

# OUR SHARED ADIRONDACK LEGACY

We find ourselves at an intersectional moment as we collectively fight for racial justice, equity and inclusion; fight the causes and impacts of climate change; and fight to create work and educational opportunities for the next generation of New Yorkers. The Adirondack region was a cradle of civil rights advocacy in our country, long before the deep south in the 1960's. Unfortunately, our history books have failed to teach us this deeper narrative demonstrating a rich connection between communities of color and the Adirondack landscape.

The Adirondack region was central to the Black suffrage movement in the mid-1800's. At the time, the right to vote was seen by Black abolitionists and suffragists as critical to bringing about real change. Wisdom held that electing the right public officials would bring about the basic rights of freedom and equal protection under the law. As one digs deeper into the rich history of this region, it becomes clear that Black abolitionists built a movement that leveraged the philanthropy of their white partners towards a brighter future.

## EIGHT BLACK SUFFRAGE SETTLEMENTS

3,000 free Black men - yearning to vote for public officials that would fight for abolition, Black suffrage, and equal protection - partnered with philanthropist Gerrit Smith in 1846 to acquire deeds to 40 acres of land for each person. By owning the equivalent of \$250 in property, these men secured the right to vote under the New York State constitution. This requirement represented one of the earliest examples of voter suppression. As a result of these efforts, eight Black suffrage settlements were established in the Northern Adirondacks.

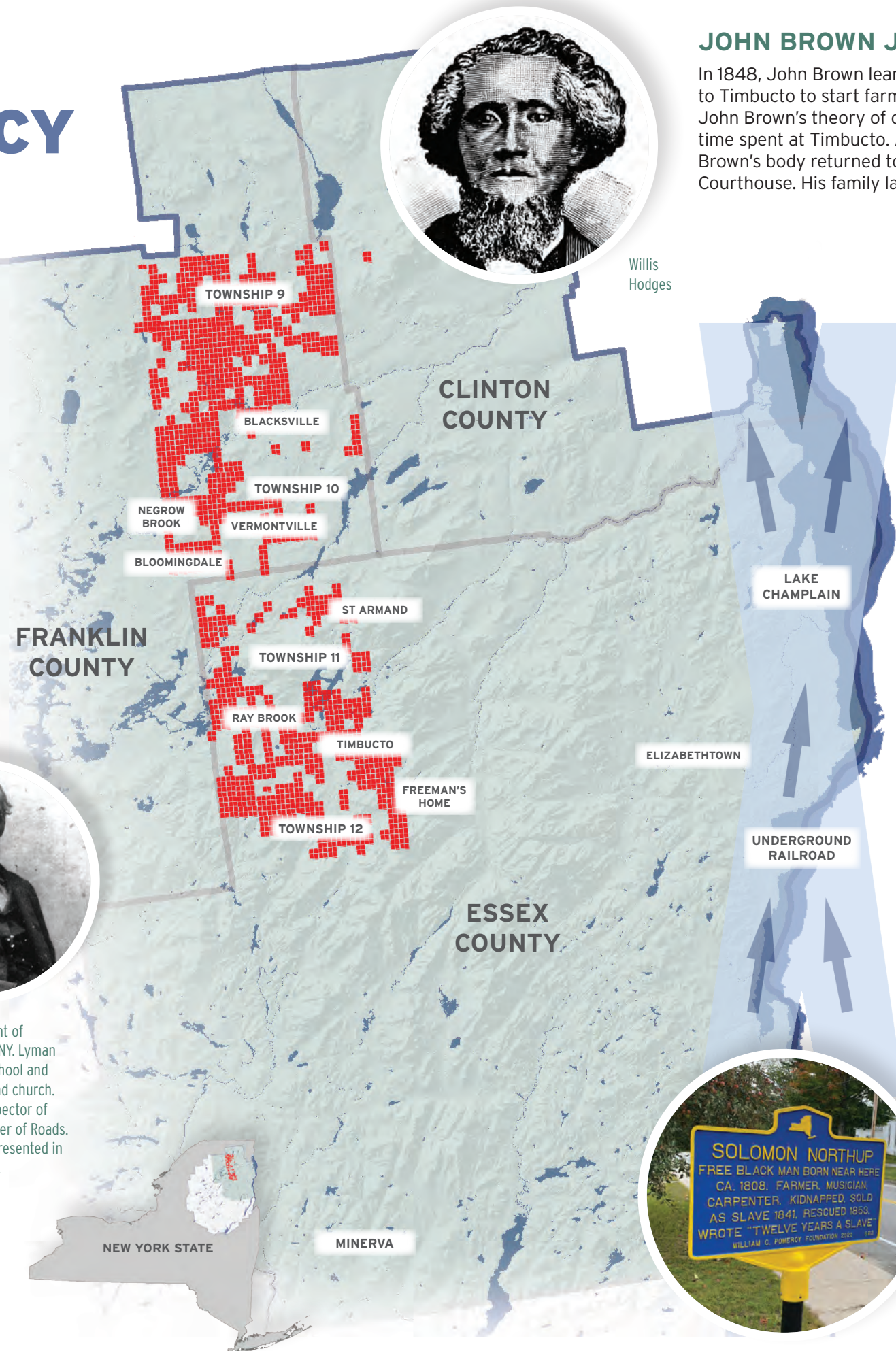
**Why the Adirondacks?** Suffragists chose this region for its proximity to a major corridor on the Underground Railroad, its safe distance from the south and its proximity to the urban centers like New York City where many of these men currently lived. While some did move north to settle the land and start farming, most owned the land purely for strategic purposes.

