

The 7th Judicial District Black History Month Committee Presents:



*The Legacy:
Representation and Identity*

February 2022

Celebrating Black History Month

in the 7th Judicial District



This booklet includes the events and happenings in the 7th Judicial District in celebration of National Black History Month. The Black History Month Committee is a working group of volunteers under the leadership of the Hon. Fatimat Reid, Monroe County Family Court Judge, Acting Supreme Court Justice and Districtwide Coordinating Judge for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion.



Know the past, shape the future.

7th Judicial District 2022 Black History Month Booklet

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Celebrating Black History Month in the 7JD



Hon. William K. Taylor

*7th Judicial District Administrative Judge
New York State Supreme Court Justice*



Hon. Fatimat O. Reid

*Monroe County Family Court Judge
Acting Supreme Court Judge
Districtwide Coordinating Judge for Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
Chair, 2022 7JD Black History Month Committee*

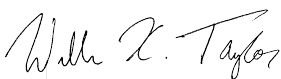
Administrative Judge William K. Taylor and Justice Fatimat O. Reid, Chair of the 2022 7th Judicial District Black History Month (BHM) Committee, are honored to share this booklet with you. This year's theme for Black History Month was "Black Health and Wellness" including an emphasis on what Black communities have done to encourage health. Celebrating Black History Month can be the igniter to spark the learning of a Black experience, past and present, for all. Recording and passing down the stories of the Black legal professionals, lawyers and judges is an important vehicle to ensure that the contributions of trailblazers are acknowledged and preserved by both the African American Community and the legal community. That is why this year, the 7th JD was proud to celebrate many "Firsts in our History." We will continue to document and celebrate 7th JD "Firsts" in the years to come and hope the community will continue to provide us names and biographies of those who have led the way.

This booklet also shares the rich African American history in our community. The BHM Committee partnered with the Wellness Committee to coordinate a walk which highlights several points of interest in the historic area surrounding the Monroe County Hall of Justice in Rochester. This walk, scheduled for June of 2022, will provide an opportunity to deeply connect with our community and learn about our past as we continue to shape our future.

This month also allowed us an opportunity to connect with our youth by establishing the Annual Black History Month Court Tours. The annual Black History Month Court Tours are part of the 7th JD's year-round Community Heritage Month Courthouse Tour series which combines public education activities with national and local observances marking and celebrating racial and ethnic diversity.

We would like to thank each member of the BHM Committee for their dedication and commitment to providing truly excellent programming and for the overwhelming support of our 7th JD family.

Sincerely,



Hon. William K. Taylor



Hon. Fatimat O. Reid



The Legacy: Representation and Identity

February 2022

Highlighting “Firsts” in Our District

Each February, Black History Month serves as both a celebration and a powerful reminder that Black History is American History, Black Culture is American Culture and Black Stories are essential to the ongoing story of America. This celebration goes beyond one month.

The theme for Black History Month 2022 is **“Black Health and Wellness”** including an emphasis on what Black communities have done to be well.

This year, the 7th Judicial District celebrates Black History Month by highlighting several “Firsts” in the legal profession. Many ask why it is

important to highlight the First African American to do something in the 7th JD? It is important to highlight their accomplishments because their legacy pinpoints the necessity of representation and identity. Their legacy will help shape future generations to follow in their footsteps. The First stand on the shoulders of our ancestors. The First are the fruition of Dr. Martin Luther King’s *I Have A Dream* Speech. The first have set the scene for the 7th JDs own Judges, legal professionals and employees who are trailblazers, their dedication to the law and the bench leaving their mark on history. Each week, we will highlight the following individuals for their contribution:

Celebrating Firsts in the Legal Profession – Black History Month

- Honorable Reuben Davis, First African American from the 7JD to serve in the Appellate Division
- Honorable Teresa Johnson, First African American woman to be elected to the Bench
- Honorable Roy King, First African American to serve as Supervising Judge
- Honorable Fatimat O. Reid, First African American woman to be elected to the Family Court Bench
- Honorable Karen Bailey Turner, First African American to be elected to Monroe County Court
- Rocky Simmons, First African American to serve as a Court Attendant (Court Deputy)
- Connie Walker, Esq., First African American to serve as a Law Clerk
- Honorable Charles Willis, First African American to serve as an Administrative Judge and first African American to be elected to the Family Court Bench

Please go to next page for photos of our distinguished 2022 Firsts in the Legal Profession.

Know the past, shape the future.

Highlighting “Firsts” in Our District



Hon. Reuben Davis



Hon. Teresa Johnson



Hon. Roy King



Hon. Fatimat Reid



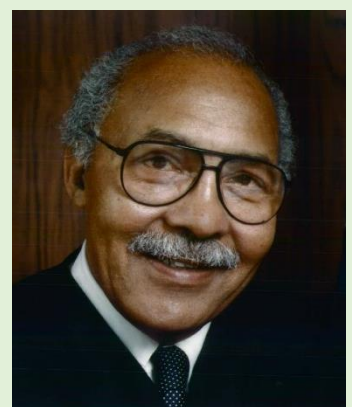
Hon. Karen Bailey
Turner



Rocky Simmons



Connie Walker, Esq.



Hon. Charles Willis

Walking for Wellness in February



The Black History Month Committee and the Wellness Committee have partnered in honor of the national theme for Black History Month of “Black Health and Wellness.”

The committees are coordinating a walk on Friday, February 18th starting at 12:30 p.m. for the entire 7th JD. The chairs of the respective committees will provide additional details.



Know the past, shape the future.

Bell to Present Virtually in February

In February, we will have a virtual discussion with **Edwin Bell**, Director of Racial Justice, Equity and Inclusion for the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) on February 17th starting at 12:30 p.m. A virtual link will be shared shortly. Mr. Bell is spear heading the Blueprint for Racial Justice that is examining systemic change needed to make equality under the law a reality for all.

Mr. Bell has overseen the day-to-day operations of the administrative and support functions of the Stone Mountain Judicial Circuit (GA), including human resources, the development of policies and procedures, and strategic planning. Prior to joining the Stone Mountain Circuit, he served as Clerk of Court for the juvenile court of Fulton County. Mr. Bell's prior experiences include working with the Georgia Administrative Office of the Courts, the Office of the Governor (Georgia) in the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, and for the Georgia Board of Pardons and Paroles. Mr. Bell received a Bachelor of Science degree in criminal justice from Georgia State University and a Master of Business Administration from Clayton State University. He is a 2017 graduate of NCSC's Institute for Court Management's Fellows program, and he received a certificate in judicial administration from Michigan State University.



Edwin Bell



*"History has shown us
that courage can be contagious,
and hope can take on
a life of its own."*

~Michelle Obama



Celebrating Excellence in the Arts



Kearstin Piper Brown

We are honored to host Kearstin Piper Brown, American Soprano, for a performance here in the Hall of Justice on February 28 at 12:30pm. There will be an opportunity to view Ms. Piper Brown's performance both virtually and in-person. Please look out for more information regarding this amazing performance.

Ms. Piper Brown is a classical vocalist, broadcaster, clinician, educator and parent activist. She holds a bachelor's from Spelman College where she studied African American Music History and Anthropology, and master's degree in Voice Performance and Literature from Northwestern University. She is also a graduate of the Greater Rochester Parent Leadership Training Institute where she serves as an active education advocate.

She has taught in Fairfax County Public Schools, developed and implemented music programs with the Jane Addams Hull-House Association in Chicago, and was a Cultural Programming Editorial Staff team member for National Public Radio. Ms. Piper Brown's work with The Antiracism Academy includes business development, content creation and workshop facilitation. Ms. Piper Brown enjoys an international career as a Classical and Opera Singer, Actor, Vocal Coach and Clinician, is a WXXI Broadcasting Radio Host, and Board Chair of the Gateways Music Festival. She is a mentor and champion for young marginalized performing artists.



7JD Black History Month Committee 2022

Hon. Fatimat Reid – Chair

Hon. Melissa Barrett

Hon. Craig Doran

Rochelle Coley – Lifetime Member

Janice Ivery – Lifetime Member

Rashondra Martin Jeanna Savage

Amy Monachino Steve Shannon

Jessie Parson Catherine Sessler

Tami Politza Laurie Maloy Sheller

Thandie Sykes



Know the past, shape the future.



