, achievements and culture of African American and Black New Yorkers are uplifted and recognized for their beneficial impact on the health, economic prosperity, public safety and general welfare of all New Yorkers.”

Governor Hochul and legislative leaders appointed a diverse, talented, and vibrant group of individuals to serve on this Commission including educators and civic and community leaders.

Executive Order Number 15 tasked the Commission with issuing a final report containing a summary of its activities, an accounting of its received and expended funds, and its findings and recommendations.

In this final report, the Commission offers extensive recommendations to meet the objectives of Executive Order Number 15. The timing of this report reinforces the critical need for our society to have a better understanding of the deep, complex, and multifaceted history of the Empire State.

The work of the New York State Commission on African American History demonstrates that the State of New York is committed to embracing, incorporating, preserving, and sharing all facets of African American history to tell the story of our state in an inclusive and authentic manner.

Issuance of Executive Order No. 15

On March 9, 2022, Governor Kathy Hochul established the 400 Years of African American History Commission via Executive Order Number 15.

Executive Order Number 15 states:

“The diverse, important and numerous contributions that African-American and Black New Yorkers have made and continue to make to New York State, its economy, and its culture have frequently been minimized or overlooked because of the enduring effects of slavery, persistent racism, and frequent discrimination in our laws and society which have also resulted in African-American and Black New Yorkers suffering from disparate outcomes in health, economic prosperity, public safety, and general welfare.

New York is committed to ending such disparities and ensuring that the expansive contributions, achievements, and culture of African Americans and Black New Yorkers are uplifted and recognized for their beneficial impact on the health, economic prosperity, public safety, and general welfare of all New Yorkers.

New York is committed to ending the disparate outcomes in health, economic prosperity, public safety and general welfare African Americans and Black New Yorkers suffer.”

The 400 Years of African American History Commission was established to fulfill the following objectives:

- Governor Hochul and her administration
- Members of the New York State Legislature

Per Executive Order Number 15, the Commission is required to submit an “interim report to the Governor and the Legislature that contains a summary of its planned activities, an accounting of its received and expended funds, and its findings and recommendations on or before October 1, 2023.

The Commission shall submit a report to the Governor and the Legislature that contains a summary of its activities, and its findings and recommendations on or before June 1, 2024.”¹

¹ [Executive Order No. 15: Establishing the 400 Years of African American History Commission | Governor Kathy Hochul \(ny.gov\)](#)

Composition of the New York State Commission on African American History

Per Executive Order Number 15, the New York State Commission on African American History is hosted by the New York Department of State and is comprised of fifteen individuals. The New York Secretary of State and the Commissioner of Education, or their designee, are named in Executive Order Number 15 to serve as ex officio members of the Commission. Executive Order Number 15 specifically designates New York's Secretary of State to serve as the Chairperson of the Commission. The Secretary of State in their role as the Chairperson of the Commission appoints the Vice Chairperson.

Members are appointed to the New York State Commission on African American History as follows:

- Seven (7) members appointed by the Governor of the State of New York
- Two (2) members appointed by the Temporary President of the New York State Senate
- Two (2) members appointed by the Speaker of the New York State Assembly
- One (1) member appointed by the New York State Senate Minority Leader
- One (1) member appointed by the New York State Assembly Minority Leader

The ex officio members are:



Secretary of State and Chairperson of the New York State Commission on African American History Walter T. Mosley

Walter T. Mosley serves as the 69th Secretary of State for the State of New York. Mr. Mosley was nominated to the position by Governor Kathy Hochul in May of 2024 and confirmed by the New York State Senate in May of 2024.

Prior to his role as Secretary, he served as President and Chief Executive Officer at Mosley Advisory Group. Founded in February 2021, the Mosley Advisory Group (MAG) was a full-service government and corporate relations firm with a concentration in emerging markets and overseas economic market initiatives, industrial development, alternative energy, and adult use cannabis.

Mr. Mosley worked as a national and international public relations strategist and offered his expertise in a variety of resources including a combined brand of skills necessary to reach crucial community members and critical legislators. In this role, Mr. Mosley provided a unique approach to solving problems with government by utilizing an integrated strategy of lobbying, communications, social media, and grassroots efforts, masterfully designed to achieve his client's designated goals.

Prior to Mr. Mosley's private sector engagements, he represented the New York State Assembly within the New York State Legislature. From 2013 to 2020, Mr. Mosley represented communities in central Brooklyn encompassing the neighborhoods of Fort Greene, Clinton Hill, Prospect Heights and parts of Bedford Stuyvesant and Crown Heights.

Over those years, Mr. Mosley was a staunch advocate for his constituents both in Albany and within his district. Individually and alongside his colleagues, Mr. Mosley worked to pass crucial legislation to protect New Yorkers from unscrupulous landlords, furthered criminal justice reform practices, and expanded affordable housing opportunities on several fronts throughout his district and state.

Mr. Mosley was also a member of the Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic and Asian Legislative Caucus (BPHA), the Jewish Caucus, and the Hispanic Task Force. In his capacity as a BPHA Caucus member, Mr. Mosley served as Second Vice-chair and as the Budget Chair.

Mr. Mosley is a graduate of The Pennsylvania State University where he received his BS in criminology and minored in African Studies and African American History; he is also a graduate from Howard University School of Law in Washington, DC. 1998.



**Chancellor Dr. Lester W. Young, Jr.
(Designee of Commissioner of Education,
Dr. Betty A. Rosa)**

Dr. Lester W. Young, Jr. is serving his fourth term as Regent At Large, The University of the State of New York. In January 2021, Dr. Young was unanimously elected by his peers to be Chancellor.

A career educator, Dr. Young served as a teacher, guidance counselor, supervisor of special education, principal, Associate Commissioner with the New York State Education Department, and Superintendent of Community School District 13.

He also led the first NYC Office of Youth Development and School Community Services. A recognized educational leader and innovator, he was responsible for establishing some of the more successful high schools and middle schools in New York City and reproducing the nationally recognized Algebra Project and Comer School Development Program.

Dr. Young's commitment to helping improve outcomes for boys and young men of color led to the establishment of the NYS My Brother's Keeper initiative, and under the leadership of the NYS Legislature, New York State remains the only state in the nation to have the My Brother's Keeper initiative enacted into New York State law. Continuing his commitment to public service, in 2014 Dr. Young was appointed to the New York State Juvenile Justice Advisory Group. He is a founding member and Trustee of the Adelaide L. Sanford Institute, a Trustee for the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and co-chairs the Community Advisory Council for Boys and Girls High School. He is a Life Member of the National Alliance of Black School Educators and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity.

Dr. Young also served on the advisory boards for Eagle Academy High School, the New York Office of the Children's Defense Fund, the Brooklyn Children's Museum, and the Bedford Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation. Dr. Young volunteers as a mentor to principals and aspiring leaders throughout New York City. He has been recognized by many local, national education, and civic education organizations for his professional contributions.

New York Governor Kathy Hochul’s appointees are:



Dr. Hazel N. Dukes, Vice Chairperson of the New York State Commission on African American History

Dr. Hazel N. Dukes, a civil rights activist, has dedicated more than seven decades of advocating to achieve racial diversity, equity, and inclusion to bring long-lasting social change. Dr. Dukes is a member of the NAACP National Board of Directors and President of the NAACP New York State Conference. She is a woman of great strength and courage with an unwavering commitment to civil rights and public service. Her dedication to human rights and equality is exemplified by her role linking business, government, and social causes.

Dr. Dukes is an active and dynamic leader who is known for her unselfish and devoted track record for improving the quality of life in New York State.

“A harsh system of civil and human injustice persists; intimidation and violence speak to the widespread de facto absence of a civil and human rights agenda in America” observes Dukes, and the fires of frustration continue to burn.

Dr. Dukes is a successful entrepreneur, President, and founder of Hazel N. Dukes & Associates Consultant Firm. The firm has extensive expertise in strategic planning as it pertains to education, economic development, civic engagement, and youth development.

Dr. Dukes is the recipient of numerous honors and awards for her many years of commitment to justice and activism. She received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, YWCA City of New York John La Farge Memorial Award for Interracial Justice, The Network Journal’s 25 Most Influential Black Women in Business Award, First Annual Ruth Clark Trailblazer Award, National Action Network Legacy Award, City & State Fifty Over 50 Lifetime Achievement Award, John E. Zuccotti Public Service Award by the Real Estate Board of New York, first recipient of the Metro-Manhattan Chapter of The Links, Inc. Hazel N. Dukes Social Justice Champion Award and was a Greater Harlem Chamber of Commerce 2023 125th Anniversary Gala honoree.

In 2020 Dr. Dukes was presented the key to New York City by former Mayor Bill de Blasio for years of dedicated public service to New York City and the New York City Council awarded Discretionary Funding to the NAACP New York State Conference technology program that

was renamed the “Hazel N. Dukes Education Initiative” in honor of her commitment to improve educational opportunities for underserved communities. Her biography has been selected for publication in many journals and directories: Fisk University Library, Minority Women Contribution, American Biographical Institute Personalities of Northeast, Who’s Who Among American Women, Who’s Who Among Black Women, and in 2022 was inducted into the prestigious Who’s Who in America Biographical Registry.

In January 2023, Dr. Dukes made history by becoming the first layperson in the United States of America to administer the oath of office to a governor.

Dr. Dukes received a Bachelor’s Degree in Business Administration from Adelphi University, Garden City, New York and completed post-graduate work at Queens College. In 1990 she was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws Degree from the City University of New York Law School at Queens College and in 2009 was conferred the Honorary Doctor of Humane Letters from Medgar Evers College, Brooklyn, New York. In 2012 she was awarded the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Humane Letters from Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine, Harlem, New York.



Ms. Jennifer Jones Austin

A fourth-generation leader of faith and social justice, Jennifer Jones Austin fights for equity. As CEO of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies (FPWA), an anti-poverty, policy, and advocacy organization with 170 member agencies and faith partners, she has led and secured monumental changes in social policy to strengthen and empower the disenfranchised and marginalized. Jennifer brings to her work a profound understanding of the link between race, poverty, law and social policy in America, and the role religion plays.

Prior to joining FPWA, Ms. Jones Austin served as Senior Vice President of the United Way of New York City; the City of New York’s first Family Services Coordinator; Deputy Commissioner for the NYC Administration for Children’s Services; Civil Rights Deputy Bureau Chief for Attorney General Eliot Spitzer; and Vice President for LearnNow/Edison Schools, Inc.

Ms. Jones Austin chaired the NYC Racial Justice Commission, the first of its kind in the nation, where she led the development and passage by the New York City electorate in 2022 of three unprecedented proposals to amend the city’s charter to dismantle structural racism and embed racial justice and equity in all government functions. She has chaired several other influential boards and commissions, including the Mayoral

Transition for Bill de Blasio; the NYC Procurement Policy Board; the NYC Board of Correction, where she presided over the promulgation of rules to end solitary confinement; the NYS Supermarket Commission; and the Community Engagement for Brooklyn District Attorney Gonzalez's Justice 2020 Initiative. She was lead advisor for the City's Full Day UPK Expansion in 2014-2015, and a lead advisor for the NYPD Reform and Reinvention Collaborative. She currently serves as Vice Chair of the Board of National Action Network; member of the Feerick Center for Social Justice Advisory Board; member of the Center for Law, Brain and Behavior Advisory Board at Harvard University; and member of the COVID-19 "Roll Up Your Sleeves" Task Force created to ensure vaccine information and equitable access in Black and Brown communities.

She is the Visiting Scholar for the New York University Silver School of Social Work, and the Scholar in Residence at Alliance University's Center for Racial Reconciliation.

Jennifer co-hosts WBLS' "Open Line", guest hosts weekly the nationally syndicated radio program, "Keep'n It Real with Rev. Al Sharpton", and appears frequently on the cable show, "Brooklyn Savvy". She is a returning guest and contributor on the "Karen Hunter Show".

Jennifer Jones Austin is the author of *Consider It Pure Joy*. Described as "a story that if not lived would make for a great novel", it is the harrowing account of her year-long battle with a sudden, life-threatening illness, and the power of faith and community to transform desperation into joy. She is the editor of *God in The Ghetto: A Prophetic Word Revisited*, the re-release of her father, William Augustus Jones Jr.'s seminal work deconstructing the "System" of racism, capitalism and militarism all working in concert to continually oppress people of color. Jones Austin is also the co-author of "Race and Reform: A Seat at the Table" in *Leadership Reflections: How to Create and Sustain Reforms in Children and Family Services*.

