

Marilyn Banks-Winter  
122 Constable Drive  
Riverhead, NY 11901

October 28, 2022

Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Hochul:

Thank you for your leadership and sound vision that has guided New York out of the many pandemics that plagued our Nation to include the recent out-breaks of Monkeypox and Polio by providing the necessary PPE, Testing Sites, and vaccines for citizens across New York. You are a Champion at the forefront of fighting for women reproductive rights. We as women should have the right to determine and make our own decision about our body. I am big believer in holding on to that right. Thank you for setting in place bold legislative actions for sustainability and decarbonization programs that will be in pursuit of environmental quality, sound public health, and the social well-beings, as well as, the recent launch to expand Offshore Wind Workforce Development and Training Initiative to prepare New Yorkers for High-Growth Jobs where MWBE's will be at the forefront. Your Executive Order to protection of public safety in an attempt to end gun violence and combat domestic terrorism, which will further stop these 'Bad Apple' gun dealers from selling semi-assault rifles that have been found in the massacres of many children, teachers and school administrators is unprecedented. I applaud you for all of your efforts, and listening to the concerns of your constituents in New York, and your passion for change.

As you have recently signed into Executive Order the establishing of the '400 Year African-American Commission' within the Department of State, in which I have affiliations with colleagues to whom have been appointed, I am honored to know that our New York Governor sees the need of protecting family ties. As this Order directly acknowledges my family history of 'Bell Town' in Aquebogue, NY, a community of Afro-Indigenous people, which you have acknowledge., my ancestors in the United States were victims of racially-motivated lynching's, mass extermination and continued discrimination. I am a proud African-American and Native-American Woman Veteran, a descendent of many New York Indigenous tribes as Corchaug-Montaukett, Unkechaug, with family ties to Shinnecock Nation

in Suffolk County and Matinecock Nation in Nassau County, and of African Slaves stolen and brought over to these United States. You mentioned at a press conference of how 'We must recognize and acknowledge shameful chapters in our state's past, ensure New Yorkers have a better understanding of our history, and fight racism and bigotry of all forms'.

Racial bigotry and bias acts plague us still today, especially in the Construction field of which I have worked in for over 21 years. I am owner and operator of A&M Electrical Contractor, Ltd in Suffolk County, New York, a registered MWBE/WBE and Veteran-Owned electrical contracting company. As New York was first inhabited by Native Americans, remains from Indigenous people have been found all across our state during excavation to storms, to include Bell Town that is on Corchaug Native land next to Indian County Park, located at the mouth of the Peconic River. In 2005 after Tropical Storm Tammy hit our area hard with torrential rains, severe beach erosions, roads buckled and houses in the area were demolish. Major flooding caused human remains to surface at Indian Island. They were deemed by Archeologist to be Native. The Inter-tribal Grave Warrior Protection Society used non-intrusive ground-penetrating radar to image the subsurface, tested the soil, and repatriated the remains.

Although my ancestors area 'Fort Corchaug', a prehistoric archeological lodge site located in Cutchogue, NY, a National Historic Landmark, the Corchaug Indians controlled all land from Nassau border to Montauk to Orient Point. Builders have been excavated for years without any care or oversight of any remains underground and continue to desecrate today.

Governor Hochul, I beseech you to continue your passion for change. as you have partnered with other Governors of various states to include Main and Rhode Island in a Multi-State agenda for a regional Clean Hydrogen Hub and on many issues raised by your constituents. We in New York urge you to partner with the bipartisan approval and sign the 'Unmarked Burial Protection Act', S5701/A6724.

Forty-Seven State Governors have already implemented protections of remains of Native Americans, African Americans and others, from Desecration, Discard and Destruction. We need a fail-safe system and an Oversight Committee appointed by you in place to protect human remains found in unmarked burial sites. When you sign, what joy will ring as you will be the 48th Governor in my time that decided to protect our land and serve its people. We do not currently have these protections, not only for unmarked sacred Native burial sites, but also for African Americans and Revolutionary War-era veterans who were buried in mass graves. We honor our fallen comrades every year for Memorial Day and Veterans Day, of to whom I call my brothers and yes, sister-at-arms. Those women who were 'founding mothers' as Margaret Corbin, who was one of the lucky ones to be reburied by the 'Daughters of the American Revolution'. Most soldiers of color in New York were thrown into mass graves or just buried unknowingly. My grandmother, a Cherokee woman who was sick, was taken from her two small sons, ages 2 years old and 3 years old, to the City's Insane Asylum at Randall's Island (Minnahanock), which was a horrific institution that housed a mixture of criminals, terminally ill and mentally unstable. We have lost the paper trail to where she might have been was buried, and where she and others might have been transferred to an unknown location and dumped. She may be under someone's development.

As a Contractor, I understand the urgency to set up official land protections to be governed under the State of New York as I have seen first hand where Builders whose only goal is to 'Dig and Discard', sort of 'tunnel vision'. The picture of bones being desecrated and artifacts looted and thrown away paints a dismal picture.

Trust, faith, and a common purpose to lift up all people in our town, city and state are what the leaders in the African-American and Indigenous Communities strive for. Right now, people are not as hopeful as they should be, as you must show and do more to maintain the level of trust we need in our Governor. As I am for economic and community development and growth, I am also for cautious development as there is history where we all stand. We must respect those who have paved the way and who allowed us to exist here in the first place....our ancestors.

As we are gifted this land to maintain and cultivate, protecting human remains in unmarked graves should be at the top of the list of protection as wetland and endangered species. I encourage you to expeditiously sign the 'Unmarked Burial Protection Act', S5701/A6724 to help stop the desecration.

With sincere admiration and gratitude,

Marylin Banks-Winter  
632-494-5665  
Riverhead, Long Island, NY

President/Co-Chair - The African American Educational and Cultural Festival, Inc (AAECF).  
President - A&M Electrical Contractor, Ltd  
President - Bell Town Historical Heritage  
Clergy - House of Praise Christian Revival Center, Inc  
Member - Suffolk County Executive Steve Bellone's African American Advisory Board  
Director/Member - National Coalition 100 Black Women, Suffolk County & National Chapters  
Member - Riverhead Revitalization Committee  
Member - Riverhead Problem Solving Committee  
Member - Riverhead Chamber of Commerce  
Member - Suffolk County Alliance of Chambers, Inc  
Member - Long Island African American Chamber of Commerce  
Member - North Fork Authentic  
Member - ELI NAACP & DC Chapters  
Member - HIA (Hauppauge Industrial Association)  
Member - Women's Chamber of Commerce  
Member - Professional Women in Construction  
Member - RCSD Diversity & Cross Cultural Task Force  
Member - RCSD African American Experience Committee  
Member - Eleanor's Legacy  
Mental Health First Aider - Assoc. for Mental Health & Wellness & Mental Health First Aid USA  
Member - Board Member - East End Arts Council  
Member - Riverhead Anti-bias Task Force  
Trustee - Riverhead Free Library  
Recipient - Women of Distinction Award - Assemblywoman Jody Giglio  
Recipient - Power Women of the East End Award - Dan's Paper and Schneps Media  
Recipient - Small Business Award - Black Legacy Partners, LLC