Celebrating Firsts

in the 7th Judicial District

The Hon. Reuben K. Davis was born in Columbus, Mississippi in 1920. He served for three and one-half years in the United States Army during World War II, and received an undergraduate degree from Virginia State College and a LLB from Boston University School of Law in 1949. He was admitted to practice on March 2, 1950 and began his legal career in Brooklyn, New York. In 1955 he moved to Rochester and practiced law as a partner with the law firm of Hurst & Davis for 11 years.

From 1966 to 1967 Davis served as a Deputy Corporation Counsel for the City of Rochester. In March of 1967 he was appointed as the first African American Rochester City Court Judge. He was then appointed Commissioner of the Bureau of Buildings & Property Conservation and served from 1968 to 1970. He was elected to a full term on the Rochester City Court in 1974 and to State Supreme Court in 1982. He was the first African American designated to the Appellate Division, Fourth Department by Governor Mario Cuomo on January 1, 1987, and served as an Associate Justice until his retirement on December 31, 1996.

After retiring from the Bench, Davis was appointed to the state-wide panel of mediation and arbitration for Empire Mediation & Arbitration, Inc., a private dispute resolution company. Later that year he was named to the Frederick H. Minnet Professorship at the Rochester Institute of Technology. For the last several years of his life, he served as a Judicial Hearing Officer in the Seventh Judicial District.

Davis died in Hilton, New York, on Tuesday, March 9, 2010 at the age of 89. He was survived by his wife, Elizabeth U. Davis; and his three children, Jennifer Carey (Bob), Andrea Zopp (William), Mark A. Davis; and three



Honorable Reuben K. Davis

stepchildren, Andrea Muhly, Peter Muhly (Barbara), Alexandra Muhly; and ten grandchildren. A scholarship fund was established in his honor at Virginia State University

Throughout Justice Davis' career, he was actively involved in several community activities including: Monroe County Human Relations Commission (Chair), Past President of the Rochester N.A.A.C.P., trustee of the Monroe County Bar Association from 1964 to 1965, a member of the governing body of the U.N.C.A. of Greater Rochester, trustee for the Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church, the Rochester Chamber of Commerce, the Center for Governmental Research, and of the Montgomery Neighborhood Center. Davis also served on the Board of Directors of the Greater Rochester YMCA and the Rochester Business Opportunities Corporation.

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Celebrating Firsts

in the 7th Judicial District

The Honorable Teresa D. Johnson is the first African American woman to serve on Rochester City Court and was first elected in 1990. Judge Johnson has been a Rochester City Court judge for 31 years. She is the Acting Administrative Judge and Supervising Judge for all City Courts within the Seventh Judicial District as well as an acting County Court Judge.

In addition to her administrative responsibilities, Judge Johnson regularly presides over full Criminal and Civil Court Calendars. She has served as a Judge presiding over the Rochester Drug Treatment Court and the Monroe County Mental Health Court. Judge Johnson chairs the Seventh Judicial District Gender Fairness Committee and is also an active member of the statewide Criminal Jury Instructions Committee and statewide New York Evidence Committee.



Honorable Teresa D. Johnson



Judge Johnson at a Press Conference in Monroe County.

Judge Johnson has taught courses through the Monroe County Bar Association, the New York State Association for City Court Judges and at the New York State Judicial Institute. She has served as an adjunct professor at the State University of New York at Brockport and was the Fedrick H. Minett Professor at the Rochester

Institute of Technology. Judge Johnson is a graduate of Yale University and the Boalt Hall School of Law at the University of California at Berkeley.

After graduation from law school, Judge Johnson worked as a trial attorney in the Civil Rights Division of the United States Department of Justice in Washington D.C. Upon moving to Rochester, Judge Johnson worked as an attorney in the Litigation Department of the law firm Harter Secrest and Emery and as the First Deputy County Attorney for the County of Monroe.



Celebrating Firsts

in the 7th Judicial District

The Honorable Roy King was the first African American Supervising Judge for Rochester City Court and was appointed in 2002. Born and raised in Cat Island, Bahamas, he served in the U.S. Army from 1956-1958. From there, he continued to receive his bachelor's degree from Drake University, and his Juris Doctorate Law Degree from Syracuse University School of Law. Judge King served the Rochester City Court from 1997-2006 and was the Supervising Judge for more than four of those years.

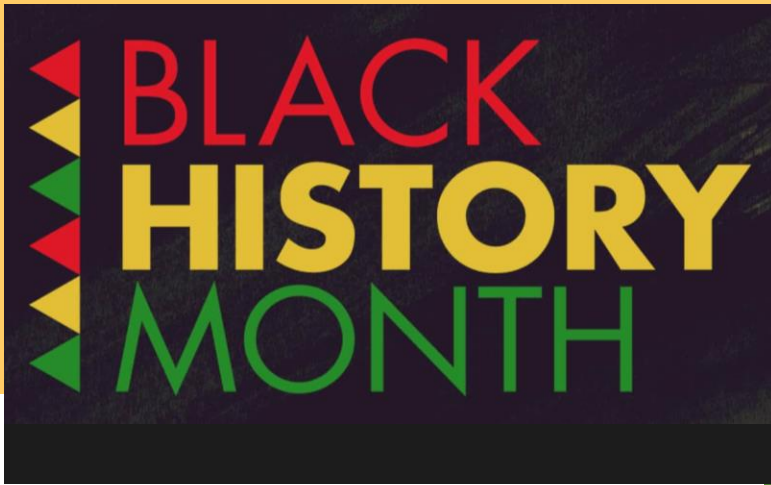
Prior to his retirement in 2006, Judge King was the Presiding Judge of the Rochester Drug Treatment Court and served as Acting Monroe County Court Judge. In his retirement, Judge King aided the Greater Rochester Area as a member of the Monroe County Bar Association, the Rochester Black Bar Association, and was a member of the Board of Visitors for the State School at Industry. He also served as a Judicial Hearing Officer for the New York State Unified Court System. Judge King was an established and well-respected educator within the Rochester community as an adjunct lecturer at Keuka College and for the State University of New York, College at Brockport.

Throughout his years of service, Judge King received many professional and civic awards



Honorable Roy King

including the "Charles F. Crimi Award"; Fossie and Steven McClary Award of the Boy Scouts of America, Seneca District N. 293; Urban League of Rochester, New York; Charles T. Lunsford Distinguished Service Award; Outstanding Community Service Award from Haggai Chapter #41, Royal Arch Masons; Humanitarian Award presented by the Foundation of the Monroe County Bar Association; and the Rochester Black Bar Association Lifetime Achievement Award. Sadly, Judge King passed away in January of 2018 at the age of 81 and will be remembered as a man who valued his family and community.



Celebrating Firsts

in the 7th Judicial District



Hon. Fatimat Reid

The Honorable Fatimat O. Reid is the first African-American woman to be elected to a county wide judicial seat, by her election to Monroe County Family Court in 2018. She is a seasoned litigator, transactional attorney, and administrator who has served Monroe County's citizens since 2006 in both public and private practice.

Judge Reid also became the first African-American woman to serve as Acting Supreme Court Justice in the 7th Judicial District. Judge Reid serves as co-chair to the Administrative Judge's Task Force and has recently been appointed Coordinating Judge for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for the 7th Judicial District. She also serves as the Chair of the 7th Judicial District's Black History Month Committee. In addition, Judge Reid serves on many other committees within the 7th Judicial District and boards within the community.

Prior to this historical election, Judge Reid served as Chief of Staff of the Rochester City School District. She previously served as a Municipal Attorney for the City of Rochester Corporation Counsel's Office, overseeing the city's contracts and litigation.

Judge Reid began her career as a litigation associate in private practice working at the firms of Davidson Fink LLP and Wolpoff & Abrahamson LLP.

Judge Reid's past and present community involvement includes service on the boards of Caring and Sharing Junior Academy, the Federal Employees Parent Association, and Children Awaiting Parents. She also supervises five children, who started their own not-for-profit, Sisters Investing in Sisters (SIS), which raises funds in order to provide young girls worldwide with an opportunity to rise out of poverty through education.

Judge Reid is a graduate of the University at Buffalo School of Law, and the State University of New York at Oneonta. Judge Reid was raised in Nigeria.



Celebrating Firsts

in the 7th Judicial District



Hon. Karen Bailey Turner

The Hon. Karen Bailey Turner is the first African-American elected to serve as a Monroe County Court Judge. She began serving her term as a County Court Judge on January 1, 2020 after being elected to that position in November of 2019. Judge Bailey Turner is also the first Caribbean-American elected to the County Court Bench.