Records indicate that these Black suffrage settlements were called: **Timbucto, Blacksville, Bloomingdale (Vermontville), Ray Brook, Freeman's Home, Township 9, St. Armand, and Negrow Brook/Negro Hill.**

In 1846, the NYS Constitutional Convention proposed an amendment to repeal the \$250 property requirement. Sadly, New Yorkers voted this amendment down.



Lyman Eppes, resident of Timbucto from Troy, NY. Lyman formed a Sabbath school and choir, town library and church. Eppes was made Inspector of Elections and Overseer of Roads. The Eppses were represented in North Elba until 1942.



## JOHN BROWN JOINS THE MOVEMENT

In 1848, John Brown learned of the Black suffrage settlements in the Adirondacks, and moved to Timbucto to start farming and assist the Black suffragists who lacked farming experience. John Brown's theory of creating free lands controlled by people of color was born in his time spent at Timbucto. After his death sentence for the famous raid in Harper's Ferry, John Brown's body returned to the North Country where he laid in state at the Elizabethtown Courthouse. His family laid his body to rest on his farm, which is now a state historic site.



John Brown

**"Do not let anyone forget the vast importance of sustaining the very best character for honesty, truth, industry, and faithfulness. I hope everyone will be determined not to merely conduct as well as the whites, but to set them an example in all things."**

John Brown to Willis Hodges (January 1849) -  
Founder of Blacksville from Brooklyn, NY

## THE UNDERGROUND RAILROAD

New York was an important link in the Underground Railroad, particularly due to its connections to Canada via waterway. The **Lake Champlain Corridor** provided safe and speedy transport towards emancipation. The Champlain Corridor represented the final leg of a long journey to freedom for many enslaved people seeking freedom, and the eight Black suffrage settlements represented one of many possible safe havens for a new beginning.

