

County of Buncombe

Proclamation

Black Legacy Month

WHEREAS, Buncombe County strives to be a caring community where residents succeed, thrive, and realize their potential, while actively promoting a healthy, safe, well-educated, and thriving community with a sustainable quality of life achieved through the implementation of equitable systems, policies, and practices that support all people and embracing diversity and inclusion; and

WHEREAS, in honoring the cultures, traditions and accomplishments of Black and African Americans that have shaped our community, state, and nation; and

WHEREAS, we honor the memory of the millions of enslaved Africans who died during the Transatlantic Slave Trade and we seek to repair the trauma of past oppression and broken trust by celebrating the legacy of Black cultures and voices striving together to build a future of shared hope and promise for all; and

WHEREAS, in 1926, Dr. Carter G. Woodson and Minister Jesse E. Moorland laid the foundation for Black History Month because the achievements of Black Americans were being erased from national history and underrepresented in important policy decisions; and

WHEREAS, in an effort to increase partnerships with and support of Black and African Americans in 1975, President Gerald Ford recognized Black Awareness Week by signing a resolution, and on February 10, 1976, President Ford was the first president to provide a message recognizing National Black History Month; and

WHEREAS, Buncombe County changed from recognizing Black History Month to celebrating Black Legacy Month to honor the many achievements and contributions made by Black and African Americans like Lucy S. Herring, Edward Stephens, Hester Ford Lee, Roberta Flack, E.W. Pearson, and Isaac Dickson to Buncombe County's economic, cultural, spiritual, educational, and political developments; and

WHEREAS, by transitioning from looking back on history to celebrating the legacy of our Black and African American community members, we create a culture of mutual respect, appreciation, and honor; and

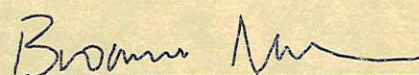
WHEREAS, the legacy of Black and African American leadership has long been a bedrock of Buncombe County, including at Stephens-Lee High School, the "Castle on the Hill" that annually served approximately 900 Black students, where Elynora M. Foster was a member of the faculty and was known as the first African American woman in Asheville to receive a master's degree; and

WHEREAS, we call our community's attention to the continued need to eliminate racism and to build a society that lives up to its democratic ideals through resolutions like the declaration of ***Racism as a Public Health and Safety Crisis*** and creation and implementation of Buncombe County's Racial Equity Action Plan; and

WHEREAS, Buncombe County is continuing its commitment to reparations in collaboration with the City of Asheville and have dedicated nearly \$5 million toward the initiative; and

WHEREAS, Buncombe County Public Libraries, including the Buncombe County Special Collections, offer curated content for all ages about Black legacy, not just in February, but all year-round.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that on this 20th day of February 2024, the Buncombe County Board of Commissioners does hereby proclaim February 2024 as **Black Legacy Month**, a time to celebrate the rich and diverse cultures of Black and African American people, to raise awareness about our shared history, to recognize that truth must come before reconciliation, and to acknowledge the important contributions that Black and African American people have made and are making within our community and our nation.



Brownie Newman, Chairman
Buncombe County Board of Commissioners