

State of Maine

Proclamation

WHEREAS, Ashley Frederick Bryan, son of immigrant parents from Antigua, renowned author and illustrator, and resident of the State of Maine for over 60 years, celebrates his 97th birthday on July 13, 2020; and

WHEREAS, drafted out of Cooper Union in New York City in April 1943, Mr. Bryan served in a segregated battalion of the U. S. Army where he participated in the D-Day invasion, documenting his experiences in real-time through writing and art, and finally telling this important and inspiring story in 2019 in his celebrated memoir *Infinite Hope*; and

WHEREAS, in the summer of 1946, Mr. Bryan visited Maine for the first time as a student at the Skowhegan School of Art and, upon viewing the mountains of Acadia and the Cranberry Isles, decided this was where he wanted to live, later returning in 1956 as part of a group commissioned by Skowhegan to create the frescoes still vibrant in the South Solon Meeting House; and

WHEREAS, residing on Little Cranberry Island since 1988 after retiring from teaching at Dartmouth College, Mr. Bryan has enriched the lives of island residents, visitors, and school children in Maine and around the world with over 50 books including *Beautiful Blackbird* and *Freedom Over Me*; and

WHEREAS, through his art, Mr. Bryan has illuminated the African-American experience and cultural heritage for which he has been recognized by universities and institutions internationally, and continues to pave the way for Black writers and illustrators, creating opportunities for greater diversity in the world of children's literature; and

WHEREAS, using debris washed up on the shores of the Cranberry Isles, Mr. Bryan has created puppets and stained-glass windows that have been displayed in museums around the country and are now on permanent display in the Ashley Bryan Storyteller Pavilion on Islesford; and

WHEREAS, through his philanthropic efforts building water tanks, libraries, and schools in Kenya and South Africa, Mr. Bryan has made it his life's work to celebrate the unique spirit of every individual, offering them the gift of his love and friendship, and in sharing his understanding of the creative process, encouraging all to wake up each morning and "find the child in you;" and

WHEREAS, Mr. Bryan counts as first among his many honors the renaming of the Islesford school to the Ashley Bryan School in celebration of his love of children and commitment to education;


NOW, THEREFORE, I, Janet T. Mills, Governor of the great State of Maine, do hereby proclaim July 13, 2020 as

Ashley Frederick Bryan Day

throughout the State of Maine and I encourage all Maine people to honor and recognize the lifetime of achievements and contributions made by Mr. Ashley Bryan.



In testimony whereof, I have caused the Great Seal of the State to be hereunto affixed GIVEN under my hand at Augusta this thirteenth day of July Two Thousand Twenty


Mathew Dunlap
Secretary of State


Janet T. Mills
Governor