Jennifer is a graduate of the Fordham University School of Law, the New York University Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service, and Rutgers University. A recipient of numerous awards and recognitions, including three honorary doctorates, she considers the ten honors bestowed upon her by her three alma maters and the recognition from civil rights and faith-based institutions especially significant.

Ms. Jones Austin resides in Brooklyn, New York with her husband and has two children.



Dr. Anne Bailey

Dr. Bailey is a writer, historian, and a Professor of History at SUNY Binghamton. Dr. Bailey is committed to a concept of “living history” in which events of the past are connected to current and contemporary issues. She is also concerned with the reconciliation of communities after age-old conflicts like slavery, war, and genocide. Dr. Bailey is the founding Director of the Binghamton University/Harriet Tubman Center for the Study of Freedom and Equity, which opened in September of 2019 and intends to steer the research, writing, and programs toward the following priorities: History and Equity; Educational Equity; and Medicine/STEM fields and Equity.

Dr. Bailey holds a BA degree from Harvard University and both MA and Ph.D. degrees from The University of Pennsylvania.



Ms. Joy Bivins

Ms. Bivins is the Director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture – a research center of the New York Public Library. Prior to this appointment in 2021, Bivins worked at the Schomburg as the Associate Director of Collections and Research Services. Prior to joining the Schomburg, Bivins served as the chief curator of the International African American Museum (IAAM) in Charleston, South Carolina, providing content and design oversight for its inaugural exhibitions and was previously Director of Curatorial Affairs at the Chicago History Museum.

Ms. Bivins began her career as exhibition developer of Chicago History Museum’s Teen Chicago project. Bivins earned her MA from Cornell and a BA from the University of Michigan.



Dr. Kishi Ducre

Dr. Ducre is an Associate Professor and Associate Dean for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion at Syracuse University. Dr. Ducre has authored two books: the first book explores gender, race, and justice in Syracuse and the second focuses on environmental and food justice and the connection to the school to prison pipeline.

Dr. Ducre received her Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 2005 and began teaching at Syracuse shortly thereafter. Dr. Ducre has a MA from the University of Maryland.



Dr. Henry Taylor

Dr. Taylor is a Professor at the University of Buffalo where he focuses on historical and contemporary analysis of issues surrounding the black and Latino community. Within this framework, Taylor's research also focuses on these issues in Cuba, the Caribbean Islands and Latin America.

Lastly, Dr. Taylor is concerned with the redevelopment of shrinking cities and metropolitan cities, with a focus on social, economic, and racial justice. He has a BS from Tennessee A&T State, an MS from University of Tennessee, and an MA and PhD from SUNY Buffalo.



Dr. Laurie Woodard

Dr. Woodard is an assistant professor of history and black studies at CCNY. Her research focuses upon the intersection between the cultural and political realms and employs interdisciplinary methodologies, drawing from cultural and political history, critical race theory, and gender studies.

She was the recipient of the National Endowment for the Humanities Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, Scholar-in-Residence Fellowship, the Sylvia Arden Boone Prize, and the 2018 National Endowment for the Humanities Faculty Award. She is currently completing a manuscript on the life and work of performing artist and civil rights activist Fredi Washington, *A Real Negro Girl: Fredi Washington and the New Negro Renaissance*, which will be released by Oxford University Press in 2024.

New York State Senate President Pro Tempore Andrea Stewart-Cousins' appointees are:



Dr. Christina Greer

Dr. Greer is an associate professor of political science at Fordham University, Lincoln Center campus. She specializes in American, black ethnic and urban politics as well as quantitative methods and public opinion.

She was the 2018 Fellow for the McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy and Research at New York University Silver School of Social Work.

In her book, *Black Ethnics: Race, Immigration, and the Pursuit of the American Dream*, she investigates the increasingly ethnically diverse Black populations in the US from Africa and the Caribbean.

She is the co-host of the New York centered podcast *FAQ-NYC*, the host of *The Blackest Questions Podcast* with *TheGrio.com* and writes a weekly column for *The Amsterdam News*, one of the oldest black newspapers in the U.S.

Dr. Greer received her BA from Tufts University and her MA, M.Phil and her Ph.D in political science from Columbia University.



Dr. Malik A. Small

Dr. Small is a middle school principal in the community of East New York Brooklyn with over 15 years of experience in educational leadership, both in charter as well as district schools. Dr. Small is a passionate advocate for social justice, restorative practices, culturally responsive education, equity in schools and empowering children, families, and community to close both the opportunity gap as well as the exposure gap.

Dr. Small is a public speaker and frequent guest and panelist in forums that include *The Heather B Show*, *The Raw Perspective*, the *WhyTry Podcast*, and *The Dr. Selma B Show*.

Dr. Small is a proud member of the *Off School Grounds Coalition*. Dr. Small also sits as a board member on the *Mount Vernon Youth Board* as well as a member of *Eagle Foundation/BERC Pilot Design Team* for the *Education Equity Action Plan*. Dr. Small is currently working on several books and was recently published in the *National Association of Secondary School Principals Journal*. Lastly, Dr. Small is the CEO of the *Acacia Consulting Group & Acacia Productions*.

New York State Assembly Speaker Carl Heastie's appointees are:



Mr. Reginald Rene

Mr. Reginald J. Rene's commitment to nursing shines through his 15 years of exemplary service as an Oncology/Med-Surg nurse at Bellevue Hospital. Within the Health and Hospitals Corporation, he has consistently demonstrated unwavering dedication to providing high-quality care to vulnerable oncology populations across New York City. Currently, Mr. Rene serves as an Assistant Nurse Manager in the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU) at Nassau University Medical Center in East Meadow, NY. In this capacity, he plays a pivotal role in the center's management team, focusing on developing culturally sensitive care protocols, advocating for policy changes, providing staff education and training, and collaborating with community organizations to address social determinants of health. His primary aim is to ensure that all PACU patients in the Nassau County community receive high-quality equitable care, irrespective of their background or circumstances.

Mr. Rene's extensive experience has fueled his passion for addressing health disparities among diverse population groups, prompting him to conduct research on the underlying constructs perpetuating healthcare inequities. His invaluable contributions have established him as a sought-after expert, particularly regarding the history and current state of African-American communities.

Beyond his professional pursuits, Mr. Rene's adventurous spirit has led him to explore six continents, broadening his understanding of diverse cultures and perspectives. With a solid nursing foundation from The New York City College of Technology, he now aims to further his education and impact by pursuing an FNP-DNP at Hofstra University, demonstrating his commitment to advancing his knowledge and skills to better serve his patients and community.

Residing in Long Island with his beloved wife and children, Mr. Rene finds fulfillment in both his professional achievements and his role as a devoted family man.



Dr. John R. Torrey

Dr. Torrey is an assistant professor of philosophy and a contributing professor in Africana Studies at Buffalo State College. His primary research interest is the interconnection between moral arguments for reparations for Black people and their political limits in America. He has also done work in applied ethics, philosophy of education, and pre-college philosophy.

In addition to publications on reparations, he has published on the theoretical underpinnings of Black Lives Matter. Dr. Torrey currently serves on the Academic Advisory Board of PLATO (Philosophy Learning and Teaching Organization).

In 2020, he was appointed to Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown's Commission to Recommend Police Policy and Advance Social Reconstruction. He was selected to the Board of Ethics for the City of Buffalo in 2022. He holds a BA in philosophy and Spanish from Morehouse College and an MA and Ph.D in philosophy from the University of Memphis.

New York State Assembly Minority Leader William Barclay's appointee is:



Mr. William E. Berry, Jr.

Mr. Berry is Founder and CEO of aaduna, Inc., a non-profit company that seeks to identify new and emerging writers and artists, especially creative people of color through a thrice annual publication called aaduna.

He served in various roles at universities and colleges including senior academic, executive and student affairs administrative assignments, considers himself to be an activist educator, change agent, and academician interested in the dynamics of empowerment, diversity, sustainability, culture, and organizational effectiveness.

He served as assistant dean at SUNY Stony Brook; directed Antioch University's undergraduate and graduate programs; served as dean of student affairs at Malcolm-King College in Harlem, NY, and served under three presidents at Rockland Community College. Other stops include Cayuga Community College, York College and Briarcliffe College.

Currently, Mr. Berry is a consultant to the Auburn Enlarged City School District (AECSD) assisting in the district's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion strategic plan development and implementation, as well as incorporating the NYSED Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework Initiative throughout the DEI district plan. He holds an undergraduate degree in history from Lehman College, a masters in Afro-American Studies from Boston University and completed doctoral level coursework in Urban History at New York University.

He resides in Auburn, New York.

Department of State – Executive Support



Nicole Jean Christian, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Officer

Nicole Jean Christian serves as the inaugural Department of State Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer and Policy Advisor in the Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure (OPDCI).

Nicole Jean’s responsibilities include guiding, enhancing and realizing the agency’s diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategy across all offices and program areas. As Policy Advisor, reporting directly to and advising the Deputy Secretary Kisha Santiago and the management team, she is responsible for the development, advancement and oversight of OPDCI climate change, resilience, sustainability, DEI and University partnership policies that impact communities across the state.

Nicole Jean is a class of 2021-23 NYS Empire Fellow with a 25+ year career in economic development in the related disciplines of downtown revitalization, affordable housing, disaster recovery, business attraction and retention, entrepreneurship, historic preservation and waterfront revitalization.

Nicole Jean holds a BBA from Marymount University; an MPA from George Mason University with a graduate certificate in nonprofit management. Nicole Jean is a certified DEI professional and is a current doctoral student. Nicole Jean has been published in the Journal of Public Affairs Education and Cogent & Business Management Journal and has presented at over a dozen academic conferences including for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Council on the Ocean (MARCO), Museum Association of NY (MANY), Northeast Business & Economics Association (NBEA) and the Northeast Decision Sciences Institute (NEDSI).

Nicole Jean is a committee chair of the Brookhaven NAACP.

Organizational Developments of the New York State Commission on African American History:

I. The objectives of the Commission were to:

- Share and host public meetings to solicit feedback and information from members of the public.
- Contribute to the telling of the whole history of the state and its people.
- Provide recommendations to inform and discuss Black history, culture, and contributions.
- Provide recommendations to support and/or promote the inclusion of Black history and contributions to unite, protect, and serve all New Yorkers.

Over the course of two years, the Commission achieved its objectives by partnering with stakeholders and community-based organizations across the state through events, cultural programming, and scholarly research to learn what lesser-known facts exist about the contributions of Black people throughout New York's history.

II. Per Executive Order Number 15, the New York State Commission on African American History is hosted by the New York Department of State, and the Secretary of State serves as Chair of the Commission. Executive Order Number 15 stipulates that the Chairperson of the Commission shall appoint a Vice Chairperson.

The inaugural Chairperson of the New York State Commission on African American History was New York's 68th Secretary of State Robert J. Rodriguez. In his role as the Chairperson, then Secretary of State Rodriguez asked Dr. Hazel N. Dukes to serve as the Vice Chairperson of the Commission. Dr. Dukes enthusiastically accepted, and this was unanimously supported by the appointed members of the Commission.

III. Decision to adopt a working framework to focus the scope and guide the work of the Commission:

Executive Order Number 15 was issued on March 9, 2022. In the summer of 2022, as members were named and appointed to the Commission, outreach to each member of the Commission was initiated. Due to the strong presence of the COVID-19 pandemic at the time and varying levels of individual comfort in public spaces, the outreach was conducted via phone and/or virtual platforms.

The origin of the Commission's framework was developed and informed by conversations with Commission members and through the eventual creation of Commission working committees. From these conversations emerged the ideas and aspirations Commission members had for the Commission's activities, approach to community engagement, impact, and accountability.

Some of these themes included programmatic ideas such as celebrating Black leaders and trailblazers in specific areas such as the military, sports, business, science, education, public service, and civil rights; the preservation of Black history by acknowledging the sites and amplifying the importance of Black communities within the State of New York such as Weeksville in Brooklyn, Sag Harbor in Long Island, Guinea Town in Dutchess County, Rapp Road in the Capital Region, Timbuctoo in the Adirondacks, and the East Side of Buffalo.

