

# PROCLAMATION

## MISSOULA COUNTY AND THE CITY OF MISSOULA

**WHEREAS**, in 1926, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History started a national Negro History week in the second week of February, intentionally chosen because it fell between the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln; and

**WHEREAS**, in the following decades, mayors of cities across the United States began issuing yearly proclamations recognizing Negro History Week; and

**WHEREAS**, following the Civil Rights movement and a growing awareness of Black identity, in 1976, President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month, urging the public to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history;” and

**WHEREAS**, Missoula County and the City of Missoula recognize that Montana currently has the smallest percentage of people who identify as Black or African-American in the United States, reflecting the complexity of Montana’s Black history; and

**WHEREAS**, Missoula County and the City of Missoula recognize Montana’s Black history, spanning from the first documented arrival of enslaved Africans in 1805 as part of the Lewis and Clark expedition into the aboriginal territories of the Séliš and Ql’ispé people, the publication of Montana’s first Black newspaper, “The Colored Citizen,” in 1894, to the election of Geraldine Travis, the first African-American woman elected to the Montana Legislature in 1974 and the election of the state’s first Black Mayor, Wilmot Collins, in 2017; and

**WHEREAS**, in Missoula County, the percentage of our residents who identify as Black or African American is 0.6, highlighting the importance of the preservation of Black History culture in our community; and

**WHEREAS**, Montana’s Black history is reflected in Missoula through the bravery and valor displayed by the 25th Infantry Bicycle Corps, the United States’ first unit of black soldiers formed in 1896 to test the combat viability of bicycles, including an over-1,900-mile ride from Fort Missoula to St. Louis, Missouri; and

**WHEREAS**, other examples of Missoula’s enduring Black history can be found in the 1400 block of Phillips Street, the site of the former St. Paul African Methodist Episcopal Church, Missoula’s first Black church, which stood from 1910 to 1946 and whose congregants built a community and pursued racial equity with neighbors, regardless of race, in the face of threats from the Ku Klux Klan and other white supremacist organizations; and

**WHEREAS**, Missoula County and the City of Missoula are proud to join the state of Montana in “recognizing the accomplishments and contributions of Black Americans who are part of the fabric of our Nation” here in Montana from throughout history and today.

**NOW THEREFORE**, we, the board of county commissioners of Missoula County and the mayor of the City of Missoula, do hereby proclaim the month of February 2023 as

# BLACK HISTORY MONTH

DATED THIS 2<sup>ND</sup> DAY OF FEBRUARY 2023

CITY OF MISSOULA



Jordan Hess, Mayor

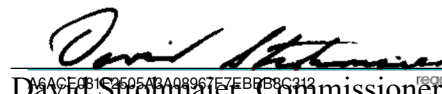
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COUNTY OF MISSOULA



Josh Stotnick, Chair

readysign



David Strommaier, Commissioner

readysign



Juanita Vero, Commissioner

readysign

