

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the City of Olympia recognizes the importance of honoring the history, heritage, and achievements of African Americans and Black communities whose contributions have shaped our nation and local community; and

WHEREAS, in 1915, Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, a noted scholar and son of formerly enslaved people, founded the Association for the Study of African American Life and History and initiated Black History Week on February 12, 1926, which later expanded and was established as Black History Month in 1976; and

WHEREAS, Black History Month provides an opportunity to recognize and celebrate the many contributions and accomplishments of African Americans and Black community members across all fields, including the arts, education, science, civil rights, labor, healthcare, technology, and the economy, while also reflecting on the continued need to dismantle racism and strengthen our democratic ideals; and

WHEREAS, the 2026 Black History Month theme, “A Century of Black History Commemorations,” marks one hundred years since the founding of Black History Week, honoring a century of collective efforts to research, preserve, and celebrate African American history, culture, labor, and contributions, and reaffirming the ongoing importance of education, truth-telling, and equity; and

WHEREAS, as part of this century of Black history commemorations, notable African American leaders have shaped Olympia’s history through transformative work in education and community-building, including Dr. Maxine Buie Mimms, an internationally recognized educator, civil rights leader, and founder of The Evergreen State College’s Tacoma Campus. Recognizing that Tacoma’s Hilltop residents needed access to higher education, Dr. Mimms started teaching out of her home before formerly establishing the Tacoma Campus in 1982. Dr. Mimms’ decades of leadership expanded access to higher education for working adults and historically excluded communities, strengthened pathways to economic mobility, and cultivated generations of leaders committed to equity, justice, and public service; and

WHEREAS, the City of Olympia continues to take steps to honor African American and Black history and presence in the community. These efforts include community engagement and planning for Rebecca Howard Park, named for one of Olympia’s earliest African American business pioneers. Together, these actions reflect the City’s broader commitment to recognizing Black stories and contributions in our public spaces and collective memory; and

WHEREAS, it is important to honor the achievements, joy, and resilience of African Americans and Black community members while also acknowledging the ongoing collective work required of every community member to ensure equal opportunity for all, recognizing the lasting impacts of systemic racism rooted in slavery, segregation, mass incarceration, police brutality, and health and economic inequities; and

WHEREAS, the City of Olympia remains committed to fostering an inclusive, diverse, and equitable community in which all residents are respected, honored, and valued;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Olympia City Council does hereby proclaim the month of February 2026 as

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

in the City of Olympia and encourages all Olympians to recognize and honor the African American experience and to work toward a community and nation where all people have equal opportunity to thrive.

SIGNED IN THE CITY OF OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON THIS 3RD DAY OF FEBRUARY 2026.

OLYMPIA CITY COUNCIL

***Dontae Payne
Mayor***