It is important to note that from these initial conversations of what the Commission might focus on to fulfill its mandate, certain proposed activities consistently resonated with Commissioners as both required and relevant work:

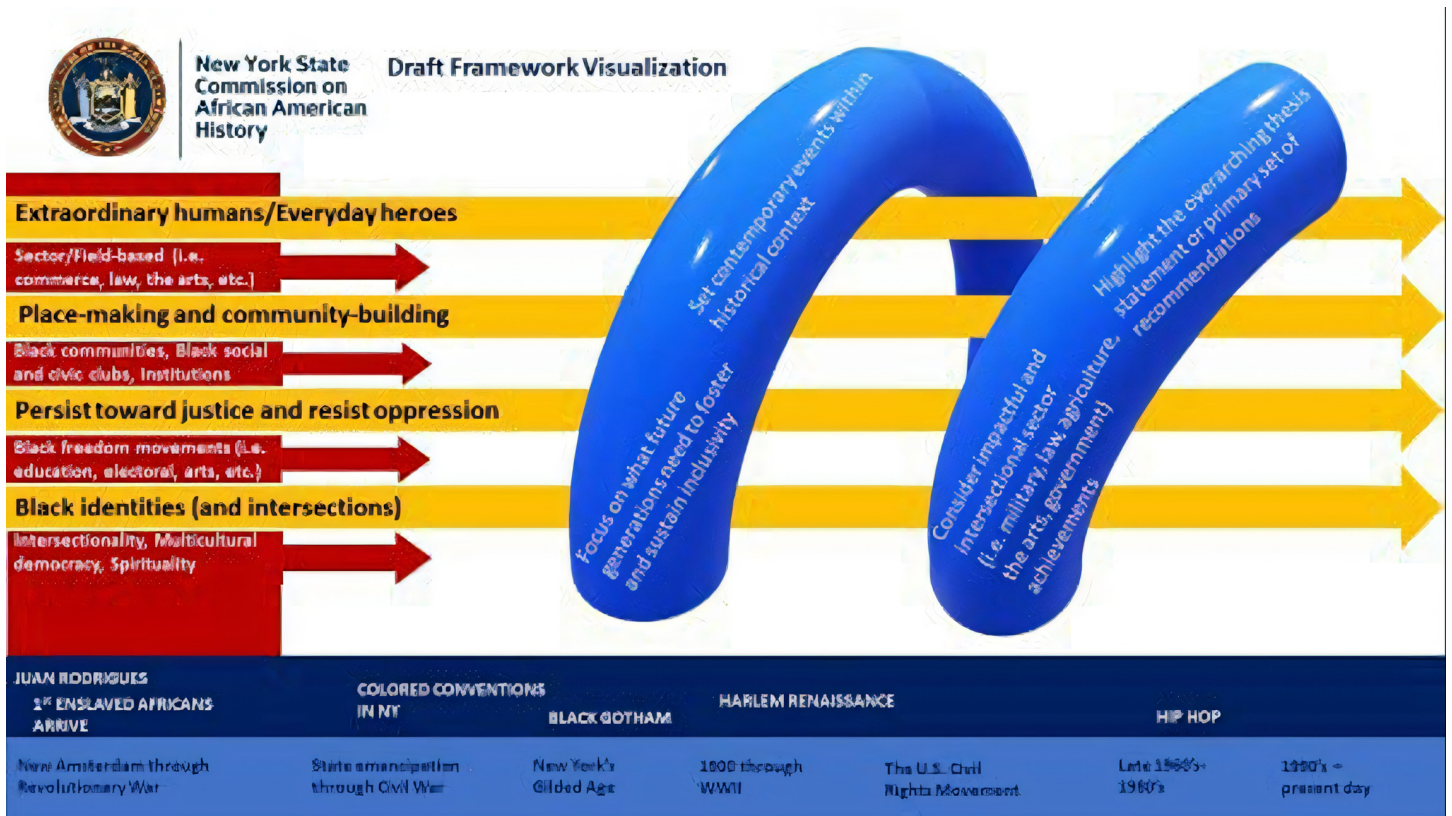
1. The development of a resource guide accessible to and promoted in the public arena.
2. An online/digital public engagement tool such as a managed website and/or interactive social media channels.
3. Consideration for the intersectionality of the Black experience in New York, specifically considering national origin, ethnicity, gender, religious affiliation, socio-economic status, and multiracial and multiethnic identities; and
4. An accurate and complete historical account of the impact of slavery on Africans and African Americans throughout all of New York State to provide clear context for the contributions of Black New Yorkers — both enslaved and free.

Themes from these conversations were documented and shared with Commission members in advance of the inaugural in-person Commissioner meeting held on November 16, 2022.

With Commissioners meeting in-person for the first time, the development of the framework began in earnest. From the rich and robust discussion, the following key points emerged:

- a. The framework would be an outcomes-based framework that includes some measures for progress and success, benchmarks, and metrics of the Commission's work.
- b. The framework would focus on themes that shaped specific historical time periods that would provide context for African American contributions during those periods.
- c. The framework would include the following topics and themes: spirituality, medicine, law, agriculture, the contemporary struggle, Afrofuturism, and would broadly focus on the political, economic, and cultural contributions of Black New Yorkers to the state.
- d. As the framework was developed, considerations for policy recommendations the Commission can make, especially in the field of education that can directly impact young people and generations to come was incorporated.
- e. As the framework developed, the Commission's organization and structure expanded to include work groups, committees, and external partners.

Following an initial discussion, eleven (11) commissioners joined a virtual working group meeting on December 13, 2022, to continue developing the framework. The following visual representation of a framework for discussion and feedback was presented:



The framework developed by the commission includes four elements/parts representative of the areas of emergence and discovery of contributions made by African Americans and Blacks in New York:

1. Extraordinary humans/Everyday heroes - sector/field-based contributions.
2. Place-making and community-building - contributions of Black communities, collectives, social and civic clubs and institutions.
3. Persist toward justice and resist oppression - contribution to New York’s political history and aspirations for an inclusive multiracial democracy through Black freedom movements and liberation struggles dating back to the 1600s and throughout history including education justice, the Black Arts Movement, and others as a persistence towards justice and resistance of oppression.
4. Black identities (and intersections) - the myriad ways in which contributions of African Americans in and to New York reflect the diverse identities within Blackness and intersectionality of Black people.

Explanation of African American History Commission Visual Framework

The four elements of the framework - emergent areas of contribution by Blacks in NY - provide thematic context to experiences uncovered during the scoped historical timeline for the commission starting with Juan Rodriguez's arrival as a free merchant in 1613.

The blue wrapped cylinders represent the dynamic lenses through which the Commission sought to analyze and understand contributions of Black New Yorkers within the themes across time. The Commission acknowledges that the contributions of Black New Yorkers could be limitless considering their ingenuity, skill, and what so many Africans and African Americans in New York have had to overcome, and therefore, developed these key considerations to help in creating thematic synergy and identifying connective threads throughout time. These considerations include:

- a. Focus on what future generations of New Yorkers will need to foster and sustain inclusivity.
- b. Set contemporary events within historical contexts, if applicable and where necessary.
- c. Consider contributions that reflect connected themes such as arts, democracy, agriculture, health, and other sectors.
- d. Align contributions with an overarching thesis (a theory of change) and/or a set of recommendations to be developed and submitted in the interim and final report to the Governor and the Legislature.

During the March 28, 2023, meeting of the members of the Commission, a unanimous vote was taken to adopt the framework with specific amendments. Those amendments included an extension of the timeline to overlap the Civil Rights Movement and the Black Power Movement time frames and to add the Black Arts Movement and Black feminism to the timeline.

- IV. Decision to establish an Executive Committee of the New York State Commission on African American History comprised of 5 commissioners appointed by the Chair and Vice Chair of the Commission.

On January 9, 2023, both the Chair and Vice Chair of the New York State Commission on African American History agreed that an Executive Committee would be beneficial to continue to move the Commission's work forward in a timely and effective method.

With thoughtful consideration given to reflect the diversity of geography, appointing authorities, and perspectives, the Executive Committee was formed in February of 2023.

The Executive Committee was comprised of:

1. Then Secretary of State and Chair of the New York State Commission on African American History, Robert J. Rodriguez
2. Vice Chair of the New York State Commission on African American History, Dr. Hazel N. Dukes
3. Dr. Malik Small
4. Jennifer Jones Austin
5. Dr. John Torrey

- V. Decision to create subcommittees to facilitate specific areas of the Commission’s work while simultaneously supporting commission members’ areas of expertise and interest.

The Executive Committee held their inaugural meeting on March 1, 2023.

At this meeting, the Executive Committee agreed that subcommittees for the Commission should be formed to reflect the emergent streams from within the Commission and feedback received from the members of the public.

On March 28, 2023, a meeting of all members of the Commission was convened in Albany, New York. The Executive Committee presented its recommendations for the creation of the subcommittees to the members of the Commission. The members of the Commission reviewed and adopted the recommendations.

Below is an overview of the subcommittees created and their focus:

1. Subcommittee on Sites, Localities, and Placemaking - Primarily responsible for strategies to highlight and acknowledge historical sites and places where significant Black achievements and Black placemaking took place within the State of New York. Responsible for identifying and partnering with organizations and communities across the state on this endeavor.
2. Subcommittee on Public Engagement and Programs - Primarily responsible for the programmatic activities of the Commission including public meetings, hosted events, collaborative celebrations, and raising awareness of the Commission and its work around highlighting the history and contributions of Black New Yorkers.
3. Subcommittee on Education - Primarily responsible for the work the Commission will undertake to raise awareness and advance a full and accurate history of Black New Yorkers.

Members of the Commission were asked to volunteer to serve as the Chair and/or member of a subcommittee.

Below is a chart summarizing the membership composition for each subcommittee.

Subcommittee	Chairperson	Membership
Sites, Localities, and Placemaking	William E. Berry, Jr.	Dr. Anne Bailey and Dr. Kishi Ducre
Public Engagement and Programs	Dr. Christina Greer	Ms. Jennifer Jones Austin and Ms. Joy Bivins
Education	Chancellor Lester W. Young, Jr	Mr. Reginald Rene, Dr. Malik Small, Dr. Henry Taylor, and Dr. Laurie Woodard

Inaugural Meeting of the New York State Commission on African American History

The invitation to the public meeting was disseminated electronically to non-profit and community organizations, elected officials, and via social media.

Recognizing the critical role that the cultural arts – including music and dance – play within the African American and Black communities, the New York State Commission on African American History sought to highlight and include a local individual and/or organization within the inaugural meeting.

The New Amsterdam Boys and Girls Choir provided a musical performance of “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” “Woke Up This Morning,” and “Wade in The Water.”



Members of the New York State Commission on African American History at the inaugural public meeting.

At this meeting, the Commission and its members were formally introduced to the public and a website dedicated to the Commission was unveiled where the public could submit comments and feedback. The public meeting was also broadcast live on the Commission’s website and a recording of the meeting was made available afterwards.

[New York State Commission on African American History \(ny.gov\)](http://www.ny.gov)

The inaugural meeting set the precedent for the Commission to identify and work with community partners for public meetings and events. The invitation and public meeting agenda for the inaugural meeting follows with a recording of the meeting here:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b0QwUQKKqal>



NYS COMMISSION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY INAUGURAL MEETING

Highlighting Over 400 Years of Contributions to Our Country and State



DATE

Wednesday, November 16, 2022



TIME

5:30 - 7:00 PM



LOCATION

**Schomburg Center for
Research in Black Culture**

**515 Malcolm X Boulevard
Langston Hughes Auditorium
New York, New York 10037**

RSVP NOW:

RSVP-NYSCAAH@dos.ny.gov

*Limited capacity. Registration required.
Mask wearing in a large group setting such as an
auditorium or theater is still strongly encouraged.