Judge Bailey Turner, who was born in London, England, spent her early childhood in Jamaica, West Indies before migrating to Brooklyn, New York with her family.

Judge Bailey Turner received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Communication from Cornell University, a Master of Arts Degree in Public Communication from the American University and a Juris Doctorate Degree from the State University of New York at Buffalo School of Law. She has also studied at the University of Oxford in England and John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City.

In law school, Judge Bailey Turner received the Harold A. Dautch Memorial Scholarship, won several awards while serving on the Jessup International Moot Court Board and was admitted to the Order of the Barrister. After law school Judge Bailey Turner accepted an employment offer from Nixon, Hargrave, Devans & Doyle (now Nixon, Peabody) and came to Rochester to work as an Associate Attorney in the firm's Real Estate and Banking/Lending practice groups.

Before being elected to office, Judge Bailey Turner served as an Associate Attorney for the Mental Hygiene Legal Service, New York State Supreme Court, Appellate Division, Fourth Department where she represented mentally ill patients in court proceedings.

For more than nine years, Judge Bailey Turner served Monroe County as an Assistant Public Defender representing indigent defendants on various kinds of criminal charges. In private practice at Brown Hutchinson LLP, and as a sole practitioner, she represented indigent clients (via the Monroe County Assigned Counsel Program) and private clients facing criminal charges. Judge Bailey Turner has also represented prisoners in civil rights cases in Federal Court in the Western District of New York.

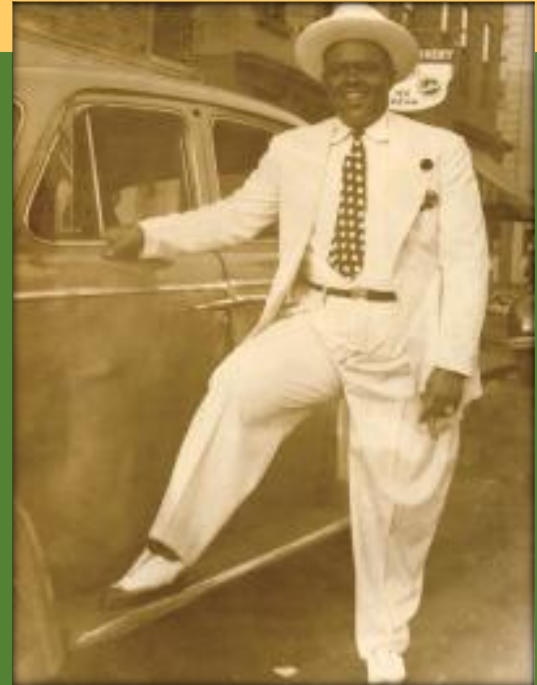


Celebrating Firsts

in the 7th Judicial District

Steven (Rocky) Simmons (1915-1994) was born in Magnolia, Mississippi to Irvine and Gladys Simmons. The family moved to Bogalusa, Louisiana where Rocky spent much of his youth. A gifted athlete, he was recruited by Wiley College in Marshall, Texas to play football and baseball. He became a professional baseball player and played in the Negro Baseball League for several teams including the Bogalusa (Louisiana) Tigers and the Utica (New York) Monarchs. He played with such notables as Satchel Paige and Jackie Robinson.

During World War II, Rocky served his country in the US Army. When the War ended Rocky, like so many others from the South, opted for greater opportunities in the North and he made a new home for himself in Rochester, New York. He managed the Rochester American Giants Baseball Team and coached many youth teams. He married Beatrice Dawkins in 1954 and they had four children: Wynder, Roxie, Michelle and Dwayne. Rocky became involved in Republican Party politics when he lived on Scio Street in Rochester's Seventh Ward. He was a powerful campaigner, encouraging voter registration and participation. Rocky campaigned for Caroline Branch to be the first local female Judge and when she won the election, she appointed Rocky to the position of Monroe County Family Court Attendant (Court Deputy) in 1964 - the first African-American to hold the position. Rocky remained in this position until his retirement in 1988. Rocky sought to improve Rochester's African-American community by organizing youth activities and agitating for positive change. He also became a professional photographer, documenting, with his business partner George Mitchell, the lives of the community of which he had become so vital a part.

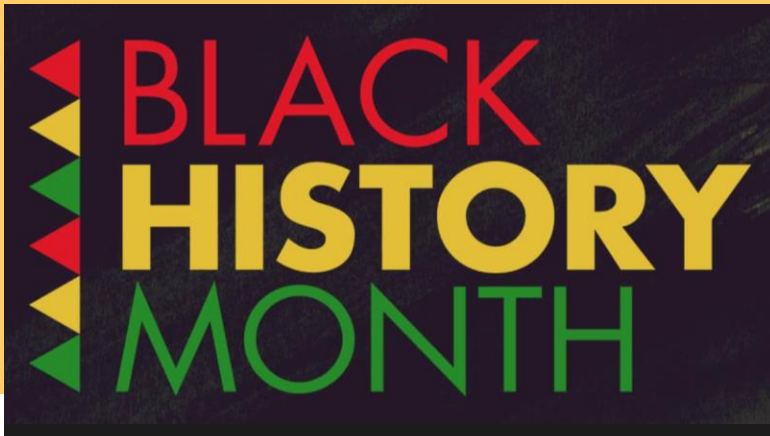


Rocky Simmons

A permanent exhibit honoring Rocky was unveiled on October 30, 2008, in the Monroe County Hall of Justice. The exhibit is comprised of seven photographic panels highlighting his achievements, accomplishments, his family, and his friends throughout the various phases of his life. It also contains photographs that he took as a professional photographer of local events, weddings, musicians, sports teams, beauty contests, new businesses, and other events and images of interest.

Among his many community activities, Rocky organized and sponsored a Little League in the Rochester's Seventh Ward. He also provided opportunities for musically gifted youth, as well as for beauty pageants and hosted many community picnics. He is remembered by many for his tireless work on behalf of Rochester's youth in need of positive adult role models.

12.



Celebrating Firsts

in the 7th Judicial District

When Connie Walker's name is mentioned, two firsts are noted: Walker was the first African-American Law Clerk in the Monroe County Supreme Court, and the first African-American woman to serve as president of the Monroe County Bar Association (MCBA).

After those firsts comes a long list of contributions Walker made in each of those roles. While on the MCBA's Board, she served on a special task force that studied the Public Defender selection process and worked toward improved oversight of the Conflict Defender and Assigned Counsel Programs.

Partnering with the Bar Associations from Onondaga and Erie Counties, Walker led a cooperative effort to evaluate New York Court of Appeals candidates and provide feedback to the Governor. She also made sure that newly appointed Judges came to Rochester to meet attorneys in the community.

Walker was instrumental in bringing Verna Myers, a nationally known author who speaks on diversity, to Rochester to work with the legal community on diversity, inclusion, and retention matters. Walker fostered dialogue within the legal community about the role that race relations plays locally.

"Connie is tenacious, discreet, hard working in the extreme, selfless and humble," said attorney Barbara Orenstein, who worked with Walker through the Greater Rochester Association for Women Attorneys. "(Her) hours in service to the community at large, truly define the terms selfless and tireless."

Retired from her position as career Law Clerk for the Hon. Frank P. Geraci, Jr., Chief U.S. District Judge, Western

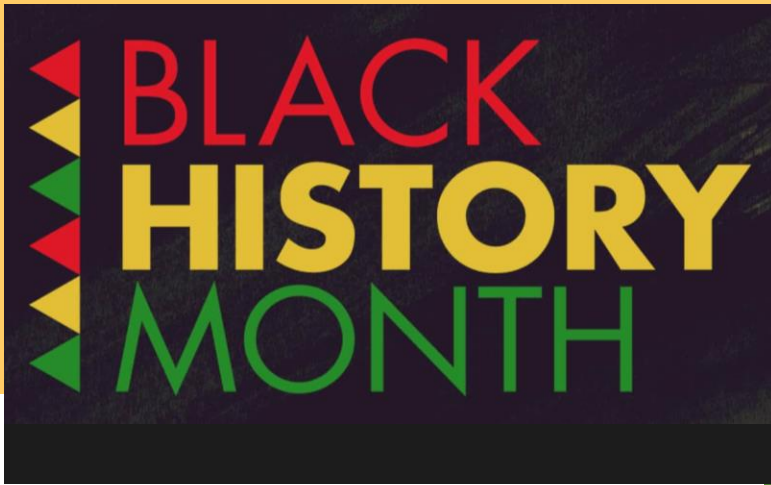


Connie Walker, Esq.

