



# MONTCLAIR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

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**KENDRA V. JOHNSON, J.D., ED. D.**

*Superintendent of Schools*

### **Montclair Public Schools FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Montclair, New Jersey – April 4, 2019 – The Montclair community is invited to a dedication ceremony hosted by the Montclair Public Schools (MPS) at the Charles H. Bullock School on May 18, 2019 at 10 am where a memorial plaque honoring the history and legacy of the Washington Street YMCA (WSY) will be unveiled.

The Charles H. Bullock School, which opened in 2010, was built on the former site of the Washington Street Y and pays tribute to Charles H. Bullock, who served as the Washington Street Y's Executive Director from 1916 to 1935. A photograph of Mr. Bullock is located in the school entranceway, memorializing his contributions during his tenure. Not only is the Bullock School the first new school in Montclair in nearly 80 years, but the first building in the township to be named after an African-American, in honor of his many contributions to the community.

The ceremony will include opening remarks from Superintendent Kendra V. Johnson, who will also provide a brief history of the Washington Street Y, performances by Hillside's Drums of Thunder (weather permitting), the Montclair High School Chorus, and the unveiling of the memorial plaque.

The Washington Street Y opened in 1926 and was demolished in 2005. Inspired by Booker T. Washington, Julius Rosenwald, President of Sears, Roebuck and Company donated millions of dollars to build schools for black children in the rural south. Rosenwald also helped to build the YMCAs in black communities through a challenge grant offering \$25,000 to any community nationwide that would raise \$75,000 for construction of a YMCA in African American communities. From this offer, 24 YMCAs were built in 14 states, including WSY under the leadership of Bullock.

For many, the WSY served as a place where children felt safe and protected. It has been described as a "Beacon of Light" and a "North Star" in the Black community of Montclair for providing a complete array of programs and services that improved the well-being of individuals, families and Montclair's African American Community as a whole. It is a little-known fact that for five cents, a non-member could get a clean towel and a shower. This was significant because most Black families did not have showers in

their homes. The WSY also had the only local pool where Black people could swim, and it is believed that as many as 700 Black soldiers learned to swim there before going off to World War II.

Since the WSY's demolition in 2005 to make way for the Bullock School, a committee of Montclair community members who felt such a strong connection to their childhood "second home," they lobbied the Montclair Board of Education to memorialize the WSY as a tribute to the way in which it helped to prepare boys and girls for civic life as adults. The Board recently voted unanimously to approve the dedication plaque.

We encourage Montclair's families, local dignitaries, residents and friends to join the Montclair Public Schools at this auspicious and historic community event honoring the esteemed institution.