LIVESTREAM

bit.ly/3UCo77M

[NY.GOV/NYSCAAH](https://ny.gov/nyscaah)



**New York State
Commission on
African American
History**



**New York State
Commission on
African American
History**

Inaugural Meeting Agenda

November 16, 2022, 5:30 PM - 7 PM

**Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
515 Malcolm X Boulevard New York, New York 10037**

1. Welcome by Joy Bivins, Executive Director, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and Member, New York State Commission on African American History
2. Performance by the New Amsterdam Boys and Girls Choir:
“Lift Every Voice and Sing,” “Woke Up This Morning,” and “Wade in The Water”
3. Call to Order and Establishment of Quorum
4. Opening Remarks by Robert J. Rodriguez, Secretary of State and Chairperson of the New York State Commission on African American History
5. Introduction and reflections from Members of the New York State Commission on African American History
6. Motion to Adjourn

Activities of the New York State Commission on African American History

January 15, 2023 – On behalf of the New York State Commission on African American History, Vice Chair Dr. Hazel Dukes and Dr. Malik Small attended the New York State Office of General Services' Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. "Pathways to Freedom" celebratory program in Albany, New York. Vice Chairperson Dr. Hazel Dukes provided remarks regarding the creation of the Commission and its purpose.

February 9, 2023 – Second public meeting of the New York State Commission on African American History in partnership with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation at Philipse Manor Hall in Yonkers, New York during Black History Month.

The promotional flyer and public agenda for this meeting are below on pages 34 and 35. Members of the public were asked to RSVP for the event. This meeting was broadcast live on the Commission's website, and a recording of the meeting is available on the Commission's website.

[New York State Commission on African American History \(ny.gov\)](https://www.ny.gov/new-york-state-commission-on-african-american-history)

In advance of this public meeting, members of the Commission received a guided tour of Philipse Manor Hall and its exhibit which highlights the stories of the Philipse family, the Indigenous people from whom the Philipse lands derive, and the enslaved Africans whose work and trade allowed the Philipse family to prosper during the pre-Revolutionary era. While past exhibits and lectures have documented the role that Africans and Indigenous people contributed to New York State history, these expanded permanent exhibits more fully depict the multicultural environment of the colonial period and share this complex history with visitors.

The tour, which was expertly led by Lavada Nahon, Interpreter of African American History for the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), was a fitting introduction to OPRHP's "Our Whole History Initiative." During the public meeting, Ms. Nahon and Mr. Michael Lord, the Site Director for Philipse Manor Hall, provided an overview of the institution's rich history and the efforts underway to include a more complete history.

The public meeting included stirring musical selections from Yonkers-based vocal artist Cecilia Tucker-Myers and presentations on regional history related to the Commission's charge from Dr. Myra Armstead and Mr. David Thomas. Dr. Armstead, a lauded historian and author of numerous books, spoke about the history of Black identity in the Hudson Valley region of New York from the pre-colonial period through the 1800s.

Specifically, Dr. Armstead shared fascinating excerpts from the life of James F. Brown, a formerly enslaved man from Maryland who escaped to New York, was manumitted, and worked as a master gardener and horticulturalist for a wealthy New York family, the Verplancks, at their Fishkill Landing

(now Beacon) estate, Mount Gulian. Dr. Armstead's book, *Freedom's Gardener: James F. Brown, Horticulture, and the Hudson Valley in Antebellum America*, is informed by the diary Mr. Brown kept from 1829-1866. Mr. Brown's detailed journal entries do not reveal his inner thoughts, conflicts, or psychology. Instead, they read as a record of everyday events and daily chores, local news, seasonal farming and weather entries, receipts for work done and even favorite recipes.

The journals also reveal his deep feelings of patriotism for the new nation, his desire to earn money so that he could buy property, and his wish to vote in elections like other men. They also reveal how hard he worked to earn money, doing assorted labor for the Verplancks and neighbors, ferrying people across the Hudson, and managing the Verplanck estate.¹

After this insightful presentation, the public heard from David Thomas, Director of Friends of the African American Cemetery in Rye, New York. Mr. Thomas' presentation focused on the rediscovery and community-driven, volunteer-led reclamation of a local African American cemetery. Notably, Mr. Thomas shared that in addition to routine volunteer days to clean the cemetery, ceremonies are held on Memorial Day and Veterans' Day each year because there are fifteen Civil War Veterans, one Spanish American War Veteran, five World War I Veterans, and two World War II Veterans interred there.

Mr. Thomas shared that many descendants of those interred there come to these ceremonies and reach out to him to provide more detail about those buried there, which helps provide additional context for understanding what life was like in Rye, New York, and the surrounding communities for African Americans throughout history.

This public meeting was a successful and impactful demonstration of the importance of local history education and preservation for understanding both the Black experience in New York and the state's history.

The public had the opportunity to provide their feedback during the public meeting and via the Commission's website. Comments centered on exploring Black history and the contributions of Black people of African descent.

¹ [James F Brown | Emancipated Slaves | Hudson Valley | Beacon \(mountgulian.org\)](http://mountgulian.org)



NEW YORK STATE COMMISSION ON AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MEETING



DATE

Thursday, February 9, 2023

***Limited capacity.**

Registration required.



TIME

6:00 - 8:00 PM

RSVP NOW:

RSVP-NYSCAAH@dos.ny.gov



LOCATION

Philipse Manor Hall
29 Warburton Avenue
Yonkers, New York 10701



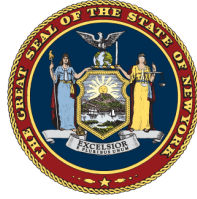
LIVESTREAM

ny.gov/NYSCAAH

[NY.GOV/NYSCAAH](https://ny.gov/NYSCAAH)



New York State
Commission on
African American
History



**New York State
Commission on
African American
History**

Meeting Agenda

February 9, 2023, 6 PM - 8 PM

**Philipse Manor Hall
29 Warburton Avenue Yonkers, New York 10701**

1. Welcome by Michael Lord, Philipse Hall Manor Site Director, New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
2. Performance by Cecilia Tucker-Myers
3. Call to Order
4. Opening Remarks by Robert J. Rodriguez, Secretary of State and Chairperson of the New York State Commission on African American History
5. Presentation by NYS Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation regarding “Our Whole History Initiative”
6. Remarks by professor and author Dr. Myra Armstead regarding Black Identity in the Hudson Valley
7. Remarks by Mr. David Thomas, Director of the Friends of African American Cemetery in Rye, New York
8. Public Engagement
9. Adjournment

I Love New York and the New York State Commission on African American History

One priority for the New York State Commission on African American History was to uplift past and present history within New York State's tourism program.

As part of this goal, members of the New York State Commission on African American History provided feedback on the scope, target, language, and context for the I Love NY Black History & Culture initiative.

On February 24, 2023, Governor Hochul held a press conference at the Alvin Ailey Dance Theater to announce the State's plans for an I LOVE NY Black travel initiative, which will celebrate New York's unparalleled Black history, culture, food, and the arts.



[Governor Hochul Announces Plans for I LOVE NY Black Travel Initiative | Governor Kathy Hochul](#)

Members of the New York State Commission on African American History attended and spoke at the press conference, reemphasizing the importance of the commission's work and the value of public feedback and insight.

Third Public Meeting of the New York State Commission on African American History

In recognition of Women's History Month, the New York State Commission on African American History partnered with the State University of New York, University at Albany, Africana Studies Department to co-sponsor an exhibition and forum highlighting Black women and their contributions to our democracy and society.

The Department of Africana Studies at the University at Albany is a nationally ranked academic program that enrolls students from all over the world interested in learning about Africa and Black America.

Additionally, through the partnership with the University at Albany Africana Studies Department, local and regional historical and community based not-for-profit organizations participated and shared memorabilia and items pertaining to African American and Black history.

Participating exhibitors included the Albany Institute of History & Art, the Hart-Cluett Museum, Historic Cherry Hill, New York State Archives, Rapp Road Historical Society, Schenectady County Historical Society, and the Underground Railroad Education Center.

Dr. Roxanne Booth, an Adjunct Professor, author, and pastor, provided a musical rendition of the hymn “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”

The public meeting included a robust panel discussion amongst Commission Vice Chair Dr. Hazel Duke and Commissioner Jennifer Jones-Austin and moderated by Dr. Jennifer Burns, an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Africana Studies at the University at Albany.

The panel focused on Black women’s contributions to civic life and democracy in New York State, and panelists shared personal experiences, told stories of their mothers with historical context, and highlighted contemporary Black women champions for equity, justice, and equal rights in the State of New York.



Originally, the meeting was also going to include a presentation from Professor Ciji Dodds, Associate Professor of Law at Albany Law School, about the rarely discussed role that enslaved women played in leading rebellions and resistance to slavery. However, unfortunately, Professor Ciji Dodds was unexpectedly unable to attend.

Despite this change in the program, the public meeting was successful, inspiring positive feedback from participants and having over 110 college students in attendance.

As in past meetings, the public meeting was broadcast live on the Commission’s website; a recording of the public meeting was placed on the Commission’s website; and the public was invited to submit comments and feedback at the public meeting and via the Commission’s website.



New York State
Commission on
African American
History

You're Invited!

**Highlighting African American
Women Engagement on
Democracy and Society**

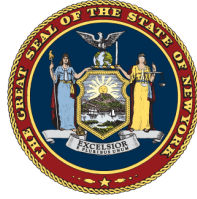
Tuesday
March 27, 2023
5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

University at Albany
Campus Center Ballroom
1400 Washington Avenue
Albany, New York 12222

RSVP NOW:
Registration Required
RSVP-NYSAAH@dos.ny.gov

LIVESTREAM:
ny.gov/nyscaah





**New York State
Commission on
African American
History**

Meeting Agenda

March 28, 2023, 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

**University at Albany Campus Center Ballroom
1400 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12222**

1. Welcome by Dr. Marcia Sutherland, Chair, University at Albany Africana Studies Department
2. Opening Remarks by Dr. Jeanette Altarriba, Dean, University at Albany College of Arts and Sciences
3. Singing of “Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing” led by Rev. Dr. Roxanne Booth
4. Call to Order and Opening Remarks by Robert J. Rodriguez, Secretary of State and Chairperson of the New York State Commission on African American History
5. Panel Discussion “Black Women’s Contributions to Civic Life and Democracy in New York State” featuring Ciji Dodds, Associate Professor of Law at Albany Law School; Dr. Hazel Dukes, President of the NAACP New York State Conference; Jennifer Jones-Austin, CEO of the Federation of Protestant Welfare Agencies; and Stacy Linch, Chief of Staff to Governor Hochul. Moderated by Dr. Jennifer Burns, Lecturer University at Albany Department of Africana Studies
6. Presentation by Ciji Dodds, Associate Professor of Law at Albany Law School on “Enslaved Black Women Leading Resistance and Rebellion.”
7. Public Engagement
8. Adjournment

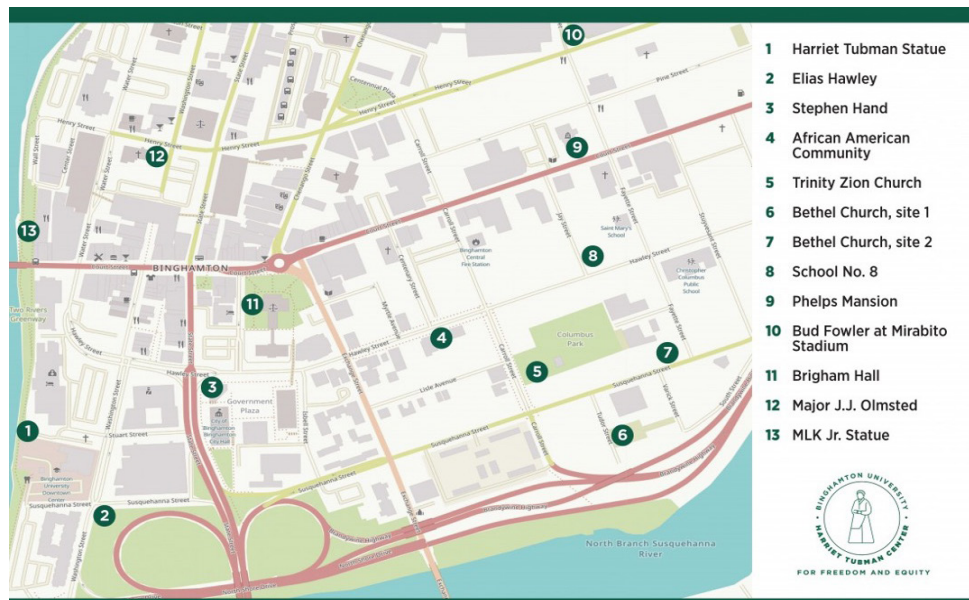
Downtown Binghamton Freedom Trail

The work of the commission is a continuation and realization of the Governor’s commitment to uplifting and recognizing the contributions of African Americans to New York State and to the country. In February 2022, Governor Hochul [announced](#) a \$400,000 grant to the Harriet Tubman Center for Freedom and Equity at Binghamton University.



