

**TOWNSHIP OF HOPEWELL
MERCER COUNTY, NEW JERSEY**

RESOLUTION #21-50

**RESOLUTION OF THE TOWNSHIP OF HOPEWELL
RECOGNIZING THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 2021 AS
“BLACK HISTORY MONTH” IN THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY**

WHEREAS, the history of Hopewell Township, New Jersey, and our nation are inextricably linked to the heritage of our country’s Black Americans; and

WHEREAS, in the beginning of our nation’s history, a large majority of Black Americans were enslaved; yet many, such as William Stives, a local African American war veteran and Badge of Merit recipient, participated in the struggle for American independence with his life in order to build a society based upon the ideals of liberty, prosperity, and self-government; and

WHEREAS, the history of Black Americans is the story of extraordinary individuals such as Friday Truehart, Frost Blackwell and Sylvia Dubois who were born enslaved but achieved their freedom and, along with William Stives a free man, were among the first African Americans to settle in the Sourland Mountain region and raise families whose descendants would remain in the area; and

WHEREAS, the history of African Americans has not been accurately transcribed as the history has either been diminished, distorted or deleted. Black Americans have served in every theater of war. In the Civil War, 88,000 New Jerseyans participated with African Americans numbering upwards of 2,900. From our region soldiers such as Ira Bergen, Raymond Bergen, George Boldin, Lewis Fisher, William Boyer, Charles Jennings, Samuel Montgomery, John Naz, Tracy Peterson, George Reasoner, William Reasoner, Samuel Ridley, James Schenk, Jonathan Stives, Aaron Truehart, George Williamson and John VanZandt enlisted in the United States Colored Troops in the 127th, 41st, 29th 24th, 14th, 11th 8th and 3rd regiments and were eyewitnesses to historical events such as President Abraham Lincoln’s second inauguration, Lee’s surrender to Grant at the Appomattox Courthouse and were survivors of the bloody Battle of Olustee which suffered some of the heaviest regimental losses recorded in the Civil War; and

WHEREAS, the spirit of competition in athletics has played an integral part in the history of our region because of Black Americans such as Paul Arnold, a local African

American man who started with the Pennington Allstars and went on to play against well-known athletes, both Black and White, and became a member of the Brooklyn Royal Giants, the Newark Browns and the Newark Dodgers which became part of the Negro National League; and

WHEREAS, while the history of Black Americans is also the story of countless nameless heroes brought to our shores who endured lives of bondage and oppression, the deprivation of their civil rights, and the ravages of bigotry and racism, it is a history for which the most glorious chapters have yet to be written as Black Americans contribute in full measure to the fulfillment of the American promise; and

WHEREAS, the people of New Jersey and this nation should study the history of Black Americans through vehicles such as the book “If These Stones Could Talk,” written by local residents Beverly Mills and Elaine Buck about the African American presence in the Hopewell Valley, Sourland Mountain and Surrounding region, the Sankofa Collaborative comprised of five New Jersey organizations (1804 Consultants, Grounds For Sculpture, The New Jersey Historical Society, the Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum and the William Trent House Museum) and Amistad Commission so that they may learn from its stories of heroism, struggle, and achievement; and

WHEREAS, On April 7, 2005 this State adopted P.L.2005, Joint Resolution No. 2 which designated the month of February of each year as “Black History Month” in recognition of the many accomplishments of Black Americans and their contributions to the history of this nation and State, and to provide the citizens of this State with an annual opportunity to pay tribute to the sacrifices and accomplishments of Black Americans; and

WHEREAS, in 2020, the deaths of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Brianna Taylor and others at the hands of police brought back into national focus systemic inequities faced by Black Americans; and

WHEREAS, citizens all over this country including Hopewell Township took to the streets to demand that we as a people understand and change these systems so that we can actively work to live up to our Founders’ bedrock belief that “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness;” and

WHEREAS in July 2020 the Hopewell Township Committee formed the Citizen’s Equity Advisory Committee to conduct a systematic review of existing and proposed Township

regulations and practices for potential discriminatory effect and to offer suggestions on how to remedy such effects; and

WHEREAS, in August 2020 the Hopewell Township Committee in Resolution #20-286 endorsed proposed legislation on Environmental Justice, that has now been signed into law, which will require NJDEP to assess the impact of certain environmental permits on overburdened communities, which are usually communities of color; and

WHEREAS, Hopewell Township has always considered equity in its Affordable Housing plans, and will continue to do so as new housing developments begin to be built; and

WHEREAS, the Hopewell Township Committee wishes to honor the contributions of its Black citizens and acknowledge the work that remains to be done to ensure equity by designating the month of February 2021 as Black History Month in Hopewell Township.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Township of Hopewell, County of Mercer and State of New Jersey:

1. The Township recognizes February 2021 as “Black History Month” in the State of New Jersey and acknowledges and pays tribute to the bravery, sacrifices, and accomplishments of Black Americans.
2. The Township urges all citizens of this State to reflect upon the many contributions that Black Americans have made to this State and nation and to participate in the activities and programs that are held in observance of “Black History Month” in accordance with P.L.2005, Joint Resolution No. 2.

Date Adopted: February 1, 2021