

## STATEMENT FROM THE TONI MORRISON SOCIETY IN SUPPORT OF OHIO HB 325

Having been founded and established in May of 1993, seven months before author Toni Morrison received the Nobel Prize for literature, the Toni Morrison Society wholeheartedly endorses House Bill 325 in the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly of the Ohio House of Representatives, which has proposed that February 18<sup>th</sup> be designated as Toni Morrison Day. Given that Toni Morrison is a beloved daughter of the city of Lorain in the state of Ohio, given that her body of fiction, non-fiction, speeches, and lectures has transformed the literary landscape for students, teachers, scholars, and the community of readers around the state, the nation and the world, it is only fitting that the state of Ohio recognizes all that Toni Morrison has given us through the power of her words, the persistence of her commitment to truth, and the unwavering passion she shared for the sanctity of the human spirit. She taught us that “narrative is radical, creating us at the very moment it is being created” and in story after story, we learned just how radical and powerful storytelling could be in her able hands and brilliant mind. Her writing is read by students in high schools, colleges, and universities and by citizens in library reading rooms, homes, and community centers throughout the state, contributing to the exponential growth of her readership over five decades. In her novels, children’s books, essays, speeches, and other works, her words have unapologetically challenged us to acknowledge the history of institutional racism at the same time that she diligently inspired us to acknowledge the myriad ways that African American people and others of the African diaspora resisted enslavement and other attempts to define and confine their humanity. Having received the Ohioana Book award for her second novel, *Sula*, the National Book Critics Award for *Song of Solomon*, the Anisfeld-Wolf Book Award in Race Relations and the Pulitzer Prize for *Beloved*, the 1993 Nobel Prize in Literature, and the Medal of Freedom from President Barack Obama, among a host other prestigious awards from colleges, universities, and institutions around the nation and the world, Toni Morrison has earned the distinction of being one of Ohio’s most beloved and respected citizens. Her extraordinary work with language demonstrated her commitment to arts and letters, to the humanities, and to the power of the word to make a difference in our lived lives. Designating February 18<sup>th</sup> as Toni Morrison Day, is a fitting tribute to the enormous impact our beloved Toni Morrison has had and will continue to have in Ohio, the nation, and the world for generations to come. The Toni Morrison Society commends the state of Ohio for recognizing the tremendous contributions of Toni Morrison as a literary trailblazer and most extraordinary citizen for all time.

**--Marilyn S. Mobley, PhD**

Founding Member and Former President

The Toni Morrison Society

Professor of English and African American Studies

Case Western Reserve University