



For Immediate Release
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First Major Exhibition Exploring More Than 200 Years of Black Life in the Adirondacks to Open Summer 2027

Nature of Belonging: The Black Experience in the Adirondacks Illuminates the Black Community's Contributions to the Region as New York State Marks the 200th Anniversary of the Abolition of Slavery



(L) Roland Brown's *Tuskegee Airman Jacket*. (M) Musicians in Lake George, 1890. Photo by Seneca Ray Stoddard (1844-1917). (R) Takeyce Walter. *Reflections in the Wilderness*, 2021. Oil on board. All images courtesy of Adirondack Experience.

Blue Mountain Lake, NY, August 4, 2026 — Opening Summer 2027, **Adirondack Experience, The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake (ADKX)** inaugurates a permanent, interactive exhibition that marks the first presentation to comprehensively explore more than 200 years of Black life in the region. ***Nature of Belonging: The Black Experience in the Adirondacks*** examines how generations of labor, leadership, artistry, recreation, and community-building have shaped the Adirondacks, highlighting the important role of Black individuals in its development, as well as the personal ties and shared traditions that continue to enrich Adirondack life. Coinciding with the 200th anniversary of the abolition of slavery in New York State, *Nature of Belonging: The Black Experience in the Adirondacks* brings together artifacts, artworks, archival materials, and oral histories that contribute to a broader understanding of African Americans in the rural north.

Since its founding in 1957, ADKX has been dedicated to exploring the relationship between the Adirondack landscape and the people who have shaped it—and been shaped by it. *Nature of Belonging: The Black Experience in the Adirondacks* builds on ADKX's commitment to documenting and sharing a layered, evolving portrait of the region by filling important gaps, bringing forward new perspectives, and inviting Adirondack residents to contribute their stories.

Its opening also extends the narrative of ADKX's core exhibition, *Life in the Adirondacks*, which introduces visitors to the Adirondack Park, its people, and its history.

"The Adirondack Experience is dedicated to telling the stories of those who have lived, leisured, and labored within the Adirondack landscape, past and present," said **Chris Dobbs, Executive Director of ADKX**. "Black Adirondackers have been integral to this history—as builders, caretakers, athletes, artists, and neighbors. By shedding light on their stories as part of a broader examination of life in the Adirondacks, we hope visitors will gain a deeper appreciation for the longstanding ties between the Black community and the region."

"Every object in this exhibition sheds light on a different part of the Black experience. From a golf club used by the first Black member of the PGA to images of Black people working in Adirondack camps, each tells its own story of belonging, labor, or self-preservation. These stories reveal the hidden, complex human story of Black people who labored to make the region a welcoming place for others, even as their own contributions were overlooked," said **Charles Clark III, curator of *Nature of Belonging: The Black Experience in the Adirondacks***. "Working from the material culture that survives, this exhibition recovers and documents narratives that have often been overlooked and lets these objects speak to the fullness of Black life in the region."

The exhibition is the result of a multiyear research process to surface both documented and anecdotal stories of Black life in the Adirondacks. Through a public collecting initiative, community members were invited to share everyday objects—clothing, hiking gear, family photo albums, and more—that reflect personal, familial, and regional histories. Guided by community input and outreach, the exhibition builds on ADKX's ongoing efforts to reflect the voices of residents today.

Nature of Belonging: The Black Experience in the Adirondacks is organized around the following themes:

Work explores the indelible role Black labor played in shaping the Adirondack region across centuries. Ranging from skilled artisans and seasonal laborers to Timbuctoo settlements established by formerly enslaved individuals and abolitionists, this section examines the challenges Black people faced and overcame. It also spotlights entrepreneurs such as Dewey Brown Sr. Facing discrimination when looking for work, he purchased and opened the Ceder River House and Golf Course in Indian Lake in 1947. By owning the course, he was admitted as a member of the PGA in 1929 at the age of 29. After the organization learned he was Black, his membership was revoked in 1934 and later reinstated.

Legacies examines the history of slavery, post-emancipation, and Black tourism in the Adirondacks, providing context for how exclusion, race, and representation have shaped Black relationships to land, nature, and outdoor spaces. The section features an abstract landscape painting by Keith Washington that serves as a healing memorial to the victim of a 1932 act of racial terror, who is memorialized in an adjacent room through a project in partnership with the Equal Justice Initiative in Montgomery, Alabama.

Connections explores the powerful narratives of Black connection, recreation, and community-building in the Adirondacks. Included are photographs documenting the story of Charlie Walker, a World War II veteran and one of the first Black marines, who also became the first Black Olympic figure skating judge in the U.S. Also on view is the shed where singer Fulton Fryar slept in 1957 while studying at the Seagle Music Colony in Schroon Lake as the opera and musical theater program's first Black student, and a kayak built by Brother Yusef, who brought children from inner cities into the Adirondacks through the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Adirondack Antique Boating Association.

Home uncovers the contemporary, lived experiences of Black individuals in the Adirondacks. In addition to highlighting the voices of residents today, this section explores figures like Dr. Alice Paden Green, a civil rights and criminal justice reform advocate, author, and founder of the Center for Law and Justice in Albany, New York. Her memoir, *Outsider: Stories of Growing Up Black in the Adirondacks*, reflects on being a Black girl in the predominantly white Adirondack region during the 1950s and 1960s, offering a profound look at migration, community, and the enduring pursuit of belonging.

Exhibition Organization and Support

Nature of Belonging: The Black Experience in the Adirondacks is organized by the Adirondack Experience and curated by Charles Clark III. The exhibition was made possible by:

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About Adirondack Experience, The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake

Adirondack Experience, The Museum on Blue Mountain Lake (ADKX), accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, shares the history and culture of the Adirondack region through interactive exhibits, hands-on activities, and culturally rich collections in more than 24 historic and contemporary buildings on a 121-acre campus in the heart of the Adirondacks. ADKX offers a broad range of programs and activities including special and permanent exhibitions, the 19,000-square-foot Life in the Adirondacks interactive exhibition and new Artists & Inspiration in the Wild, nature trail hikes, and boating on Minnow Pond. ADKX offers daily activities with artists-in-residence, workshops, lectures, nature walks, family and educational programs, and signature events like the Rustic Fair, FallFest, and the Adirondack Art Festival.

The museum is supported in part with donations from the general public, with some general operating support made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of Governor Kathy Hochul and the New York State Legislature. For additional information, call 518-352-7311 or visit www.theADKX.org.

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