District of New York, Connie's legal career includes prior employment as: Principal Law Clerk in Monroe County and Supreme Courts; Law Clerk in Rochester City Court; Solo Family Law Practitioner; Senior Deputy County Attorney in the Monroe County Department of Law; and Assistant Public Defender in the Monroe County Public Defender's Office.

Active in the Greater Rochester Community, Connie currently serves on many community boards and is the Chair of the Board of the Greater Rochester Health Foundation among others.

She is the recipient of several honors and awards, the most recent being *The Daily Record's* 2020 Attorney of the Year, Lifetime Achievement Award. She was also the recipient of the 2019 MCBA Justin L. Vigdor Senior Award for Service. Connie and husband Jesse H. Dudley reside in Rochester, New York.



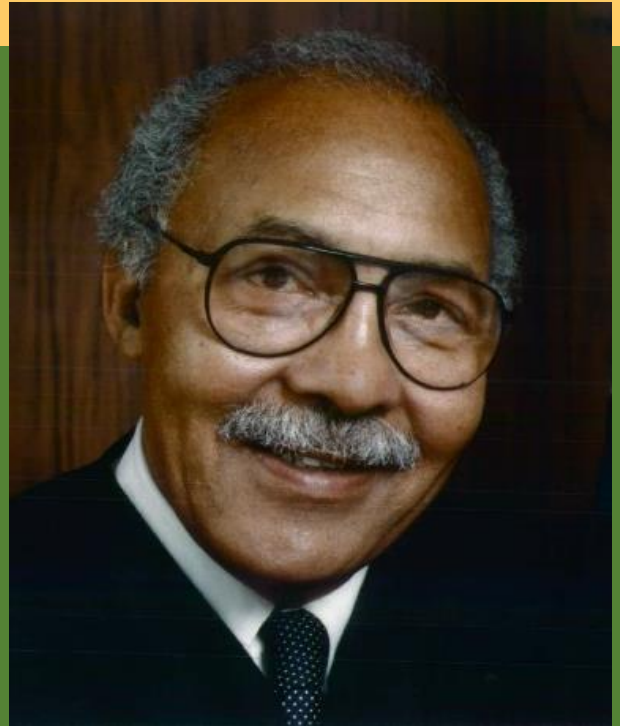
Celebrating Firsts

in the 7th Judicial District

Justice Willis graduated from law school in 1955 and when he could not get a job in a law firm, he opened a one-man office in Harlem, New York driving a cab at night to make ends meet. Eventually, he found his way to a small black law firm where he earned \$75 a week.

In 1971, he became a city Rochester City Court Judge. In 1979, the Honorable Charles Willis ran for Monroe County Family Court. He was the first black person nominated for countywide office. A Republican, Willis was backed by his own party, the Democratic Party, and the Conservative Party.

Justice Willis was later elected to Supreme Court of the Seventh Judicial District in 1987 and after retiring, he served as Special Counsel to the firm of Harris Beach. While as Harris Beach,

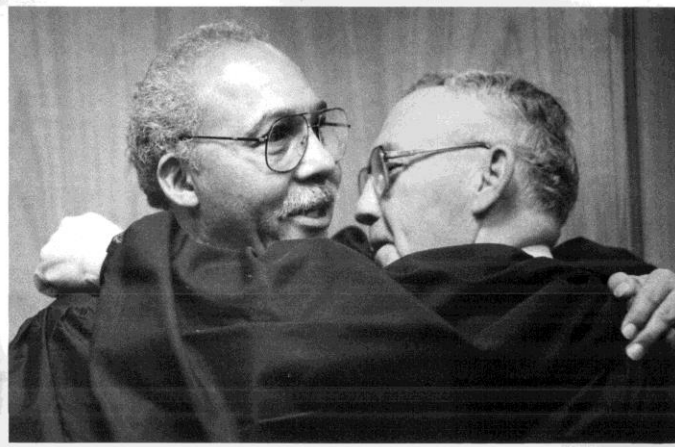


Hon. Charles Willis

Justice Willis often used his office as a base for minority recruiting at the firm.

Hoping to identify as many top minority candidates as possible, Justice Willis often visited upstate law schools and Howard University, a Historical Black College in Washington, D.C. On one round of visits Justice Willis and a colleague hired three minority students to work as summer clerks, all of whom were offered jobs once they graduated.

Justice Willis was married to Joan Willis Ridley and had a daughter, Lisa Willis.





The Legacy: Representation and Identity

February 2022

Examining Systemic Change:

Making Equality Under the Law a Reality for All

Thursday, February 17, 2022

at 12:30 p.m.

Virtual Presentation

Microsoft Teams Link to Participate:

<https://notify.nycourts.gov/meet/0arjae>

CLICK



Our Guest Speaker

Edwin Bell

Director of Racial Justice,
Equity and Inclusion
for the National Center
for State Courts





The Legacy:
Representation and Identity

February 2022

Live Vocal Performance

By Our Guest Performer:

**Kearstín
Píper Brown**

American Soprano

Students from Rochester's
School of the Arts
will also perform



Monday, February 28, 2022

at 12:30 p.m.

Monroe County Hall of Justice Courtroom 525A

or Watch Virtually:

Microsoft Teams Link:

<https://notify.nycourts.gov/meet/0ar47b>





The Legacy: Representation and Identity

March 2022

Students Tour Hall of Justice in February

7JD Engages Youth from Jack and Jill America, Rochester Chapter



Above: The Hon. Fatimat Reid shares the Bench with Teens from Jack and Jill of America's Rochester Chapter

Left: While on Tour at the HOJ, teens stopped at the Black History Month Display in the lobby.



As part of the celebrations for the 7th Judicial District's Black History Month Celebration, the 7JD Black History Month Committee and Jack and Jill of America, Rochester Chapter, partnered to establish the inaugural 7JD/Jack and Jill of America Black History Month Annual Court Tours.

The Annual Black History Month Court Tours are part of the 7JD's year-round Community Heritage Month Courthouse Tour Series which combines public education activities with national and local observances marking and celebrating racial and ethnic diversity.

Jack and Jill of America, Inc. is an organization of mothers dedicated to raising the next generation of African American leaders while enhancing the lives of all children. Jack and Jill's mothers work to accomplish their mission through diverse programs focused on leadership development, cultural exposure, community service, legislative advocacy, and philanthropic giving. During this month the teens of



Jack and Jill Tour Continued

the local chapter of Jack and Jill of America, Inc. visited various courtrooms at the Monroe County Hall of Justice, to get a sense of the day-to-day operations of the court system. The tour, led by tour guide Mandy McAvoy from Rochester City Court, included visiting various trials in progress, meeting with a Judge from Treatment Court, and met with representatives from the Monroe County Bar Association. Tour participants also received a copy of the court's information guide which outlines the structure of the Courts in New York.

"Engaging youth is a core pillar of the 7JD's *Embracing Our Community* district-wide diversity, equity and inclusion initiative," the Hon. Fatimat Reid said. Judge Reid is the first



7JD Administrative Judge, the Hon. William Taylor, met with students during their tour of the Monroe County Hall of Justice.

Judge in New York State to be appointed to the position of Districtwide Coordinating Judge of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. "We look forward to continuing to provide opportunities for students to learn about our courts through experiential learning and in-person tours."

BHM Wellness Walk Planned for June 2022



The Black History Month Committee and the Wellness Committee have partnered in honor of the national theme for Black History Month of "Black Health and Wellness" to present a *Black History Wellness Walk* through the City of Rochester.

Due to Rochester's inclement weather, the BHM Committee has decided to hold this walk in June in celebration of Juneteenth. Watch your email for more details in coming months and get ready to walk and celebrate Rochester's Black History in June in the sunshine (fingers crossed!)

Lunsford Circle Park at located in the City of Rochester's Corn Hill neighborhood was named in honor of prominent African American Physician, Dr. Charles Lunsford.



Know the past, shape the future.

Soloist Holden Turner Performs for 7JD



Holden James Turner performed live from the Monroe County Hall of Justice.

