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PRELIMINARY CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA ITEM REPORT

DATE: July 14, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Susanna Combs, Mayor

ITEM TYPE: Announcement

AGENDA SECTION: Mayor's Department

SUBJECT: Unveiling of the Solomon Northrup Sculpture - "Hope Out of Darkness" at Lincoln Baths-Saratoga Spa State Park

SUGGESTED ACTION:

ITEM ACTION: Announcement

ITEM NOTES:

On July 10, 2025, the unveiling of the sculpture “Hope Out of Darkness,” marking the 218th anniversary of Solomon Northrup’s birth, in front of the Lincoln Baths in Saratoga State Park, took place. This sculpture is the inspired creation of nationally- recognized artist, Wesley Wofford, FNSS, commissioned by the Solomon Northrup Committee for Commemorative Works of Louisiana

A free Black man born in Minerva, New York, Solomon Northrup was kidnapped in 1841 while living and working in Saratoga Springs. Prior to the kidnapping, Solomon Northrup was a husband, father, and skilled musician. Solomon Northrup was forced into unlawful slavery for twelve brutal years in Louisiana.

Solomon Northrup's ultimate liberation resonates not only as a personal tragedy and triumph, but also as a testament to

the resilience of free Black communities in New York and the ongoing struggle for justice and human rights in our nation's history.

Solomon Northrup's story has continued to captivate and educate audiences worldwide through multiple acclaimed adaptations and exhibitions, including the 1984 television film "Solomon Northrup's Odyssey", the 2012 United States Department of State's documentary "Journey to Freedom", and the 2013 Academy Award-winning film "12 Years A Slave, " as well as the publication of the Book, Twelve Years a Slave.

Saratoga Spa State Park, will be the temporary site to host the first-ever public sculpture, commemorating Solomon Northrup, serving as a vital and symbolic location that bridges his northern roots with his story of resilience and hope and will then move on to be permanently installed in Marksville, Louisiana, the site of Northrup's liberation.

The City of Saratoga Springs recognizes that commemorating Solomon Northrup's story in this way not only honors his memory, but also serves as a powerful educational and cultural opportunity, inspiring current and future generations to understand the complexities of freedom, justice, and human dignity

I encourage all citizens, residents, and visitors to join in honoring Solomon Northrup's legacy, and committing ourselves to the principles of truth, justice, and inclusion for all.

ATTACHMENTS: