



PRELIMINARY DRAFT - NOT READY FOR INTRODUCTION
2019 ASSEMBLY JOINT RESOLUTION

1 **Relating to:** proclaiming February 2020 as Black History Month.

2 Whereas, Black History Month provides a deliberate opportunity to reflect on
3 the common humanity underlying all people and to raise awareness and foster
4 respect for the heritage and contributions of people of African descent; and

5 Whereas, African Americans have been living and working in Wisconsin since
6 the 18th century, and records of their baptisms, marriages, and burials indicate that
7 they were woven into the fabric of early life in the state; and

8 Whereas, Wisconsin history first references African descendants in a speech
9 given in 1725 by a chief of the Illinois Indians, in which he said “a negro belonging
10 to Monsieur de Boisbriant” at Green Bay; and

11 Whereas, the United States has recognized black history annually since
12 February 12, 1926, first as “Negro History Week” and later as “Black History Month,”
13 by noted Harvard scholar and historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson, celebrating the
14 ethnic and racial diversity that enriches and strengthens our nation; and

1 Whereas, both enslaved and free people of African descent have participated in
2 every aspect of America's effort to secure, protect, and advance the cause of freedom
3 and civil rights and have stories that are an inspiration to all citizens, that reflect
4 the triumph of the human spirit and offer the hopes of everyday people to rise above
5 both prejudice and circumstance and to build lives of dignity; and

6 Whereas, people of African descent or African Americans have made
7 measurable differences in their respective industries, people such as:

8 • PFC Anna Mae Robertson—member of the 6888th Central Postal Directory
9 Battalion, the only Women's Army Corps all-African American battalion that served
10 overseas in World War II;

11 • Mabel Watson Raimey—Wisconsin's first black female attorney and first
12 African American female graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Madison;

13 • Susan Bazzelle Ellis and Millie White French—the first African American
14 teachers hired by Milwaukee Public Schools;

15 • Jay Mayo "Ink" Williams—pioneering producer of recorded blues music.
16 Williams was the most successful "race records" producer of his time, breaking all
17 previous records for sales in the genre. His work was key to keeping the Paramount
18 Records label of Grafton, Wisconsin afloat;

19 • Paul Jones—an enslaved leadworker in Sinsinawa, Grant County, Wisconsin,
20 who sued his employer George W. Jones for \$1,133 for trespassing on a promise to
21 pay him wages. Paul Jones lost his case because enslaved people were not considered
22 citizens, and therefore could not claim lost wages. Jones continued to work for
23 George Jones until his emancipation in 1842, when he settled with other free blacks
24 in the Pleasant Ridge community in Iowa County;

1 • Lillian Fishburne—the first African American female to be promoted to the
2 rank of rear admiral in the U.S. Navy. Fishburne served as the chief of naval
3 operations in Washington, DC;

4 • Richard Arrington, Jr.—the first black mayor of the city of Birmingham,
5 Alabama, serving from 1979 to 1999. Arrington was the driving force behind the
6 creation of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, a museum dedicated to telling the
7 story of Birmingham, an epicenter of the struggle for racial and civil rights;

8 • Kurtis Walker—known by his stage name “Kurtis Blow”, Walker is a
9 songwriter, rapper, and record/film producer. He was one of the first commercially
10 successful rappers and the first to sign with a major record label;

11 • Mildred Harpole—Milwaukee educator, civil rights activist, Marquette
12 University graduate, and community leader who helped organize Freedom Schools
13 to teach children about the effects of racism during the 1964 citywide school boycott
14 to fight school segregation and went on to become a powerful advocate for fair
15 housing working at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development;

16 • Dr. Rogers Onick—retired longtime Milwaukee Public Schools principal,
17 president of Metropolitan Milwaukee Alliance of Black School Educators, and active
18 community volunteer who generously supports students and teachers and shares his
19 expertise with school leaders across Wisconsin;

20 • Dr. O.C. White—African American community leader and civil servant,
21 affectionately known as Milwaukee’s black mayor, who created a job training
22 program in the 1960s that helped numerous African American men and women find
23 work in housing construction and, from the 1960s to the 1980s, served as a vital voice
24 for the city DJing and storytelling on the old soul station WAWA;