On February 28, 2022, the 7JD Black History Month Committee hosted a BHM musical presentation by students from the Rochester's School of the Arts (SOTA) Choir and Jazz Band, and by Baritone Soloist Holden James Turner.

The SOTA performances were prerecorded and shown via Microsoft Teams. Turner performed live from Courtroom 525A, and the entire performance was made available via Microsoft Teams for those unable to attend in person. SOTA students performed *Black Gold Esperanza Spalding* and *Ah-that's Freedom* by Thad Jones.

Administrative Judge, Hon. William Taylor gave the welcome and said, "Today, we are happy to gather as we know that music plays a vital part in many lives and contributes to being well. "

Holden James Turner, is a Baritone from Rochester who most recently had the honor of

performing as the Bass Soloist for Beethoven's Mass in C-minor with the Finger Lakes Choral Festival. Mr. Turner was also the Tenor Soloist for the World Premiere of Frank James Stanek's "Twelfth Night" with the Rochester Oratorio Society. He has been featured as a Bass Soloist with the Oratorio society on multiple occasions, recently including Schubert's Masses 1, 2, 3, and 4. He has studied under the direction of Nicole Cabell, Marc Webster and was also a Young Artist at Songfest in the Summer of 2017. Turner has worked with many great artists and has won many competitions and awards for his talent.

Judge Reid in her Black History Month celebration outfit.



Turner is a relative of 7JD Principal Law Clerk, Destini Bowman who attended the performance in-person at the Hall of Justice.





The Legacy: Representation and Identity

February 2022

Welcome to the 7th Judicial District's celebration of Black History Month! In keeping with the national theme of Black Health and Wellness, our Black History Month and Wellness Committees have coordinated a walking tour of the Corn Hill neighborhood. The goal is to highlight several points of interest in this historic area. Please use this packet as an informational guide as you follow along the 1.5 mile flat & fully side-walked route.

Begin your walk from the Hall of Justice. Upon exiting the building onto the Civic Center Plaza, turn right to take the steps down to South Plymouth Avenue (between Monroe County Jail and the Hall of Justice). Walk through the MCSO parking lot and cross Plymouth Avenue to the Central Church of Christ (purple doors). Head left, southbound on S. Plymouth Avenue and cross over Rt. 490. At Troup Street, turn right (west) and take the access sidewalk to Troup Street.

You will walk past S. Washington St., Greenwood St., and Eagle St. At the next corner, Troup St. & Clarissa St., pause at the Flying Squirrel Community Space before turning left (south) on Clarissa St.

Continue southbound on Clarissa Street, Rochester's first African American neighborhood (as early as 1810). Over the past two centuries, Clarissa Street flourished into an arts and entertainment district known as the Broadway of Rochester. Following so-called "Urban Renewal" projects in the late 60's, many of Clarissa Street's historic places were demolished or moved. Since the mid-70's, this area has been the focus of revitalization. As you round the bend toward Tubman Way, on your right you will see the historical Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church. This packet contains a timeline of this church with roots as deep as Rochester itself. Please read the timeline and discover, if you do not already know, the importance of this church in our city and our world.

Pause at Tubman Way to see the additional, affordable housing purpose-built for residents of this neighborhood. Reflect on the importance of affordable, stable housing and its impact on health and wellness of both the inhabitants of an area and the community as a whole.

Continue on Clarissa Street until Grieg Street. Turn right (north) on Greig Street and continue to Lunsford Circle Park, named for Rochester's first African American physician. Please see the articles attached about Dr. Charles Lunsford, a devoted physician and civil rights activist. In the context of Black Health and Wellness, he was a Pioneer and staunch advocate.

We conclude our walk along Frederick Douglass St., right on Adams St., and back to S. Plymouth Ave (left to HOJ).



Know the past, shape the future.



Historical Map of Corn Hill, formerly known as Rochester's Third Ward

The Flying Squirrel Community Space

The Flying Squirrel is a welcoming space for artists, activists, and community members in Rochester. We aim to cultivate and sustain long lasting relationships so we can work together to create positive social change.

The history of the building is important to us and our neighbors. The Flying Squirrel used to be an Elks Lodge—specifically, the Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World Lodge #91 Flower City Chapter and Eldorado Temple #32 Auxiliary. We recently put the 100+ year charter of their organization behind archival glass in a new frame hung in the trophy case in the large downstairs room.

This mural was commissioned and created in 2017 as a piece in WALL/THERAPY, an art and community intervention project, using public murals as a means to transform the urban landscape, inspire, and build community. The artists are Nzinga Muhammad, Kaori-Mae Stephens and Etana Browne. It is entitled “Black Lives Matter”. In 2021, this incredible work of art was defaced with racist white nationalist and anti-Black and anti-Semitic words and symbols. The artists promptly restored the work and remarked that, “Our mural is a tribute to the beauty of Blackness and the diversity within our community and diaspora. It also serves as an artistic protest against the very injustice, oppression, and bigotry that the tagger chose to display. However, there is no need to put a mural up with this kind of purpose in a place where injustice is not happening. Regardless of the Black judges, mayors, teachers and leaders we have in this city, racism is a sickness that has not yet been healed.”

Clarissa Street:

Clarissa Street Highlights, via CornHill.org, article by Carol McCallister

Clarissa Street is one of Corn Hill’s most historic and oft-changed streets. Originally named Caledonia Avenue by Corn Hill’s early Scottish settlers, in 1844 the southern portion of this street was renamed “Clarissa,” after Clarissa Greig, the daughter of early investor John Greig. Eventually the street was altered to include all of High Street, now the northern section of Clarissa, and by 1930 all of Caledonia Avenue had been renamed Clarissa Street.

As early as 1810, freed black slaves were living in western New York State and Rochester’s first African American neighborhood was located here on High Street (later Clarissa) in the Third Ward of the city.

In 1830 Rev. Thomas James, an escaped slave, founded the Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, then located on Favor Street. This church became a center for the Underground Railroad, for Frederick Douglass's abolitionist newspaper, *The North Star*, and for the women's suffrage movement. In 1975 the A.M.E. Zion Church was relocated to its present home on Clarissa Street, and it remains Rochester's oldest ongoing African American institution.

In 1922 the African American YWCA was founded at 192 Clarissa Street. It later merged with the downtown YWCA and the Clarissa Street structure became the Montgomery Neighborhood Center, which eventually relocated as well.

By the mid-20th century, Clarissa Street had become a main commercial district of the Third Ward. Businesses included the Gibson Hotel, Latimer's Funeral Home, Ray's Barbershop, Scotty's Pool Hall, Smitty's Birdland, LaRue's Restaurant, and Vallot's Tavern. Following the riots of 1964 and the subsequent Urban Renewal program, many of these buildings were either destroyed or torn down.

Once referred to as "Rochester's Broadway," Clarissa Street became famous for jazz and for clubs such as the Pythodd Club, the Elk's Club and Dan's Restaurant and Grill (later Shep's Paradise Lounge – now The Clarissa Room). See *"Spirit of the Pythodd"*, below.

Since the early 1900s, the Elks Club was a Corn Hill mainstay. Located in a converted house at 285 Clarissa Street, Elks Lodge #91 Flower City Chapter and Eldorado Temple #32 Auxiliary claimed this location as their headquarters (since 1906 and 1907, respectively.) Initially, the Elks Club was organized by African-American Rochesterians after being rejected from membership into the BPOE of W (Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World), which was exclusively white. This newly formed group became known as the IBPOE of W (Improved Benevolent Protective Order of Elks of the World.) The Elks Club welcomed both all people regardless of skin color. Its members came from a wide cross section of the community and represented various occupations and businesses in the Rochester area. The Elks Club was the last remaining black-owned business on Clarissa Street, which was historically a mecca for the African American social scene. This building now houses The Flying Squirrel Community Space.

Since 1996, current and former Clarissa Street residents have presented an annual Clarissa Street Reunion, held the 3rd Saturday of August to celebrate the importance and the traditions of this historic Corn Hill street.

