

## *Making Space*

### *Celebrating Toni Morrison*

*By Valerie A. Jackson, Esq.*



“Make a difference about something other than yourselves.”—Toni Morrison

Last March, the United States Postal Service honored the late Toni Morrison—the first Black woman to win the Nobel Prize in Literature—with a Forever stamp. At the time of the unveiling the USPS shared that “One of the goals of our stamp program is to raise awareness and celebrate the people who represent the very best of our nation.”

This year, the 2024 Women's History Month theme established by The National Women's History Alliance is titled “*Women Who Advocate for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion.*” As I contemplate the importance of Women’s History Month, consider this year’s important theme, and take time to pay homage to trailblazing women, past and present, who have made significant contributions to diversity and to history, it seems most fitting to make space to honor, world renowned American novelist Toni Morrison.

Born in Ohio, Toni Morrison is known as one of the most celebrated authors of our time. She is credited with the unique ability to examine race in America and to capture the experience of Black American identity and Black Women in a starkly poetic fashion. She has authored countless award winning children’s books, plays and novels. Works such as, “The Bluest Eye” and “Song of Solomon” are considered classics and are taught in classrooms and across college campus around the globe. Considered her greatest work, “Beloved,” was honored with the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction in 1988.

Making her mark on New Jersey—from 1989 until she retired in 2006, Toni Morrison served as a Professor at Princeton University and was the Robert F. Goheen Chair in the Humanities. Toni Morrison received the Nobel Prize for Literature, the National Book Critics Circle Award and a Grammy Award. In 2011 Ms. Morrison received an Honorary Doctor of Letters degree from Rutgers University; and in 2012, she was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama.

The impact of Ms. Morrison, who died in 2019, went beyond literature. She was a champion for justice, civil rights, human rights and women’s rights. And she inspired us all. “*You are your best thing.*” —Toni Morrison