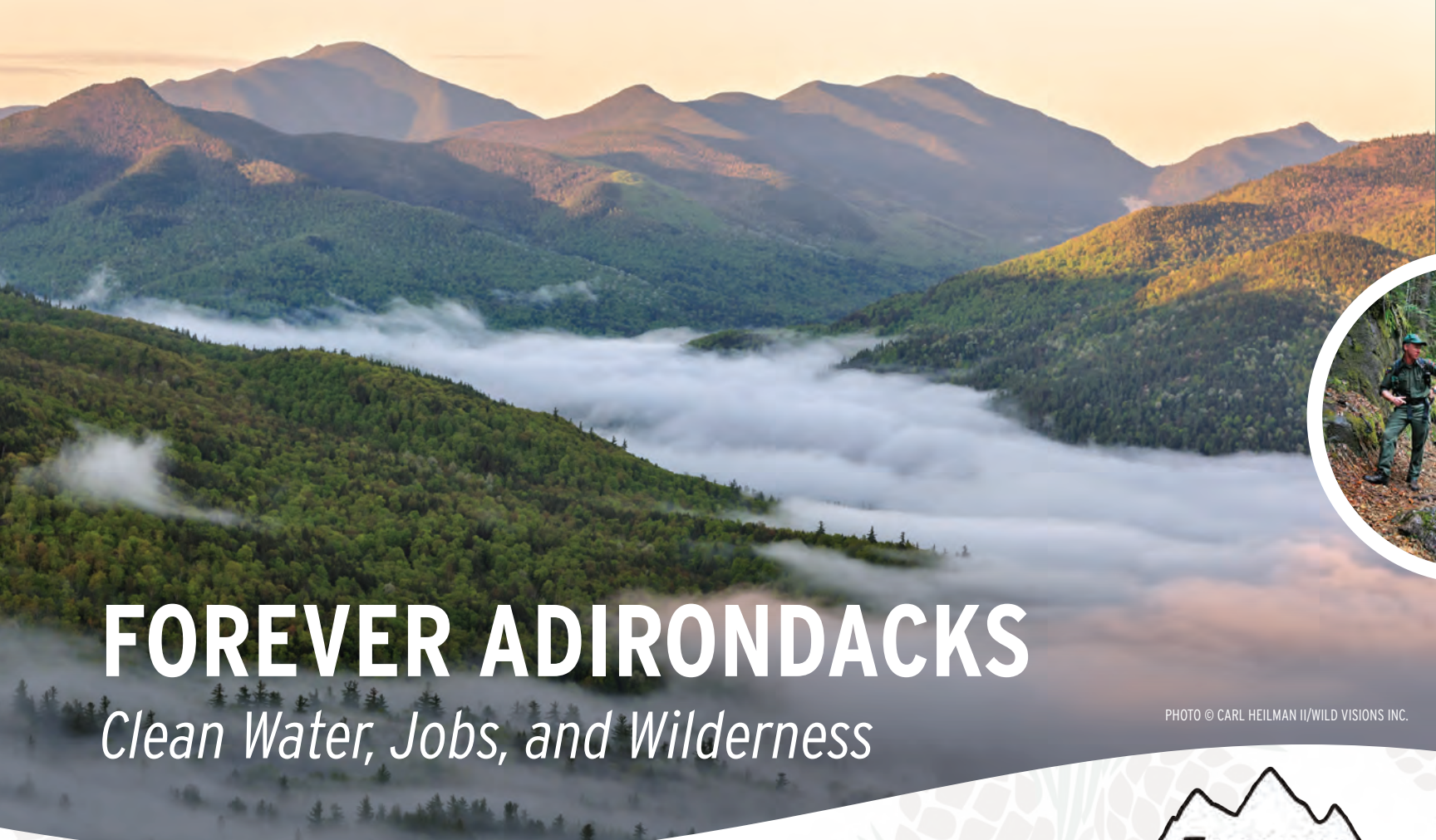
## SOLOMON NORTHUP

Born and raised in Minerva, NY, American Abolitionist Solomon Northup is famous for writing the novel **"Twelve Years a Slave."** As the son of a formerly enslaved man and a free woman of color, Northup was a businessman, owning a horse team and employing two laborers to bring timber from the Adirondack region south to Troy, by way of Lake Champlain and the canal. He was also very talented as a musician. While touring in Washington, D.C. as a musician in the mid-1930's, Northup was kidnapped and sold into slavery. He was shipped to New Orleans under the label of "fugitive slave." Over the course of twelve years, he managed to get word of his kidnapping back to New York, where state law provided aid to free New York citizens who had been kidnapped and sold into slavery.

Northrup's experience underscored the need for these Black suffrage settlements. His writings and speaking tours following his kidnapping were profoundly influential to the abolitionist movement in the mid-to-late 1800's.







# FOREVER ADIRONDACKS

Clean Water, Jobs, and Wilderness

PHOTO © CARL HEILMAN II/WILD VISIONS INC.