The center is led by Dr. Anne C. Bailey, who is a member of the New York State Commission on African American History. The Center was founded in 2019 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the presence of people of African descent in the United States and is committed to “living history” or “applied history” as it pertains to the shaping of public policy. The grant supported the Harriet Tubman - Freedom Trail project, which was created to honor and remember the civil rights legacy of Harriet Tubman and the Underground Railroad in Binghamton and the Southern Tier.

[Binghamton Downtown Freedom Trail project gets underway | Binghamton News](#)



On March 12, 2024, also known as Harriet Tubman Day, the Downtown Binghamton’s Harriet Tubman-Freedom Trail officially opened to the public. The completed trail consists of 13 markers spread across two and a half miles in the City of Binghamton. The first marker is located directly behind the University Downtown Center and honors Harriet Tubman. The remaining 12 historical markers represent abolitionists, such as William Seward of Auburn and Gerrit Smith of Peterboro, as well as Underground Railroad stops and anti-slavery sites.

Additionally, at the public ceremony, Dr. Anne Bailey announced that the artist Zoey Dufour was selected to create a sculpture of Harriet Tubman that will stand next to the marker. The sculpture is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2025.

Fourth Meeting of the New York State Commission on African American History

In honor of Juneteenth, the Commission held its fourth public meeting on June 12, 2023, in partnership with the Michigan Street African American Corridor and their anchor partner organizations at the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library in Buffalo, New York.

Michigan Street African American Corridor Executive Director Terry Alford provided a presentation to the members of the Commission about the history, work, and strategic plan of the organization.

Members of the Commission engaged in conversations with Mr. Alford about how the Corridor could partner with local universities to assist with creating sustainable businesses and industries in the community. Additional items of discussion included the gap in the full integration of local minority-owned businesses with the influx of construction jobs and the need to offer and/or provide significant training opportunities for Black Buffalonians so that they could use their skills.

Due to inclement weather, the walking tour of the Corridor was retooled, and participating anchor organizations made virtual presentations to the Commission. Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor Program Manager Audrey Clark led a [virtual tour of the Michigan Street Baptist Church](#); Nash House museum volunteer Sharon Holley provided a [presentation on the Nash family](#); and Buffalo's first Black woman to own a radio station - Sheila Brown - led us on a [virtual tour of WUFO and the Black Radio Collective](#). Additionally, George Scott of the Colored Musicians' Club and Museum displayed items in the library auditorium lobby during the public meeting.

The theme for this public meeting was "Looking Back While Moving Forward: Recognizing African Americans long-standing presence, rich contributions, and pride in Western New York" and the panel discussion featured Commissioner Dr. Henry Taylor, a Professor at the University of Buffalo; Commissioner Dr. John Torrey, Assistant Professor of Philosophy and a contributing professor in Africana Studies at Buffalo State College; Naila Ansari, Assistant Professor in Theatre and Africana Studies at SUNY Buffalo; and Dr. Lillian S. Williams, Assistant Professor at the University at Buffalo. Each of these panelists shared the significance of Black Buffalonians who made a difference in their community and contributed to the city in different ways.

The panelists shared stories of the following individuals:

Dr. Monroe Fordham, who worked tirelessly to promote and highlight the contributions of African Americans—especially members of Buffalo's African American community—to this country's history and culture and was a driving force in founding The Afro-American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier, an organization dedicated to collecting and preserving records documenting the legacies of African Americans in Western New York. (Dr. Lillian S. Williams is also a co-founder of this organization.)

Mary Burnett Talbert, a civil rights and anti-lynching activist, suffragist, preservationist, international human rights proponent, and educator who moved to Buffalo when she married in 1891. According to the Michigan Street African American Corridor's petition to correct America's anti-lynching advocacy history to include Mrs. Talbert's advocacy, Talbert's work to protect the lives of African Americans created a path that took 100 years to establish a law that recognized lynching in America as a federal crime.

Lorna C. Hill, the founder of Buffalo's Ujima Company, used drama to explore race and ethnicity and to build and sustain community. An activist as well, Ms. Hill was among the first Black women to graduate from Dartmouth, and she spent her entire life creating opportunities for people of color to make riveting, provocative theater.

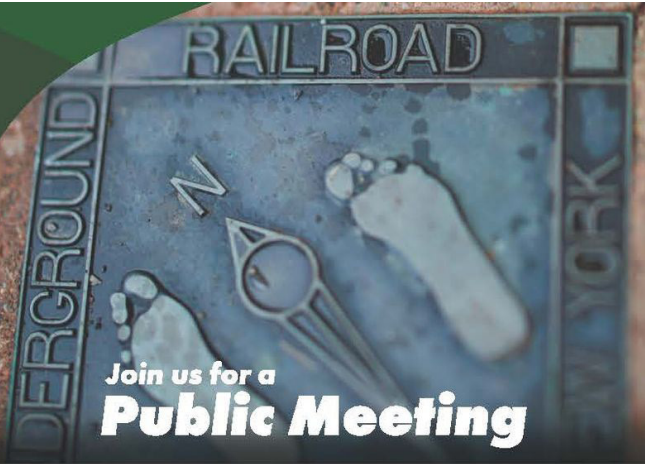
Arthur O. Eve moved from the segregated South to Buffalo, NY in 1953. After serving in the United States Army from 1953-1955 where he achieved the rank of corporal, he returned to Buffalo in 1955. Eve won his seat in the New York State Assembly in 1966 and served longer than any other incumbent member (1967-1982, 1983-2002). Eve rose to prominence in the mid-1960s during Buffalo's civil disturbances. He expanded his notability through his activist work during the Attica Prison Riots. In Buffalo's Civil Rights Movement riots, Eve attempted to organize formal meetings to avert physical confrontations. During his first term he led the effort to obtain an initial \$500,000 of funding to establish the State University of New York's SEEK/Educational Opportunity Program.

The promotional flyer and public agenda for this meeting are below. To further promote the public meeting, an advertisement was purchased and placed in the historic African American newspaper, *The Challenger*. As with prior meetings, the program allowed for public engagement and comment, the meeting was broadcast live, and a recording of the meeting is available via the Commission's website. The event highlighted and further supported the Commission's objectives to identify, highlight and uplift contributions of African Americans to New York State and the country.

[New York State Commission on African American History \(ny.gov\)](http://www.ny.gov)



New York State
Commission on
African American
History



Join us for a
Public Meeting

The Commission is Coming to Buffalo!

Looking Back While Moving Forward:

Join us as we reflect on the past while moving forward and recognize African Americans' long-standing presence, rich contributions and pride in Western New York.



Monday, June 12, 2023
5:00 PM – 6:30 PM

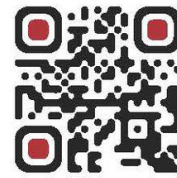


Buffalo & Erie County Public Library
1 Lafayette Square
Buffalo, NY 14203
(Enter Through Clinton Street)



To Register, Email:
RSVP-NYSAAH@dos.ny.gov

LIVESTREAM



ny.gov/nyscaah





**New York State
Commission on
African American
History**

Meeting Agenda

June 12, 2023, 5:00 PM - 6:30 PM

**Buffalo & Erie County Public Library
1 Lafayette Square Buffalo, NY 14203**

1. Opening Remarks by Robert J. Rodriguez, Secretary of State and Chairperson of the New York State Commission on African American History
2. Artistic Performance by Jillian Hanesworth, 1st Poet Laureate of Buffalo
3. Panel Discussion “Looking Back While Moving Forward: Recognizing African Americans long-standing presence, rich contributions, and pride in Western New York” featuring Dr. Henry Taylor, Director of the University at Buffalo Urban Studies Program and Member of the NYS Commission on African American History; Dr. John Torrey, Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Buffalo State University, and member of the NYS Commission on African American History; Naila Ansari, an Assistant Professor in Theatre and Africana Studies at SUNY Buffalo State College; and Dr. Lillian S. Williams, an Assistant Professor at the University at Buffalo. Moderated by Maria Dautruche, External Advisor to the NYS Commission on African American History
4. Public Engagement
5. Closing Remarks by Robert J. Rodriguez, Secretary of State and Chairperson of the New York State Commission on African American History
6. Adjournment

New York State Commission on African American History Webinars

As previously noted, the New York State Commission on African American History formed three subcommittees. To continue advancing the mission of the Commission, the Public Engagement and Programs subcommittee recommended a webinar series to further engage and educate the public on the state's history and highlight the contributions of African Americans and Black New Yorkers within specific content areas.

In April 2024, the Commission hosted two virtual “lunch and learn” style webinars, which were free and open to the public. The first webinar was held on April 5, 2024 and focused on “The Contributions of Black Religion and African Spiritual Traditions throughout New York’s History.”

This topic was chosen because the Commission received many public comments on the important role that faith and religion has and continues to play within the African American community.

Public comments focused on recognizing the role that religion and faith played to ensure the survival and progress of African Americans. From the first independent congregations established by free blacks in the early 1800’s to contemporary black churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues, these institutions served as centers of moral and political leadership and provided services and support to urban and rural communities. Spiritual beliefs and faith-orientated practices offered hope and comfort, the will to resist oppression, the values of self-determination, and pride in race and culture.

Moderated by Joy Bivins – the Director of the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture and a member of the New York State Commission on African American History—the webinar featured Rev. Malcolm J. Byrd, Senior Pastor of Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and Katherine Merriman, a native New Yorker and Associate Professor at the University of Detroit Mercy.

Reverend Malcolm Byrd spoke about the history of the Mother African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, which is the oldest Black church in New York State. Founded in 1796 and chartered in 1799 by Ministers James Varick, Christopher Rush, William Miller, and George Galbreath, the church introduced Black religious expression while catering to a growing population of Black abolitionists. The church served as a stop along the Underground Railroad and was referred to as a “Freedom Church” for its active participation in Black social activism. After affiliate Zion churches started to open, the original church began to distinguish itself as the “Mother” church and it continues to serve its members and the community—including through the COVID-19 pandemic. Reverend Malcolm Byrd spoke about how the Black Church has been a place of refuge and healing for the oppressed and marginalized. He emphasized how the Black Church continues to mobilize African Americans for meaningful change and underscored the resilience of the Black Church, which has survived in the face of adversity, scarcity of resources, and historical threats.

Professor Merriman concluded the program with a short presentation that highlighted the presence, roles, and contributions of African and Black Muslims in New York from pre-colonial times through the present. Dr Merriam presented visual examples of religious amulets of Muslim Africans from pre-colonial times and shared how the story of Black Muslims is intertwined with themes of liberation and collective activism. She drew connections between pre-colonial Black Muslim practices related to worship, community activism and collective economics of contemporary Black Muslim today.



JOIN OUR FREE WEBINAR

The Contributions of Black Religion and African Spiritual Traditions throughout New York's History

Reverend Malcolm Byrd
Senior Pastor, Mother AME Zion Church
(The oldest Black church in New York)
A liberation theologian, Rev. Byrd has served in various capacities in local and national leadership.



Prof. Katherine Merriman
University of Detroit Mercy
Scholar of religious studies with focus on contemporary Islam, race and religion, and the anthropology of religion.



April 5, 2024



12 PM – 1 PM



This is a Virtual Event presented on Zoom



To Register, please scan the QR Code or visit: <https://bit.ly/3x6XyRn>

SCAN ME



**New York State
Commission on
African American
History**

[NY.GOV/NYSAAH](https://ny.gov/nyscaah)

New York State Commission on African American History Webinars, Continued:

The Commission's second webinar was on April 29, 2024, and focused on "Black Military Service and Contributions throughout New York State's History". This topic was selected based on comments received from the public, which highlighted the long-standing involvement of Black people within the military.

