

## Governor Phil Murphy

photo: view of NJ Trenton DOM

# Governor Murphy Signs Bipartisan Bill Establishing Black Heritage Trail in New Jersey

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
*Trail Will Highlight Remarkable Achievements and Legacies of New Jersey's African American Figures*


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**NEWARK** – In a room at the historic City of Newark's Public Library, surrounded by state and local officials as activists, Governor Phil Murphy today signed bipartisan bill A2677. The bill requires the New Jersey Historical Commission to establish a Black Heritage Trail to promote awareness and appreciation of Black history, heritage and culture in the State. The Black Heritage Trail will highlight Black heritage sites through historical markers and a trail-like path that connect the stories of Black life and resiliency in the State.

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"I am honored to sign this bill today, establishing a Black Heritage Trail in New Jersey. However, our work does not stop here," **said Governor Murphy**. "Celebrating and commemorating Black history is not something that we should relegate to only the month of February or to Juneteenth. Black history is New Jersey history. It must be honored every day of the year."

In January 2021, the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism within the Department of State launched the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail, which invites visitors and residents to "discover the remarkable achievements and legacies of New Jersey's African American scholars, famous figures and everyday citizens who shaped the State's history for nearly four centuries." The New Jersey Black Heritage Trail will highlight landmarks, heritage sites, museums and modern-day attractions, which will be featured on downloadable three-day trip itineraries and map views. Under the bill, which appropriates \$ 1 million to the Department of State to establish the historical markers, the Historical Commission must give special consideration to sites that are in close geographic proximity, thematically linked by surrounding arts and other tourism destinations, or recommended by the New Jersey Black Cultural and Heritage Initiative Foundation.

"The Black Heritage Trail will highlight major historical contributions of Black Americans and the events that helped shape our state," **said U.S. Representative Donald M. Payne**. "There are many stories in New Jersey's Black culture that need to be told. New Jersey played a significant role in the Underground Railroad that helped enslaved Blacks in the southern U.S. escape to freedom in the north. In addition, many Blacks became permanent residents of the state during the Great Migration of southern Blacks into northern cities after World War I. I applaud Governor Murphy for signing the bill to create this trail and focusing more attention on the significant contributions of Blacks to New Jersey's history."

"With the establishment of the Black Heritage Trail, New Jerseyans and visitors from around the world will learn more about the significant contributions, history, and culture of Black people throughout New Jersey over the last four hundred years," **said Secretary of State Tahesha Way**. "Through partnership with the New Jersey Black Cultural and Heritage Initiative Foundation, this is an exciting opportunity for the New Jersey Historical Commission to help people identify and understand the places where Black people made history in New Jersey."

The primary sponsors of the bill are Assemblyman McClellan, Assemblywoman Reynolds Jackson, Assemblywoman Sumter, Senator Singleton, and Senator Testa.

"For nearly 400 years, Black Americans have been part of New Jersey's history. Black heritage and history has, for far too long, gone underrepresented and untold despite our contributions to industry, culture and arts," **said Senator Troy Singleton**. "The purpose of this new law establishing the Black Heritage Trail is to promote and honor these achievements through education, public programs, and historical markers."

"This trail will salute the accomplishments of so many African people and their descendants who have contributed significantly to the fabric of New Jersey history for almost four centuries. It is a long-overdue recognition for many who deserve to have their stories known," **said Senator Michael Testa**.

"Black history plays an integral role in the story of our country and our State," **said Assemblywoman Shavonda Sumter**. "By creating the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail to highlight and celebrate so many important historic sites, we can raise awareness and educate our fellow New Jerseyans about the historical contributions of Black people in our State."

"I am honored to help shine a light on New Jersey's rich African history and encourage tourism to hidden Black heritage spots throughout the state," **said Assemblyman Antwan McClellan**. "From Ocean City's former segregated Westside to Cape May's new Harriet Tubman Museum, there are so many sites and stories that testify to our state's important Black history. This trail will highlight Black abolitionists, veterans, artists, entertainers, and other leaders who have made their indelible marks on New Jersey's history and deserve to be recognized and celebrated. It ensures that New Jersey's Black history and culture will be properly documented and appreciated for future generations."

"Despite the rich influence the African-American community has had on New Jersey, black history has gone unrecognized for far too long," **said Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson**. "With the New Jersey Black Heritage Trail, we can ensure important landmarks throughout the State receive the recognition they deserve while highlighting the moments and people who helped shape our nation."

"New Jersey in general and Newark in particular have long been at the center of African-American history in the United States. African-Americans have made many contributions to our state and nation, from the battlefields of Trenton in 1776, to the ongoing fight for freedom, and the rebirth of modern Newark," **said Mayor Ras Baraka**. "It is truly appropriate that we create a historic trail with itineraries, landmarks, and historic information, so that visitors and residents alike can learn our unique heritage and the contributions African-Americans have made in New Jersey. I commend Governor Murphy, our State Legislators, and the New Jersey Historical Commission on developing the Black Heritage Trail."

"If we omit this history, it is as if we are looking at ourselves with just one eye. We as a people and nation have too long been selective in how we understand and talk about history," said **Derek Davis, board member, Camden County Historical Society and the NJ Black Heritage Foundation.** " This reservoir of information and its public acknowledgement will teach us who we once were and can contextualize who we are, pointing us towards a better shared future."

## Governor Phil Murphy

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