



State of North Carolina

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

2023

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, Black History Month reminds us of our responsibility to honor the contributions and achievements of African Americans and their pivotal role in shaping our state and nation; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina is home to the largest number of four-year, degree-granting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) in the nation; our HBCUs have a rich heritage steeped in activism, service, and innovation dating back to the foundation of Shaw University in 1865; Shaw University established a law department on December 11, 1888, with John Sinclair Leary of Fayetteville serving as its first professor and dean; and

WHEREAS, founded in 1935, North Carolina Central University's School of Law today stands as the pre-eminent educator of black lawyers in North Carolina; and

WHEREAS, in addition to its traditional task of training lawyers to meet the needs of the underrepresented in this state, the NCCU law school has trained many black lawyers who have served in a variety of capacities; graduates include Maynard Jackson, former mayor of Atlanta; Samuel Chess, the first Black special superior court judge in North Carolina; Clifton Johnson, the first Black chief district court judge and the first Black resident superior court judge in the state; Leroy Johnson, the first Black state legislator in the South in the 20th century; John Wheeler and Joseph Sansom, Jr., both of whom served as president of Mechanics and Farmers Bank, the largest Black-controlled bank in the South; H.M. Michaux, Jr., the first Black person in the 20th century to serve as a U.S. attorney in the South; and Paul Jones, former assistant clerk, U.S. Supreme Court, and the first Black member of the clerk's staff; and

WHEREAS, African Americans have long played a vital role in advancing the legal field in our state, including trailblazing African American women with a strong connection to North Carolina, such as Pauli Murray, lawyer and civil rights activist raised in Durham, and Cheri Beasley, the first African American woman to serve as Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court, and a longtime resident of Cumberland County; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina cultivates a commitment to equal opportunity regardless of race with contributions from countless African American judges, attorneys, and legal professionals; and

WHEREAS, the State of North Carolina has designated February 2023 as Black History Month to recognize and celebrate the many African American leaders and innovators and their contributions; this year we focus on those who are known for their contributions and accomplishments in law, justice, and the legal field, advancing our state and beyond;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ROY COOPER, Governor of the State of North Carolina, do hereby proclaim February, 2023, as "**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**" in North Carolina, and commend its observance to all citizens.



Roy Cooper
Governor

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in Raleigh this first day of February in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty-three and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-seventh.