The webinar was presented in partnership with the Friends of Fort Ontario, which is a not-for-profit educational organization formed in 1989 to support the operation of the Fort Ontario State Historic Site.

The panelists were:

- **Anthony F. Gero:** a historian, author, and co-author of six military history books and over 150 articles on military history, primarily concentrating on the NYS Militia, National Guard, and African American soldiers. He is a member of the Friends of Fort Ontario board and a military historian.
- **Professor Nikki Brown:** Hailing from Rochester, New York and currently an Associate Professor at the University of Kentucky, Professor Brown has been teaching American and African American history since 1999. She majored in History at Oberlin College, and she earned a PhD in History from Yale University in 2001. Her book, *Private Politics and Public Voices: Black Women's Activism from World War I to the New Deal* (Indiana University Press) won the Letitia Woods Brown Award for Best Book in African American Women's in History in 2006.

Mr. Gero spoke about Fort Ontario's history, its role as a significant site for Black military service, and shared his knowledge about the Black New Yorkers who fought in the War of 1812.

Ms. Brown shared the multi-generational story of the Fraziers - Andrew Frazier, an African American Revolutionary War soldier and his great-granddaughter Susan Elizabeth Frazier, President of the Women's Auxiliary of the Old 15th National Guard (later known as the Harlem Hellfighters) during World War I - to highlight African Americans' embodiment of values such as freedom and patriotism.



369th Infantry, NY Army National Guard, commonly referred to as the "Harlem Hellfighters" New York State's first Black National Guard Regiment



African American Women Army Corps at the Staten Island Terminal, 1946

JOIN OUR FREE WEBINAR

Black Military Service and Contributions throughout New York's History

Nikki Brown

Associate Professor at the University of Kentucky, and author of *"Private Politics and Public Voices: Black Women's Activism from World War I to the New Deal"*



Anthony F. Gero

Historian, author, and co-author of six military history books and over 150 articles on military history, primarily concentrating on the NYS Militia, National Guard, and African American soldiers.



Monday, April 29, 2024



12 PM – 1 PM



This is a Virtual Event presented on Zoom



To Register, please scan the QR Code or visit: <https://bit.ly/4aCrxPZ>

SCAN ME



New York State Commission on African American History

[NY.GOV/NYSAAH](https://www.ny.gov/nyscaah)

Communications and Media Engagement of the New York State Commission on African American History

In addition to the external activities of the Commission, the Department of State as the host entity for the New York State Commission on African American History developed and launched a website for the Commission in November 2022.

The website, the New York State Commission on African American History (ny.gov), provides the public an opportunity to learn about the Commission and its upcoming activities, watch live-streams and recordings of Commission meetings, and provide comments and feedback for the Commission.

The website also offers resources for individuals to learn more about African American history within the State of New York and the United States.

In addition to the Commission’s website, the Commission’s work has been highlighted in several media articles, which are outlined below and available on the Commission’s website.

Date:	Publication:	Title:	Link:
February 23, 2022	Governor Hochul	Governor Hochul Announces 400 Years of African American History Commission Appointments	Governor Hochul Announces 400 Years of African American History Commission Appointments Governor Kathy Hochul (ny.gov)
March 3, 2022	City University of New York	NY Gov. appoints CCNY’s Laurie Woodard to 400 Years of African American History Commission	NY Gov. appoints CCNY’s Laurie Woodard to 400 Years of African-American History Commission The City College of New York (cuny.edu)
March 9, 2022	Governor Hochul	Executive Order #15	No. 15: Establishing the 400 Years of African American History Commission Governor Kathy Hochul (ny.gov)
March 30, 2022	Syracuse University News	NY Governor Appoints Professor Ducre to 400 Years of African American History Commission	New York Governor Appoints Professor Ducre to 400 Years of African American History Commission — Syracuse University News
February 1, 2023	ABC Channel 7 New York	Africology class unlocks hidden Black History Month stories for middle schoolers in East New York, Brooklyn	Africology class unlocks hidden Black History Month stories for middle schoolers in East New York, Brooklyn - ABC7 New York (abc7ny.com)

Date:	Publication:	Title:	Link:
February 8, 2023	Patch Newspaper	NY African American History Commission Begins Listening Tour in the Hudson Valley	NY African American History Commission Begins Listening Tour In The HV Pelham, NY Patch
February 9, 2023	News 12 Westchester	State Commission on African American History holds its first meeting in Yonkers	State Commission on African American History holds its first meeting in Yonkers (news12.com)
March 14, 2023	Press Connects	Binghamton Freedom Trail honors Tubman, anti-slavery leaders	Binghamton University Harriet Tubman project to honor sites and leaders (pressconnects.com)
March 16, 2023	Binghamton News	Freedom Trail Project receives \$400,000 grant	Freedom Trail Project receives \$400,000 grant Binghamton News
April 17, 2023	Spectrum News	Trail highlights Binghamton's Underground Railroad	Trail highlights Binghamton's Underground Railroad history (spectrumlocalnews.com)
June 8, 2023	Challenger Community News	Meeting of NYS Commission on African American History to Take Place in Buffalo	CHALLENGER COMMUNITY NEWS by Challenger Community News - Issuu
June 12, 2023	WGRZ TV Station	African American Heritage Corridor engages with community in pushing educational initiatives	African American Heritage Corridor engages with community in pushing educational initiatives wgrz.com
June 19, 2023	ABC Channel 7 New York	Celebrating Juneteenth: Emancipation Day	Celebrating Juneteenth: Emancipation Day - ABC7 New York (abc7ny.com)

Public Feedback

The New York State Commission on African American History recognized the value and importance of public feedback and provided multiple avenues for New Yorkers to share their thoughts.

Commission meetings provided a platform for members to hear from public officials, experts, and New York State residents, which informed the Commission's work and recommendations.

As noted earlier, members of the public were also invited to provide ideas and feedback on the Commission's website.

To assist in raising awareness of the opportunity to provide feedback and comments, the flyer below was developed and disseminated at public meetings and shared with community-based organizations.



New York State Commission on African American History

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter”
— Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

On March 9, 2022, Governor Kathy Hochul signed an Executive Order to create the New York State Commission on African American History.

The Commission highlights African American and Black New Yorkers contributions to our state and country.

The Commission will partner with community-based organizations to bring New Yorkers together through:

- *Community Events*
- *Cultural Programming*
- *Scholarly Research*


The commission will promote a greater understanding and recognition of the history, achievements, and contributions of African Americans and Black New Yorkers. We can not do this alone.

Progress occurs when everybody has a voice. Submit your questions, thoughts, ideas, and solutions by scanning the QR code on the opposite side of this leaflet.



Scan the QR code to share your questions, thoughts, ideas, and solutions and to learn about future events.



Or visit:
NY.GOV/NYSAAH



New York State Commission on African American History

  @NYSAAH

Public responses about the establishment of the Commission were overwhelmingly positive and encouraging.

The New York State Commission on African American History has received over 550 submissions via its website and at public forums.

The feedback received to date has focused primarily on two themes:

1. Bringing awareness to sites generally unknown for their role and/or contribution. Geographically, most of the feedback has centered on locations in the Hudson Valley, Albany, the Syracuse region, and the Adirondacks/North Country. In the feedback received, the individuals and/or grassroots groups encouraged the Commission to bring awareness and to commemorate these public spaces through a plaque, statute, and/or a street naming dedication.
2. Individuals and/or grassroots groups requesting that the educational curriculum within the State of New York include materials to provide a more comprehensive, inclusive, and holistic knowledge of African Americans within pre-colonial and American history beyond the touch points of the Civil War and the fight for civil rights in the 1960's.

Financial Statement of the New York State Commission on African American History

The New York State Commission on African American History was created under Executive Order Number 15 and is hosted by the New York Department of State.

Individuals appointed to the Commission volunteer their time and expertise in service of the people of the State of New York. Expenditures such as travel, lodging, and applicable meals incurred in the service of duties associated with the work of the Commission may be reimbursed in accordance with State of New York policies and regulations.

Below is the financial statement for the New York State Commission on African American History from the time frame of July 1, 2022 to September 1, 2023.

Description	Monetary Amount
Dedicated income received by the New York State Commission on African American History	\$0
Expenditures:	
Honorarium to Presenters and/or Speakers	\$1,500.00
Food/catering for meetings of the members of the New York State Commission on African American History	\$1,516.50
Travel and/or program registrations for members of the New York State Commission on African American History, a NYS DOS staff member, and an external advisor to the Commission	\$8,053.26
Venue rental	\$4,504.01
Photography, FedEx for signs and posters, and supplies	\$2,916.45
Dedicated time and salary of NYS DOS personnel and external facilitator for the New York State Commission on African American History	\$107,409.67

Below is the financial statement for the New York State Commission on African American History from the time frame of September 2, 2023 to May 1, 2024.

Description	Monetary Amount
Dedicated income received by the New York State Commission on African American History	\$16,046,000* *Fiscal Year 2025 New York State Budget enacted on April 22, 2024, included an appropriation in this amount for the New York State Commission on African American History.
Expenditures:	
Honorarium to Presenters and/or Speakers	\$1,000.00
Food/catering for meetings of the members of the New York State Commission on African American History	\$0
Travel and/or program registrations for members of the New York State Commission on African American History, a NYS DOS staff member, and an external advisor to the Commission	\$4,262.99
Venue rental	\$0
Photography, FedEx for signs and posters, and supplies	\$0
Dedicated time and salary of NYS DOS personnel and external facilitator for the New York State Commission on African American History	\$98,319.30

Advancement of the New York State Commission on African American History Recommendations

In its interim report, the NYS Commission on African American History provided 30 recommendations within 10 thematic arenas:

1. Transformative Moments in History
2. Economic Development and Community Investment
3. Economic Development for the Arts and Tourism
4. Sites, Localities, and Placemaking
5. Legacy Acknowledgment of Civil and Human Rights/Social Impact Builder
6. Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation
7. Cultural Heritage and Education
8. Expanding Educator Knowledge and Resources
9. Expanding Student Learning Opportunities
10. Operational

Since the submittal of the interim report, some of the recommendations have been advanced in several arenas, including:

1. Expanding Educator Knowledge and Resources:
 - Launch of a funded Black Leadership Institute to attract, support, retain, and foster the success of emerging and current African American and Black leaders within the SUNY educational system.
2. Legacy Acknowledgment of Civil and Human Rights/Social Impact Builder:
 - Establishment of the Dr. Hazel Dukes Fellowship
 - Inclusion of a portrait of Dr. Dukes, a former SUNY Trustee, within the SUNY Building for her decade's long efforts in championing diversity, equity, and fairness.

In February 2024, Governor Hochul announced that the next SUNY portrait competition will be held in honor of Dr. Hazel Dukes, and the winning portrait will be displayed in the H. Carl McCall SUNY building in Albany in honor of her service.

3. Sites, Localities, and Placemaking:

- In December 2023, Governor Hochul announced the addition of the Central Harlem North Historic District to the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places, marking it as one of 37 new historic sites recognized for their cultural and historical significance across the State of New York.¹
- Development and placement of an exhibit in the NYS Capitol Building focusing on Black New Yorkers that championed civil rights and justice within the State of New York and the nation. Exhibit will feature Dorothy Height, Bayard Rustin, Philip Randolph, and Ella Baker
- Designation of Central Harlem North as a Historic District.
- Graceland Cemetery Receiving Vault, Albany County – Located within the Graceland Cemetery in Albany, the receiving vault is a significant example of a mortuary building exhibiting Romanesque, Neoclassical, and Gothic style features. The vault was built in 1902 by local civil engineer and architect Garnet Douglas Baltimore, a life-long resident of Troy, New York and the first African American graduate of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (1881). His professional career included projects with railroads, the New York State Canal System, the City of Troy, and various cemeteries throughout the state. He was also an active community member who gave lectures and served on local committees.

4. Economic Development and Community Investment:

- In November 2023, Governor Hochul celebrated the elimination of New York’s years long certification backlog for minority- and women-owned business enterprises (MWBE) following a transformative \$11 million investment secured by the Governor in the FY 2023 Budget to improve certification efficiency. This historic milestone marked the first time in decades that the Empire State Development’s Division of Minority- and Women-Owned Business Development will be operating without a backlog of certification applications.² Hiring of personnel to alleviate any backlog in processing applications for the M/WBE certification.