Spirit of the Pythodd: from Afterthoughts newsletter, cornhill.org

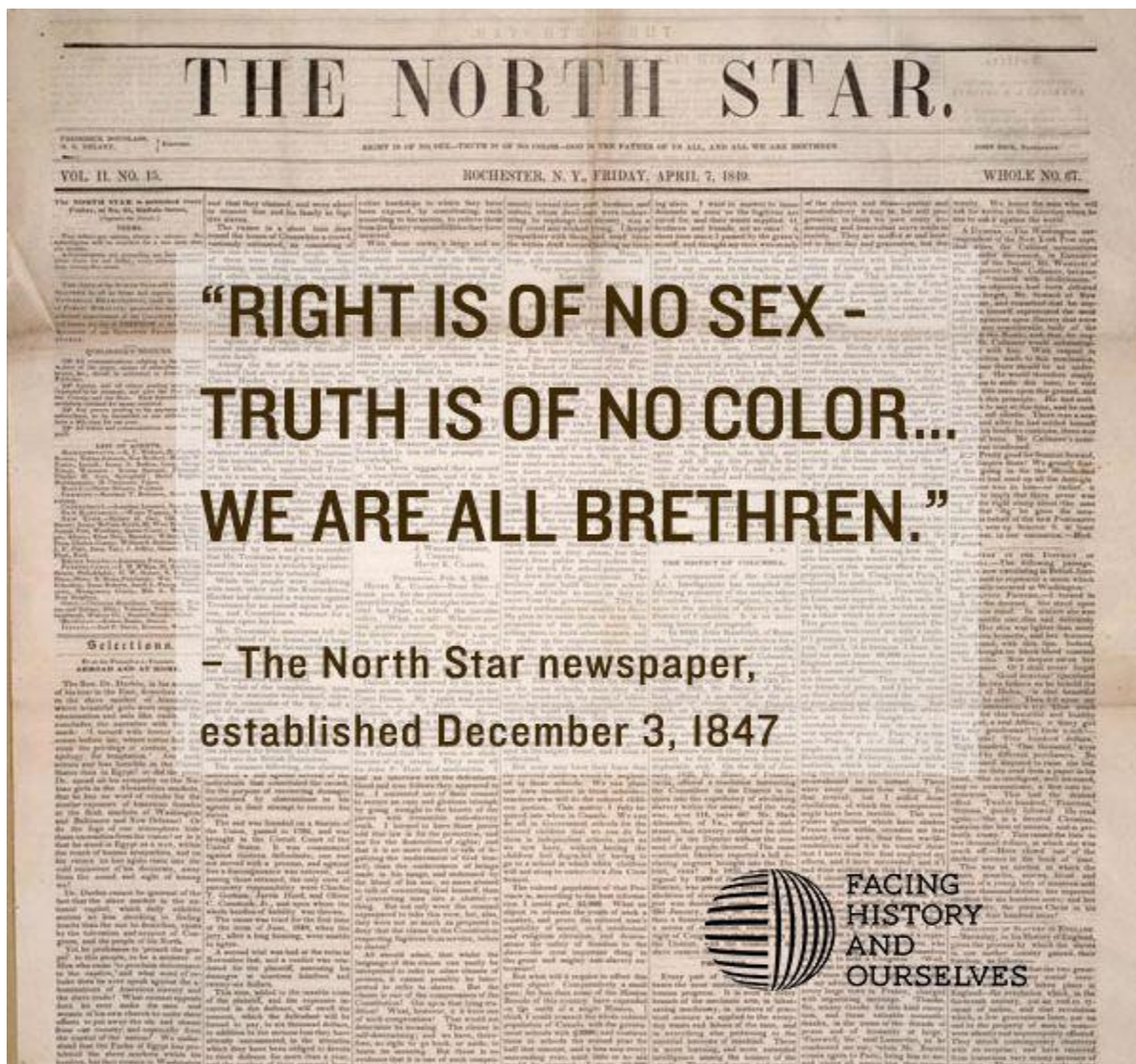
Rochester was a great place for someone hip to jazz in the mid-twentieth century. The city had six jazz clubs simultaneously in operation in the 1950s —the Cotton Club, Otmen's, the Ridge Crest Inn, the Hi-Land Inn, Squeezer's, and the Pythodd— each of which had its own distinct

vibe. By the late 1960s, however, the city's urban renewal projects had decimated Rochester's jazz scene. The legendary Ridge Crest had hosted Miles Davis, Dizzy Gillespie, and Billie Holiday, but that did not save it from demolition. By the 1970s, most of the city's major jazz clubs were gone.

In the half-century since, Rochesterians have proudly revived the spirit of its jazz history. Corn Hill's Clarissa Street Reunion commemorates the Pythodd Club's jazz scene annually and the Rochester International Jazz Festival brings in acts from around the world. Local players-turned-jazz greats like Steve Gadd, the Mangione Brothers, and Ron Carter are all pillars of Rochester's jazz community and help keep its history alive.

Return to Rochester's Golden Age of Jazz in the 1950s, when the swingin' city's population surpassed 330,000, Kodak and other industries were booming, and downtown Rochester was a mecca for jazz musicians and their fans.





Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church

Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church is the oldest African American church in the Monroe County. Established over 190 years ago in 1827, it played a pivotal role Rochester's history.

From providing shelter for escaped slaves being led to freedom by Harriet Tubman, to giving Susan B. Anthony a platform for her last public address, to having the distinction of being the home church of Frederick Douglass and his abolitionist paper, "The North Star"; Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church's contributions are unprecedented.

Today, under the leadership of Rev. Derrill A. Blue, Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church remains at the forefront of community service, civic activity, and community responsibility with plans to continue building on its distinguished legacy.

Abbreviated Timeline of the church's history, taken from "Beyond the Sanctuary" publication, 2020 (www.beyondthesanctuary.org)

Early 1800s:

The Church's beginnings are traced back to a group of Black men and women who met in secret in various homes to worship, as such gatherings were forbidden until the Emancipation Act was passed by the State of New York in 1827.

1827:

Rev. Thomas James, an escaped slave, become the first pastor of A.M.E. Zion Church. Rev. James was born a slave in Canajoharie, New York in 1804.

At the age of seventeen, he was bartered for a yoke of steers, a colt, and some additional property. After a severe beating, he sought to escape from slavery finding refuge in Canada. He returned to the U.S. to Rochester and gained employment at the Hudson & Erie Warehouse.

He found time to attend school and joined the Young Methodist Society. Thomas James demonstrated religious leadership abilities and eventually began to preach.

Rev. Thomas James began to hold meetings and teach school in a house on Ford Street which formed the humble beginnings for the church.

Incorporation papers are recorded in Monroe County Clerk office, 1832.

The church's incorporation was finalized in 1835 signaling a significant step in its establishment as one of Rochester's institution. Soon after it became known as the A.M.E. Zion Church of Rochester.

Rev. Thomas James remained pastor until 1835 and is replaced by Rev. Dempsey Kennedy.

1847-1849

When Frederick Douglass moved to Rochester in 1847 to begin his abolitionist newspaper, he became one of the prime "stationmasters" on the railroad.

Both his home and office were used as stations. Frederick Douglass edited his famous abolitionist newspaper, North Star" from A.M.E. Zion Church's basement.

1850's:

John Brown, the famous abolitionist and mastermind of the attack on Harper's Ferry, West Virginia, and Frederick Douglass first met in 1847 at John Brown's home in Springfield, Massachusetts.

From this meeting, Brown and Douglass became close friends. Whenever Brown visited Rochester, Douglass' home became his headquarters. Douglass and Brown supported each other's efforts to free the slaves.

John Brown was also connected to the family of Susan B. Anthony. Brown visited Rochester in April of 1859, gave a speech from A.M.E. Zion and City Hall.

Harriet Tubman escaped slavery eventually finding a home in the Finger Lakes Region. Once she had her freedom, she returned south countless times to lead hundreds of slaves to freedom. Some of those trips included stops at A.M.E. Zion church which contained a trap door by the pulpit and escape tunnels leading to Plymouth Avenue and the Genesee River.

Susan B. Anthony, the women's rights activist, delivered her last public address from A.M.E. Zion Church just three months before her death.

1897:

John W. Thompson, a member of Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church, formed a new committee, which included Mrs. R. Jerome Jeffrey (secretary) and Rev. James Mason, pastor of Memorial A.M.E. Zion church and prominent African Americans across the country to erect a monument in honor of Frederick Douglass after his death in 1895. After many years of delay due to mechanics with the statue, transportation, and JW Thompson's illness, the statue was unveiled in 1899 with more than 10,000 people attending including the Mayor and the Governor.