PHOTO: NANCIE BATTAGLIA

## AARON MAIR

Director of the Forever Adirondacks Campaign:

Aaron joined the Adirondack Council in May 2021. He is a national wilderness advocate and environmental justice pioneer who has worked over the last 40 years in the spaces of health, environment, climate change disparities, and park protection. He is an urban environmental activist and a regional and national environmental justice organizer and strategist who has advised two presidents and Congress, and served on the national board of directors of the Sierra Club as its 57th president.

**New York's Adirondack Park is a national treasure but is threatened.**



We must act now to preserve it and build a better future for visitors and residents. Aaron Mair, as Director of the Forever Adirondacks Campaign, will raise awareness across New York State and the nation of the need to fund clean water, jobs, and wilderness protection in the Adirondack Park.

### PROTECTING CLEAN WATER

The Park has more than 2,800 large lakes and ponds, 1,500 miles of rivers, 30,000 miles of brooks and streams, and billions of trees. Its protected forests sequester carbon and replace it with oxygen, help fight climate change, filter our drinking water, and provide the clear air we breathe, and keep our rivers and streams cool enough for native trout and salmon to survive.

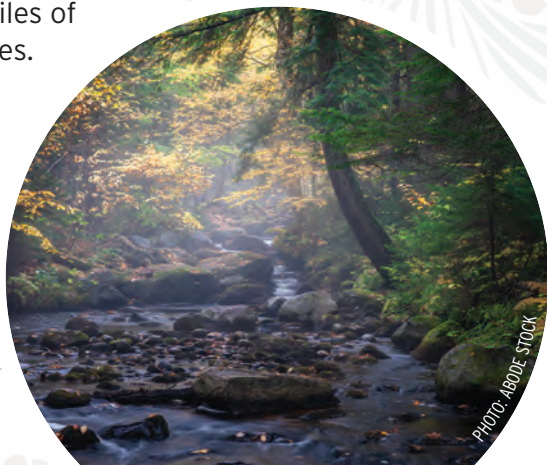


PHOTO: ABODE STOCK



Forest Rangers are asking the state to hire additional rangers

**"Aaron Mair has been at the forefront of the national movement for environmental justice. What good news that he is bringing his passion and expertise to bear on the six million acres inside the Blue Line, where I have no doubt he will make a tremendous difference!"**

**- Bill McKibben, Environmental author, climate activist/expert, and Adirondack Park resident**

### INVESTING IN NEW ADIRONDACK JOBS

The Adirondack Park's 130,000 year-round residents and 130 communities need state and federal investments to upgrade green infrastructure; to double and diversify the Forest Ranger force; to put people to work, foster more vibrant communities, and preserve the Park's clean water and wilderness.

The Park can expand job opportunities and build a sustainable year-round population with new investments in improved housing, education, childcare, visitor management, cell service, and broadband communications infrastructure.

### PRESERVING WILDERNESS

The Adirondack Park is home to 90% of all motor-free Wilderness from Maine to Georgia and irreplaceable wildlife such as moose, trout, and loon. The wilderness should be managed and enjoyed sustainably. The Park needs funding to address overuse and protect the Whitney Estate and Follensby Pond properties.



PHOTO: LARRY MASTER, MASTERIMAGES.ORG

### FUNDING SCIENCE

Resources for science, climate monitoring, acid rain research, and restoration have been cut significantly. They must be restored and expanded to protect nature and public health.

### ADIRONDACK GREEN NEW DEAL

A Green New Deal for the Adirondack region would improve the quality of life by funding community-centered development, expanded housing options, better wilderness protection, clean water, and a welcoming, safe environment for all. Better visitor-management would help spread out economic benefits and relieve congestion in crowded communities.

Renewable energy, green transportation, and climate-smart farm projects would build the economy in ways that complement Park protection. More long-term rental housing and reasonable purchase options would help provide affordable living spaces for new residents, young families, and professionals.



L-R: Adirondack Diversity Initiative Executive Director Nicky Hylton-Patterson, former Adirondack Park Agency General Counsel Bill Kissel, and Aaron Mair at a John Brown Lives! event