5. Economic Development for the Arts and Tourism:

- In February 2023, Governor Hochul announced plans for an I LOVE NY Black travel initiative, designed to grow New York State tourism and encourage Black traveler visitation.³
- Expansion of the State of New York’s I LOVE NY tourism marketing campaign to include “Must See Black Travel Destinations in New York; including a profile of Black-owned businesses throughout the state.
- In March 2024, Governor Hochul announced the reopening of the historic Victoria Theater after an extensive, decade-long restoration, returning grandeur back to the century-old Harlem landmark.⁴

1 <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-37-nominations-state-and-national-registers-historic-places>

2 <https://esd.ny.gov/esd-media-center/press-releases/governor-hochul-announces-%20celebrates-historic-elimination-certification-backlog-new-yorks-minority-and>

3 <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-plans-i-love-ny-black-travel-initiative>

4 <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-unveils-complete-restoration-and-redevelopment-harlems-historic-victoria>

6. Transformative moments in history:

- Continuing to build the capacity of NYS Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation to publicly include and celebrate Black History through programming.
- In December 2023, Governor Hochul signed into law legislation to establish the New York State Community Commission on Reparations Remedies to examine the legacy of slavery and its lingering negative effects on people currently living in the State of New York. The Governor announced her appointments to the Commission in February 2024, which included:
 - » Jennifer Jones Austin, CEO and Executive Director of FPWA
 - » Timothy R. Hogues, Commissioner for the Department of Civil Service and President of the Civil Service Commission
 - » Linda Brown-Robinson, Immediate Past President of the Syracuse Onondaga NAACP

7. Operational:

- In addition to the advancements in the six thematic areas described above, Governor Hochul included approximately \$16 million for the New York State Commission on African American History in the enacted 2024-25 budget to support the operational sustainability of the Commission's work.
- This proposal included \$5 million for a local assistance grant program and \$10 million for a capital grant program to support recommendations of the commission.

Recommendations From the New York State Commission on African American History Recommendations

Per Executive Order Number 15, below is a list of recommendations by the New York State Commission on African American History to the Governor and the New York State Legislature. The recommendations are not listed in order of priority nor are they exhaustive. As described earlier, they reinforce the critical need for our society to have a better understanding of the deep, complex, and multifaceted history of the Empire State.

Commission's Charge

New York State recognizes that African American and Black New Yorkers still suffer from disparate outcomes in health, economic prosperity, public safety, and general welfare and is committed to ending such disparities. New York State will ensure that the wide-ranging contributions, achievements, and culture of African American and Black New Yorkers are uplifted and recognized for their beneficial impact on the health, economic prosperity, public safety, and general welfare of all New Yorkers.

Transformative Moments in History

1. Continue to provide dedicated funding to the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation and the State Education Department to support initiatives to amplify the contribution of Africans and people of African descent through the Our Whole History Initiative, K-12 educational materials, museum exhibitions, and research.
2. Observe the 400th anniversary of the arrival of 11 captured Africans brought to New Amsterdam for purchase in New York State in 2026.
3. Observe the 200th anniversary of the legal abolition of slavery within the state in New York State in 2027.
4. Include the theme of "Struggle for Freedom for All" in the State of New York's preparation to observe the 250th Anniversary of the American Revolution. Highlight the role of African Americans, their contributions, the paradox of fighting for Liberty in an era of widespread slavery, and the decision points on who to fight for during the American Revolution—the Thirteen Colonies or the British Empire. Note the complex paradox of the British Empire offering freedom to those individuals who were deemed slaves but served in the British military.

Economic Development and Community Investment

5. Increase the capacity of urban planning to support regional planning within historically disenfranchised neighborhoods and within communities of color. Communities impacted by major development projects in their geographic area may lack the resources and expertise necessary to engage in consistent community planning and related actions to ensure potential benefits are realized and that potential risks are appropriately mitigated
6. Create an archive and traveling exhibit featuring New York's Black press (newspapers and radio). The public programs will both illuminate the significance of the Black press in the past and present and inform efforts to build and strengthen these media outlets.
7. Create an archive for research and exhibits that documents the role of Black-led national and local grassroots and faith-based organizations in addressing the economic, health and mental health, and education needs of African Americans, given the centuries' long history of racism in education, health and social services. Use the archive to advance critical conversations, policy, and practice aimed at redressing injustice and promoting health and well-being.
8. Provide targeted capital funding to Black cultural institutions across the State.
9. Support the development of a Resource Guide focusing on African American history as a publicly available external resource.
10. Support the development of a gallery exhibition that can travel throughout the state highlighting "hidden figures" and their contributions to the State of New York.

Sites, Localities, and Placemaking

Place is about geography, but also about memory and imagination. People make places, even as places change people. Individual and collective struggles and spirit secure places. Place is where culture is made, where traditions and histories are kept and lost, where identities are created, tested, and reshaped over time.

11. The City of New York has a rich Black History digital portal that provides a comprehensive online resource for various segments of the public: local historians, educators, parents, students, scholars, journalists. Utilizing this as a model, explore entering a private-public partnership or expanding the existing NYC model, to develop a living statewide digital portal. As information is learned and/or uncovered, include it within the digital portal.
12. Solicit proposals from the public to highlight lesser told stories centered on race, discrimination, identity, and more across the State of New York pertaining to African Americans; The public can submit a proposal to highlight lesser told stories centered on race, discrimination, identity, etc. across the State of New York pertaining to African Americans.
13. Support the development of community archiving of Black history through digitization training to equip libraries and churches in historical and current Black communities with archival materials and digitization tools

Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

1. Increase funding and staff capacity of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to optimize the scale, scope, and impact of the Our Whole History Initiative to parks across the State of New York.
2. Establish and endow a Fellowship within the Our Whole History Initiative to support research, exhibition development, and programming that focus on Black history and contributions.
3. Establish a year-round partnership with the New York State Metropolitan Transportation Authority to recognize and celebrate African American history and contributions through billboard placements inside transportation infrastructure and platforms titled “Black History in Motion.”
4. Ensure budget to maintain and enhance the [Timbuctoo site](#) in the Adirondacks and for the development of primary source materials and teacher guides to teach about the desegregation of the [Lockport Schools](#) located in Niagara County.

Cultural Heritage and Public Education

The recommendations in this group serve to expand the knowledge available to the public about African American history by leveraging the resources available in our state’s museum, library, and other cultural institutions.

5. Utilize the State Museum and Library to add historical and cultural context. For example, creating cultural events, forums, and other programming.
6. Utilize the Office of Cultural Education, the State Museum, State Library, and State Archives to create resources on African American Studies and the history/reality of African American life in NYS for libraries, educators, and cultural institutions.
7. Incorporate an African American History component into New York State History Day 2024 and/or the New York State History Conference.
8. Develop an extensive statewide Black History Month exhibit:
 - a. Work with external experts to develop accompanying Educator’s Guides and suggested lesson plans which connect historical primary source documents, collections, and resources to the Education Department’s CR-S framework.
 - b. Offer accompanying lectures, webinars, genealogy resources, and events beginning with Black History Month and continuing through the rest of the year through the State Museum, State Library, and Archives Partnership Trust.
 - c. Coordinate and cross-promote accompanying events at local and regional museums, libraries, cultural institutions, public broadcasting stations, and other partners.

Expanding Educator Knowledge and Resources

The recommendations in this group focus on preparing our schools and educators to share the history of African American New Yorkers with their students in an inclusive way.

9. Review and revise the NYS Teaching Standards and NYS Educational Leadership Standards to align with the values and priorities identified in the [Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education Framework](#).
 - a. Encourage institutions of higher education and other providers of educational programs and teacher professional development to create Continuing Education (CE) opportunities for educators. This might take the form of a micro-credential, professional learning opportunity, or set of coursework in African American Studies and culturally responsive pedagogy. The New York State Education Department should recognize micro-credentials to complete degree programs (stackable credentials) and teacher specialization in various subject areas, including African American Studies.
 - b. Revise the teacher preparation program requirements in the Commissioner's regulations to include study in the principles outlined in the CR-S Framework

Expanding Student Learning Opportunities

The recommendations in this group focus on expanding cultural and historical educational opportunities for students in New York State.

10. Create a seal in African American Studies that would be a formal recognition that a student has attained an elevated level of proficiency in that area of study. Seals are a distinction on a high school transcript and diploma. The seal would demonstrate their comprehensive understanding of African American history in New York State, including the wide-ranging contributions, achievements, and culture of African American and Black New Yorkers.
11. Create a Black/African American Student Leadership Program, which could be a collaboration between the State Education Department and NYS Assembly/NYS Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Asian Legislative Caucus. The overall purpose of the program would be to empower students. The program would aim to develop leadership skills in Black/African American Youth; create opportunities for Black/African American students to interact with positive role models such as Black/African American elected officials, educators, and business leaders; develop an in-depth knowledge of the wide-ranging contributions, achievements, and culture of African American and Black New Yorkers; and create partnerships and conversations among educators, business leaders, and students.
12. Incorporate an African American History component into the Archives Student Research Awards Program.

Resource Guide

Select resources listed below offer an opportunity to learn more about and experience African American history in New York State.

Black-founded, Black-authored, Black-owned, and Black-led entities are prioritized in this list to amplify the intellectual labor and institutional knowledge of Black creators and culture-keepers.

Links to the resources listed below can be found on the New York State Commission for African American History website under resources.

Institutions (Histo-Cultural Organizations)

- Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture (Harlem, NY)
- National Jazz Museum in Harlem (Harlem, NY)
- Lewis Latimer House (Queens, NY)
- Weeksville Heritage Center (Brooklyn, NY)
- Louis Armstrong House Museum (Queens, NY)
- African American Museum of Nassau County (Long Island, NY)
- [Harriet Tubman Center for Freedom and Equity | Binghamton University](#)
- [Underground Railroad Education Center](#)

Historical Societies & Community-Based Organizations

- [Afro-American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier, Inc.](#)
- [Rapp Road Historical Society](#)

Sites, Monuments, and Historic Places

- African Burial Ground National Monument
- Fort Ontario

Books

- *Black Education in New York State: From Colonial to Modern Times* by Carleton Mabee <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv9b2x9d>
- *Maritcha: A Nineteenth-Century American Girl* by Tonya Bolden | [Goodreads](#)
- *History of the AME Zion Church in America. Founded in 1796, in the City of New York: Electronic Edition.* Moore, John Jamison, 1818-1893 [John Jamison Moore, 1818-1893. History of the A. M. E. Zion Church in America. Founded in 1796, in the City of New York. \(unc.edu\)](#)
- *Private Politics and Public Voices: Black Women’s Activism from World War I to the New Deal* by Nikki Brown | [eBook | Barnes & Noble® \(barnesandnoble.com\)](#)

Media, Articles, Reports

- “How New York Changes the Story of the Civil Rights Movement” by Martha Biondi https://www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/justice/downloads/pdf/how_new_york_changes_the_civil_rights_movement.pdf
- “Separate/Together Report: New York State most segregated in U.S. for Black Students” in Amsterdam News <https://amsterdamnews.com/news/2021/06/17/separatetogether-report-new-york-state-most-segreg/>
- [“To the Manor Born: The Extraordinary Journey of Dutchess County’s African American Revolutionary War Veteran Andrew Frazier”](#) by Bill Jeffway
- [The Darker Side of Civil War Service for African American New York Families — The Gotham Center for New York City History](#) by Holly Pinheiro, Jr.

Podcasts

- [Discovering Timbuctoo | A New York Minute In History \(wamcpodcasts.org\)](#)

This episode of the A New York Minute In History podcast discusses the history of Timbuctoo, an African American settlement founded by philanthropist Gerrit Smith in response to an 1846 law requiring all black men to own \$250 worth of property in order to vote in New York State. A New York Minute In History is a production of the New York State Museum, WAMC, and Archivist Media, with support from the William G. Pomeroy Foundation. This episode was produced by Jesse King.