1910:

A banquet and reception were held in honor of Dr. Booker T. Washington who addressed the church at the occasion.

After 83 years, the first church parsonage was purchased from Miss L. Sweeting located at 397 Clarissa Street (formerly 91 Caledonia Ave). Pastor J. W. Brown was the first pastor to go from living from room to room to living in a house.

1932:

The Yadseut Club, first African American Women's Club in Monroe County, was established by Rev. James Clair Taylor, the minister of Memorial A.M.E. Zion church at the time. Its purpose is to "inform, uplift, and motivate its members to follow the motto – To Serve Others." The club includes members from other churches within the community. The first president of the club was Mrs. Maude Gouch. The name of the club was given by Charter Member, Alberta Bailey. She decided since the meetings were held on Tuesday evenings, the club should be named Yadseut, Tuesday spelled backward.

The club has taken on many outreach projects within the Rochester community and the Zion Connection including assisting the late Bessie Hamm with support for the youth attending Livingstone College; supporting YMCA's Emergency Housing Program, the Salvation Army's Safe Haven Shelter, and American Red Cross Hurricane Sandy relief. Over the years the Yadseut Club has provided school supplies for classrooms, purchased china and linen for the church, established a building fund to renovate the church bathrooms, and developed Welcome packets for visitors. Our Memorial Messenger, church newsletter has been produced and distributed by the Yadseut Club since 2007.

1963:

The Community Child Care Center under the direction of, Memorial A.M.E Zion member, Dr. Juanita Pitts was one of the first Day Care Centers in Rochester started by an African American church. With its beginnings in the church basement on Favor Street, it is still operational today at 170 Troup Street. Dr. Pitts was the first female African American physician to have a private practice in the city of Rochester. Dr. Pitts also created the Frederick Douglass Oratory Contest held annually at Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church.

1971:

Family Health Sunday: The church-health program concept was created by Mrs. Naomi Chamberlain, assistant professor of preventive medicine and community health at the University of Rochester.

1999:

While the Pastor at Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church, Rev. Errol E. Hunt founded the RL Edwards Manor Retirement Home and The Daisy House, affordable apartments, both in the area surrounding the church.

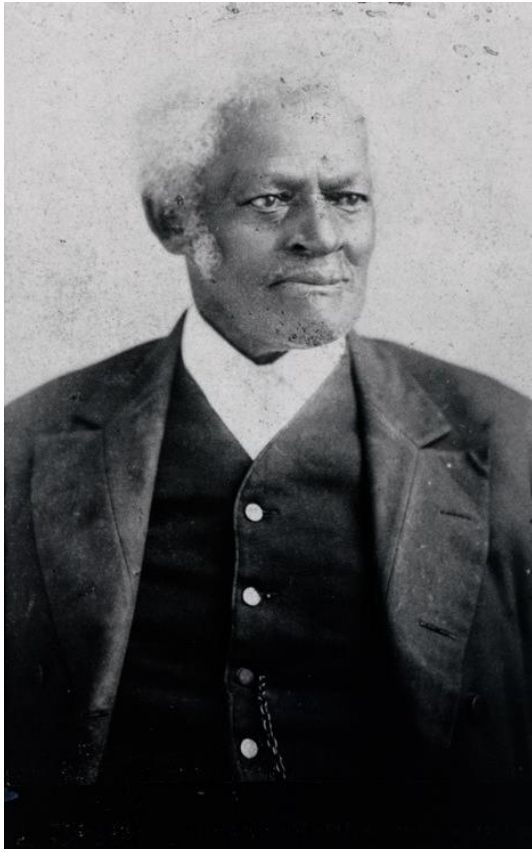
Twenty-three new single-family houses the congregation helped build in partnership with the Frederick Douglass Development Corporation.

A 50 unity seniors complex is built with church involvement.

2017:

Ms. Eva Steward Thomas, Director of the Office of Parent Engagement in the Rochester City School District and former “youth of Memorial” was the guest speaker for the annual C.I. Bullock Scholarship Sunday.

Today, under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Kenneth Q. James, Memorial A.M.E. Zion Church remains at the forefront of civic activity and responsibility. Now, Memorial A.M. E. Zion Church is poised to build on its distinguished legacy. Plans are in place to open a clothes pantry to help those in need and to restart the food pantry focusing on nonperishable goods. In addition, Memorial is working to partner with other organizations in the community to have an even bigger impact in Rochester in the years to come.



Reverend Thomas James, Founder of Memorial A.M.E Zion Church

Tubman Way: Neighborhood Renewal

(excerpts from 2019 US Interagency Council on Homelessness: The Importance of Housing Affordability and Stability)

..."Living in a stable, adequate home that is affordable to the household yields a multitude of opportunities and stronger outcomes for children, youth, and adults. A stable home provides a platform for improved outcomes around employment, health, and education. For instance, the impact of stable housing on children and youth is well documented, including that, without stable housing, young people are more vulnerable to mental health problems, developmental delays, and poor cognitive outcomes. Further, there is a correlation between housing instability and trauma, which can negatively impact future success. Educational outcomes for children are also improved with housing stability; young people in stable housing are less likely to repeat a grade and less likely to drop out of school. Ultimately, the lack of stable housing has long-lasting effects that can impact health, education, and employment throughout people's lives and in future generations.

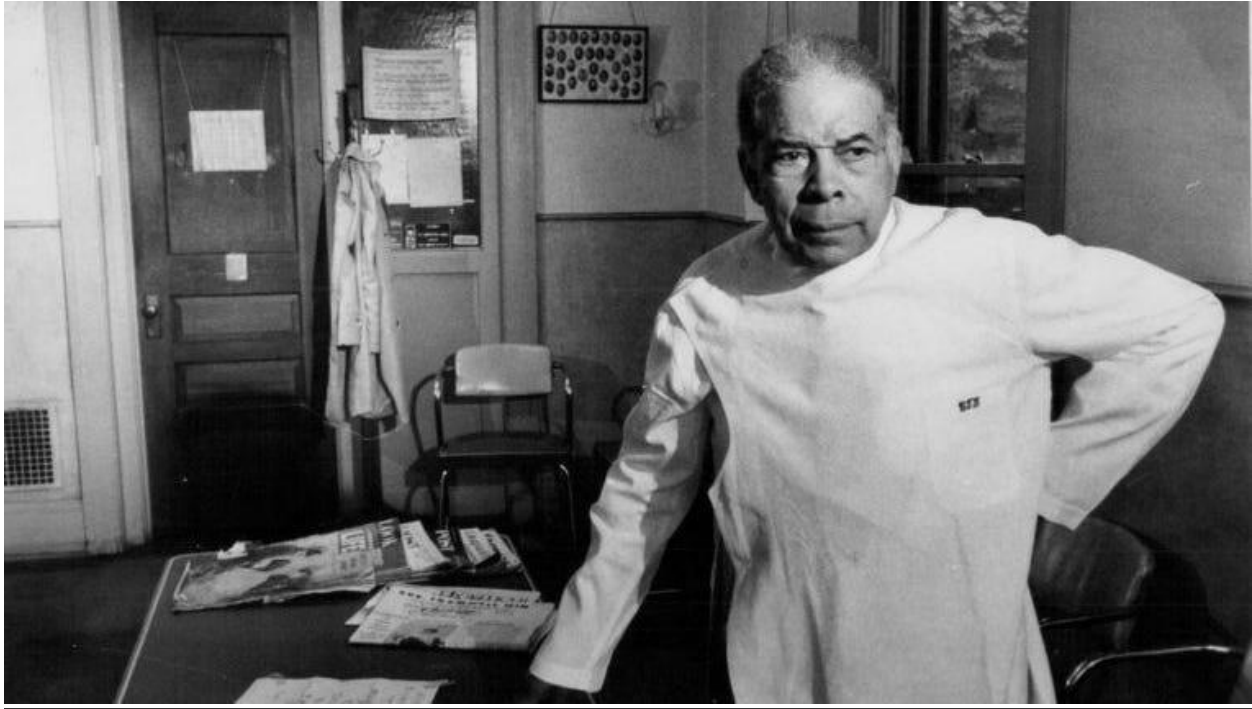
In another example, HUD's large-scale [Family Options Study](#) demonstrated that access to housing that is affordable leads to substantial benefits in reducing food insecurity and school mobility; it also improves well-being among adults as well as children. In addition, the study offers evidence that providing access to housing that is affordable strengthens family well-being and dramatically reduces child separations, domestic violence, and psychological distress." ...

