

EXECUTIVE ORDER NO. 77

WHEREAS, Toni Morrison, born Chloe Ardelia Wofford, was a distinguished author and professor who wrote numerous works of fiction, including plays and children's literature; and

WHEREAS, Toni Morrison was born on February 18, 1931, in Lorain, Ohio; and

WHEREAS, Toni Morrison earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Howard University, and a Master of Arts in English from Cornell University; and

WHEREAS, Toni Morrison began her career in academia at Texas Southern University where she taught English and then returned to Howard University as a faculty member; and

WHEREAS, in 1965, Toni Morrison became an editor of the textbook division of the publisher Random House, and after just two years, was transferred to Random House in New York City, becoming the first black female senior editor in the fiction department; and

WHEREAS, during her time as a senior editor, Toni Morrison was influential in bringing African-American literature into the mainstream, and endorsing a new generation of African-American authors; and

WHEREAS, in 1970, Toni Morrison published her first novel, *The Bluest Eye*, which tells the story of a black girl who craves blue eyes; and

WHEREAS, in 1975, Toni Morrison's second novel, *Sula*, was published and nominated for the National Book Award; and

WHEREAS, in 1987, Toni Morrison published *Beloved*, her most celebrated novel, which was inspired by the true story of an enslaved African-American woman; and

WHEREAS, *Beloved* was a best-seller for twenty-five weeks, won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1988, and was later adapted into a feature-length film; and

WHEREAS, in 1993, the Toni Morrison Society was founded to study her life and work; and

WHEREAS, before her sixth novel was published, Toni Morrison was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature; and

WHEREAS, in 1996, the National Endowment for the Humanities selected Toni Morrison for the Jefferson Lecture, which is the federal government's highest honor for distinguished intellectual achievement in the humanities, and she was also honored that year with the National Book Foundation's Medal of Distinguished Contribution to American Letters, which is awarded to writers who enrich the literary heritage over a lifetime of service, or a corpus of work; and

WHEREAS, Toni Morrison was the first black female writer of fiction to appear on the cover of *Time* magazine; and

WHEREAS, from 1989 until her retirement in 2006, Toni Morrison held the Robert F. Goheen Chair in the Humanities at Princeton University; and

WHEREAS, from 1997 to 2003, Toni Morrison was a Professor-at-Large at Cornell University; and

WHEREAS, in 2008, Toni Morrison was both inducted into the New Jersey Hall of Fame and presented the Presidential Medal of Freedom by President Barack Obama; and

WHEREAS, Toni Morrison was known for her vivid storytelling, her use of myth, and nonlinear prose throughout her work; and

WHEREAS, on August 5, 2019, Toni Morrison died at the age of 88; and

WHEREAS, Toni Morrison will be sorely missed by her family, her friends, and all those who have read her body of work; and

WHEREAS, it is with great sorrow that we mourn the passing of Toni Morrison, and extend our deepest sympathy to her son Harold Ford Morrison, and her three grandchildren; and

WHEREAS, it is appropriate to honor the exemplary work, and cherished memory of Toni Morrison, and to signify her passing;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, SHEILA Y. OLIVER, Acting Governor of the State of New Jersey, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and by the Statutes of this State, do hereby ORDER and DIRECT:

1. The flag of the United States of America and the flag of New Jersey shall be flown at half-staff at all State departments, offices, agencies, and instrumentalities during appropriate hours on Friday, August 9, 2019, in recognition and mourning of a visionary author and distinguished professor, Toni Morrison.

2. This Order shall take effect immediately.

GIVEN, under my hand and seal this
7th day of August,
Two Thousand and Nineteen,
and of the Independence of
the United States the Two
Hundred and Forty-Fourth.

[seal]

/s/ Sheila Y. Oliver
Acting Governor

Attest:

/s/ Matthew J. Platkin
Chief Counsel to the Governor