Documentaries and Videos

- *Searching for Timbuctoo* - PBS
<https://www.pbs.org/video/searching-for-timbuctoo-6fzspp/>
- *Seneca Village: The Williams Family Legacy* - Central Park Conservancy
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOIfEoGBqZ0>
- *Getting to Know Pinkster, The Country's Oldest African American Celebration with Lavada Nahon* - Kingsbridge Historical Society <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y-HsMUyyl14>

Blogs

- [I LOVE NY: Abolitionists and African-American history in New York State](#)
- Philipse Manor Hall - [A Black History of Colonial New York](#)

Exhibitions

- [Current Exhibitions | New-York Historical Society \(nyhistory.org\)](#)

Additional resources

- [The Sojourner Truth Project](#)
- Library at Buffalo State University: [Afro-Americans in New York Life and History](#)
- [I Love NY's List of 13 Places to Experience Black History](#)
- [Exploring New York's Black History - NYS Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation](#)
- [New York State Museum Black History Month resources](#)
- American Library Association Public Programs Office: [Important Achievements of Black Americans](#)
- New York Public Library - [Treasures: Voices of Black History](#)

Select Dates of Note in the History of African Americans and the State of New York (1609-1917)

1609

Henry Hudson, a British explorer hired by the Dutch to find a faster route to the Orient, accidentally “stumbles” into one of the three greatest natural harbors in the world: an immense, sheltered bay off the Atlantic that provides an entrance to North America and a natural location for a great city.

1613

Juan Rodriguez (in Dutch: Jan Rodrigues) was the first non-native to settle in New York City. Born to an African mother and Portuguese father, Juan grew up in the Spanish settlement of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic and was known for his linguistic talents. Hired by the Dutch captain Thijs Volckenz Mossel of the Jonge Tobias to serve as the translator on a trading voyage to the Native American island of Mannahatta, Juan learned the Algonquinian language of the Lenape people and married into the local community. When Mossel’s ship returned to the Netherlands, Juan stayed behind with his Native American family and set up his own trading post with goods given to him by Mossel, consisting of eighty hatchets, some knives, a musket and a sword.

Juan Rodriguez remained in Manhattan and future Dutch traders would have to use him as an intermediary to trade with the Native Americans. Some historical evidence exists to suggest he was absorbed into the New Amsterdam community and was still residing in the city as late as the 1640’s.

1624

New Amsterdam is established by the Dutch, primarily Belgian Huguenots. New Amsterdam would later become known as Manhattan (New York County).

1626

The Dutch West India Company trafficked eleven enslaved African men to New Amsterdam, with the first slave auction held in New Amsterdam in 1655. With the second-highest proportion of enslaved Africans of any city in the colonies, more than 42% of New York City households enslaved African people by 1703. Enslaved Africans were also used in farming on Long Island and in the Hudson Valley, as well as the Mohawk Valley region.

1644

In the first currently known African protest in the colonies that would become the United States, 11 indentured servants in New Netherland (later, New York) complete their term of indenture and petition for their freedom. The Council of New Netherland grants their freedom and gives each individual a parcel of land in what today is known as Greenwich Village.

1664

The Dutch surrender New Amsterdam to the British who formally rename New Amsterdam to New York. Slavery is legalized. Perth Amboy (then a part of New York) will become the leading port for the entry of enslaved people to the northern colonies.

1702

New York establishes codes limiting the rights of enslaved individuals. At this juncture, 43% of the population within the State of New York owns an enslaved individual.

1706

New York State passes legislation to:

- stipulate that the status of the mother determines the status of the child
- deny slaves the right to testify in a legal proceeding involving a white individual.

1776

The British promise freedom to any Black individual fighting for them against the American colonies.

1777

- **January 1:** The African Free School of New York City was opened.
- New York, New Hampshire, and Vermont allow males that are not slaves or indentured the right to vote.
- **December 31:** George Washington changes the policy and allows the recruitment of black individuals as soldiers.

1778

New York allows white draftees to send free Black individuals in their place to serve as soldiers.

1785

The New York Society for Promoting the Manumission of Slaves is formed under John Jay. (In later years, John Jay will be named as the first Chief Justice of the US Supreme Court.)

1787

The Constitution of the United States allowed a male enslaved person to count as three-fifths of a man in determining representation in the House of Representatives.

1796

The first Black Methodist church in New York City, African Episcopal Zion Church, is formed.

1799

A gradual emancipation act is passed in the State of New York. It declares any child born enslaved is legally free once the individual turns 28 years of age.

1803

Twenty Black people are arrested for burning 11 houses and plotting to burn down New York City.

1808

The Abyssinian Baptist Church is founded in New York City under Reverend Thomas Paul.

1810

New York requires owners to teach enslaved children to read and bans the importation of slaves “for any purpose.”

1823

Upon escaping slavery, Thomas James (1804-1891) went to Rochester to begin work on the Erie Canal. He was one of the founders of the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Zion Society. It was organized as a church on Favor Street in 1827. As Reverend James was active in the anti-slavery movement, A.M.E. Zion became a stop on the forerunner of what we now call The Underground Railroad. A new church was built in 1879 and another in 1906.

Seneca Village: 1825-1857

Seneca Village, began in 1825 when landowners in the area, John and Elizabeth Whitehead, subdivided their land and sold it as 200 lots. Andrew Williams, a 25-year-old African American shoeshiner, bought the first three lots for \$125. Epiphany Davis, a store clerk, bought 12 lots for \$578, and the AME Zion Church purchased another six lots.

From there a community was born. From 1825 to 1832, the Whiteheads sold about half of their land parcels to other African Americans. By the early 1830s, there were approximately 10 homes in the Village.

Purchase of a plot of land also brought the right to vote for men. In **1821**, New York State required African American men to own at least \$250 in property and hold residency for at least three years to be able to vote. Of the 100 black New Yorkers eligible to vote in 1845, 10 lived in Seneca Village.

It was located between 82nd and 89th Streets and Seventh and Eighth Avenues. At its height over 250 people lived in Seneca Village, most of whom were African Americans.

In **1853**, the State of New York enacted a law that set aside 775 acres of land in Manhattan to create the country’s first landscaped public park.

In **1855**, the New York State Census reported approximately 264 individuals living in the village. There were three churches, as well as a school and several cemeteries.

In **1855**, New York City Mayor Wood invoked the power of eminent domain, and the Village officially became city property.

For two years, the residents of Seneca Village ignored Mayor Wood’s edicts and battled the police sent to evict them.

In **August 1857**, another order was issued, and the remaining black landowners were forcibly and violently scattered throughout the city.

- Diana diZerega Wall, Nan A. Rothschild and Cynthia Copeland, “*Living in Cities Revisited: Trends in Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Urban Archaeology*,” *Historical Archaeology*, vol. 42, no. 1, (2008), pp. 97-107.
- https://projects.mcah.columbia.edu/seneca_village/
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- [Seneca Village - NYC's Early African American Settlements - Research Guides at New York Public Library Research Centers \(nypl.org\)](http://nypl.org)

1827

New York State abolishes slavery; only for enslaved individuals born before 1799. Approximately 10,000 individuals are set free. Individuals born between 1799 and 1827 were required to continue working as enslaved people.

- Eisenstadt, Peter (19 May 2005). *The Encyclopedia of New York State*. Syracuse University Press. ISBN 978-0-8156-0808-0.

1832

Henry Moxley (1815-1887), who escaped slavery in Virginia, settles in Buffalo, New York. He becomes an important person in the religious and political community. He became a deacon of the A.M.E. Zion church and an organizer of the 1843 National Convention of Colored Men.

1834

In New York State, David Ruggles opens the first Black- owned bookstore within the United States.

- Race riots occur in Rochester, New York.

1836

New York's Women Anti-Slavery Society bars Black women from membership.

1836

The Ladies Literary and Dorcas Society, an organization of Black women, was founded in Rochester, New York.

The Michigan Street Baptist Church was founded in Buffalo, New York.

1837

American Anti-Slavery Society develops branches in Western New York, specifically in the eight counties of Alleghany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie, Genesee, Niagara, Orleans, and Wyoming.

- As reported in the published annual reports of the American Anti-Slavery Society

1838

Buffalo City Anti-Slavery Society was founded. Prominent Black members included George Weir, Jr., Abner Francis, and James Whitfield.

1839

Buffalo's first public school opened. The school was not segregated. An African School was established in July 1839 within the Buffalo School System. This school is located on Washington Street and had 30 children in attendance.

1840

The United States Census states that the City of Buffalo housed over 18,000 people; of which 350 were "Negro" or African American. Some of these individuals were live-in domestic servants scattered across the city. Most lived in the Michigan-William Street area which remained the center of the African American experience in Buffalo, New York.

1843

Buffalo's Black community celebrated July 3 because it was the date of the 1843 emancipation of Black people in the British West Indies. There was a parade and pro-abolition speeches.

Organized by William Wells Brown, Samuel Davis, Abner Francis, William Hall, Henry Moxley, Charles L. Reason (the first Black math professor at a white college), Henry Thomas, and others, a National Convention of Colored Men was held at the Vine Street AME Church in Buffalo to find ways to end slavery.

The keynote speaker, Samuel H. Davis of Buffalo, called on northern Black people to take part in the great battle for rights in common with other citizens of the United States. The meetings were held in an old building at the intersection of Washington and Seneca Streets, because it was the best place available to the local abolitionists who had arranged for the meetings. Frederick Douglass attended this convention.

1845

Buffalo's Michigan Street Baptist Church moves to 511 Michigan, a site presently listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is one of the oldest buildings in Western New York continuously occupied by African Americans.

1847

Martin R. Delany moves from Pittsburgh to Rochester. Delany and Frederick Douglass co-found a newspaper titled the "North Star." It was printed in the basement of Memorial A.M.E. Zion church, a flourishing center for "underground" activities. Some local citizens were unhappy that their town was the site of a black newspaper, and the New York Herald urged the citizens of Rochester to dump Douglass's printing press into Lake Ontario.

1849

Martin R. Delany leaves Douglass and the North Star newspaper to pursue medical studies at Harvard.

1850

According to the 1850 United States Census of Geneva, New York's African American population stood at 317 persons and made up nearly eight percent of the village's population.

1855

The approximately 700 black people living in Buffalo have two churches and a separate, segregated public school for their children. While many black men worked as common laborers and most black women as domestic workers, there is a large number of skilled workmen in the city's East Side black community.

- 16% of Black males in Buffalo are barbers
- 8% are sailors
- 6% are in the building trades, crafts, and professions
- The rest are domestic servants, porters, and waiters

1863

Congress authorizes the enlistment of Black people within the Union army. The Massachusetts 54th Regiment was the first black unit to be formed, and the governor of the state asked Frederick Douglass to help in the recruitment. Douglass agreed and wrote an editorial that was published in the local newspapers. He urged black people to "end in a day the bondage of centuries" and to earn their equality and show their patriotism by fighting in the Union cause. His sons Lewis and Charles were among the first African Americans in Rochester to enlist.

1873

With \$1,200 from a biography written about her, Harriet Tubman purchases a home in Auburn, New York.

1891

Mary Burnett moves to Buffalo as the wife of wealthy businessman William H. Talbert. She held a bachelor's degree from Oberlin College and taught students. She later becomes the first Black woman to earn a Ph.D. from the University of Buffalo.

1902

Buffalo, New York hosts the National Association of Colored Women convention. The group was founded in 1896 by prominent African American leaders such as Harriet Tubman, Rosetta Douglass Sprague (daughter of Frederick Douglass), Frances Harper, Mary Church Terrell, and Ida Wells Barnett. Hester Jeffrey of Rochester was among the speakers.

1905

W.E.B. Dubois, John Hope, Monroe Trotter, and 27 others meet secretly in the home of Mary B. Talbert, a prominent member of Buffalo's Michigan Street Baptist Church to adopt resolutions which lead to the founding of the Niagara movement— a forerunner of the NAACP.

1906

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., the first intercollegiate Greek letter fraternity established for African American students, was organized at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York.

1913

Louis W. Roberts, a Black physicist and inventor, was born in Jamestown, New York. He has numerous patents, was CEO of several companies, and served as Chief of the Optics and Microwave Laboratory in the Electronics Research Center of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

1917

The Colored Musicians Club in Buffalo, New York was founded after African American musicians were denied membership in the whites-only local chapter of the American Federation of Musicians. The venue provided rehearsal space for Black musicians such as Count Basie, Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, and Ella Fitzgerald. To this day, the venue remains in existence and open to the public.



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