Lunsford Circle Park



Dr. Charles Lunsford (from urresearch.rochester.edu)

Dr. Charles Terrell Lunsford (1891-1985) was born in Macon, Georgia in 1891. He attended Howard University in Washington, D.C. after having moved there when he was 15. He moved to Rochester in the summer of 1921 and opened his own practice. Dr. Lunsford was a pioneer of civil rights for African-Americans. He worked with and sometimes against the YMCA, the Red Cross, the Eastman Kodak Company, and the University of Rochester's Medical School in order to abolish discriminatory practices. The Rochester School Board renamed School 19 as the Charles T. Lunsford School in 1973. On June 18th, 1978 the Mayor Thomas Ryan declared the day Charles T. Lunsford Day in Rochester. Finally, in 1986, the Rochester City Council renamed Plymouth Park to Charles Lunsford Park.



Dr. Charles Lunsford: from Democrat & Chronicle, Rochester NY 2/13/20 (Excerpts)

Rochester's first black doctor: 'Thank God we're still fighting and dreaming'
Alan Morrell, Democrat and Chronicle, USA TODAY Network

A native of Georgia and the grandson of a slave, Dr. Lunsford came to Rochester after studying at Howard University.

Dr. Charles T. Lunsford was Rochester's first African American doctor. He served underprivileged communities for more than 50 years.

Dr. Lunsford set up shop on Clarissa Street in 1921 and practiced medicine for more than half a century. Along the way, he was a tireless advocate for all kinds of civil rights issues, so much so that when he died, he was referred to as the "Martin Luther King of Rochester."

Dr. Lunsford fought successfully to enroll black students at the University of Rochester medical school. He helped to integrate the workforce of companies such as Eastman Kodak Co. and the guestrooms of the local YMCA. During World War II, Dr. Lunsford helped overturn an American Red Cross policy of not accepting the blood of black donors.

He served as president of the local NAACP chapter and hosted a reception for Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., when he visited Rochester. Dr. Lunsford did all that and more while nurturing his

reputation as a “country doctor” who cared for anyone, anytime, regardless of their ability to pay.

“From the day I got here, I started fighting,” Dr. Lunsford once said. “I spent my lifetime fighting for the underprivileged.”

Months after arriving in 1921, he diagnosed a case of smallpox and medical officials credited him with saving the city from an epidemic.

Dr. Lunsford said he didn’t set out to become the civil rights champion that he became, but the prejudice he encountered left him no choice. In a 1972 Upstate magazine article, Lunsford said that when he first got here, “I was greeted with ... ‘No (racist epithet) doctor will ever cross my doorstep.’ You have to feel that to understand it.”

So, he began his lifelong fight for equality.

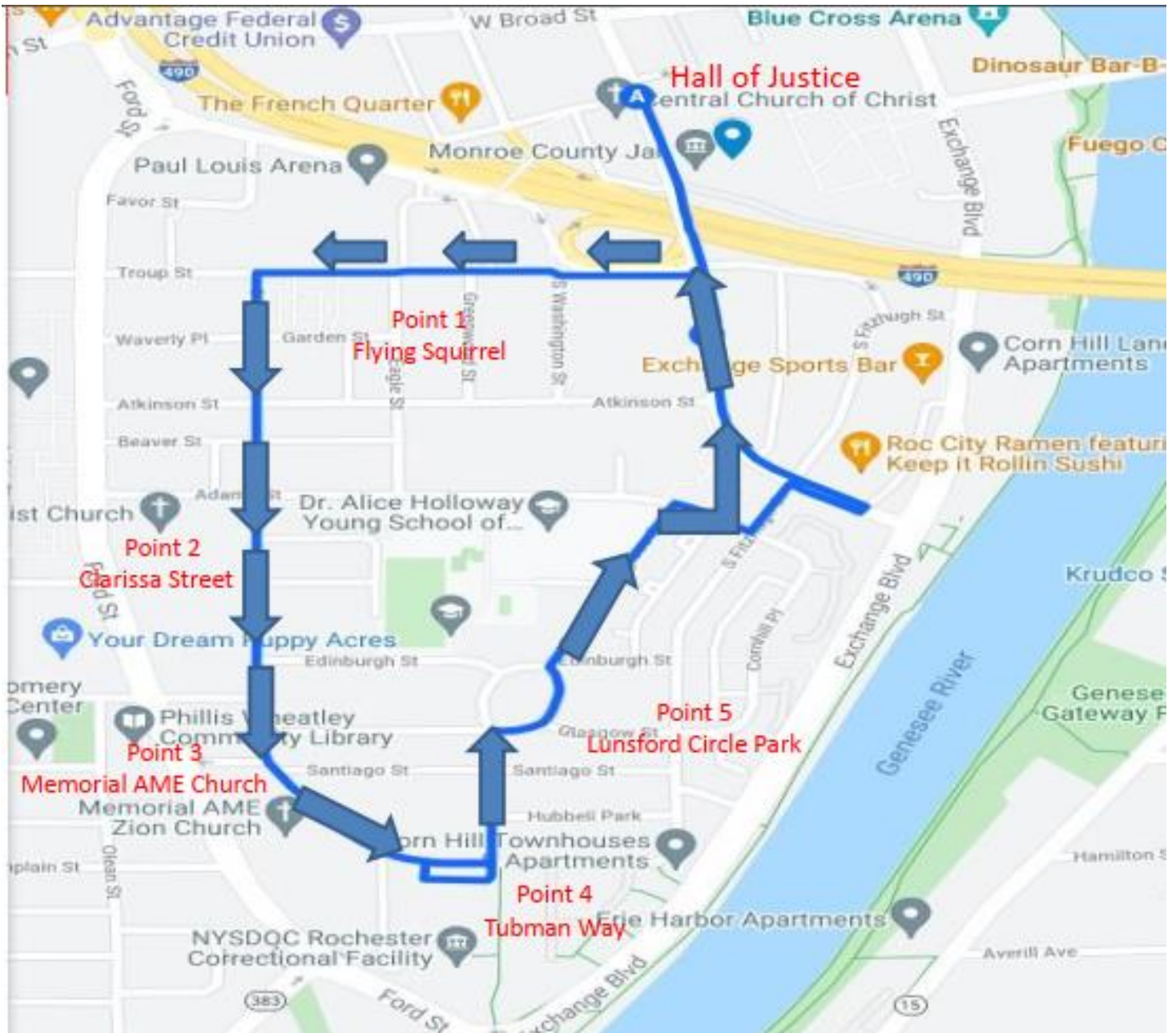
Dr. Lunsford was a key witness when a state legislative committee on discrimination held hearings here in the '30s. He was cited by then-Gov. W. Averell Harriman in the '50s for his struggle against racial discrimination in public places, housing and employment. When School 19 was named for him in 1973, it was reported that it was the first time a local school was named for a living person.

Dr. Lunsford moved his practice from Clarissa Street to South Plymouth Avenue in the '70s because of urban renewal. He retired in 1978 and died, at age 93, in 1985.

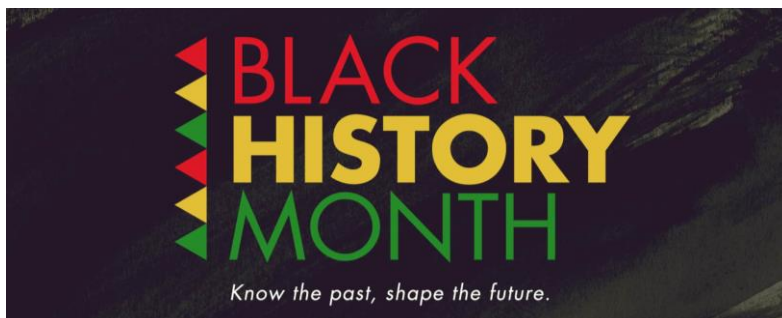
More than 1,000 well-wishers attended a testimonial dinner for Dr. Lunsford the year that he retired.

“There’s been a revolution in Rochester, and I’m proud to be a part of it,” he said at the dinner. “Thank God we’re still fighting and dreaming.”

2022 Black History Month Wellness Walk Route



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“Every great dream begins with a dreamer. Always remember, you have within you the strength, the patience, and the passion to reach for the stars to change the world.”

~ Harriet Tubman



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