

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

**PROCLAMATION NO. 2023-011**

Proclaiming February 2023 as “Black History and Futures Month” in Multnomah County, Oregon.

**The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:**

A. Black History Month is observed every February throughout the United States to celebrate and recognize the vital role and contributions of Black and African Americans in our history and culture. Black History Month grew out of “Negro History Week,” the brainchild of noted historian Carter G. Woodson and other prominent African Americans and was created as an opportunity to celebrate achievements by Black Americans and a time for recognizing their central role in U.S. history. Each February, we take stock of the cumulative efforts undertaken by Black people to erect a liberatory future, holding space for the past, present and future of liberation both individually and collectively.

B. In recent years, Black Leaders and Visionaries have led the movement to celebrate Black Futures Month alongside Black History Month. Black Futures Month is a visionary, forward-looking celebration of Blackness in February; a time to consider and celebrate Black history and to dream and imagine a world in which all Black people are free to experience freedom, justice, love and overall well-being.

C. Black History and Futures month celebrated together is an example of Sankofa a word and symbol from the Akan tribe in Ghana. The literal translation of the word and the symbol is “it is not taboo to fetch what is at risk of being left behind.” The symbol is based on a mythical bird with its feet firmly planted forward and its head turned backwards. Thus, the Akan believe the past serves as a guide for planning the future. To the Akan, it is this wisdom in learning from the past which ensures a strong future. We believe as The Akans believe, that there must be movement and new learning as time passes. As this forward march proceeds, the knowledge of the past must never be forgotten.

D. In 2023, Multnomah County recognizes the importance of Black futures by continuing to invest in programs that focus on the health, security, success and care and of our Black residents through County programs including but, not limited to, REACH, Preschool for All, Health Birth Initiatives, The Multnomah Mother’s Trust, Black Cultural Advocates in our Libraries and by centering racial equity in all of our priorities and decisions.

E. By acknowledging the importance of the future state, Multnomah County seeks to not only honor Black history in America, but also to recognize that racial injustices persist for Black communities in Multnomah County and across the country, and to honor the people and organizations that are working to create a better and more just future for Black and African

American communities, including organizations like Kairos PDX & ELSO, who are here with us today and our many Black Led Community Partners.

G. Multnomah County acknowledges and rejects the long history of institutional and structural racism toward African Americans in the United States, and this observance of Black History and Futures Month calls our attention to the continued need to confront racism and build a society that lives up to its democratic values. We recognize that a more just future requires a reimagining of life as we know it and a revolutionary transformation of beliefs, norms, and systems. We endeavor to dismantle the systemic barriers set up to hinder Black people's ability to achieve equity, opportunity, and social mobility and to focus on systemic change that prioritizes the dignity and power of Black people.

H. Multnomah County honors the rich heritage, extraordinary legacies, and ongoing accomplishments of Black and African Americans and joins the chorus of other local, state and national leaders who celebrate Black and African American excellence and lift up the importance and power of Black and African American health, healing, justice and hope. We celebrate and recognize Black and African American communities not only this month, but 365 days a year.

**The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Proclaim:**

February 2023 as "Black History Month and Black History and Futures Month" in Multnomah County, Oregon.

**ADOPTED this 23rd day of February, 2023.**



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

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Jessica Vega Pederson, Chair

REVIEWED:  
JENNY M. MADKOUR, COUNTY ATTORNEY  
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

By   
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Jenny M. Madkour, County Attorney

NOTE :  
The use of the plural *Futures* in the name of *Black Futures Month* is often interpreted as indicating the diversity of the Black experience and the many different opportunities and possibilities for Black people - as opposed to a single, monolithic vision for the future.