

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### **Legislature Chairwoman April N.M. Baskin Presents 2024 Black Doll Exhibit at Buffalo's Downtown Central Library**

*Special Opening Presentation - Thursday, February 1 features Zandra Cunningham, Buffalo native, skincare expert and founder of Zandra Beauty*

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(Buffalo, NY) Erie County Legislature Chairwoman April N.M. Baskin announced today that the fifth annual Black Doll Exhibit will be presented at the Downtown Central Library, 1 Lafayette Square, from Thursday, February 1 to Tuesday, April 9. Each year, doll collector and expert Lisa Jacobs-Watson curates a collection of dolls to express themes of perseverance, empowerment, pride, and creativity. This year's theme is *Recognizing Royalty*. Over twenty Black and Brown dolls selected for the display will be dressed to symbolize individualism and acceptance.

"I am elated to celebrate the 5th Annual Buffalo Black Doll Exhibit. My office has been privileged to sponsor this event since 2019 under the leadership of one of Buffalo's finest doll collectors, Lisa Jacobs-Watson," **said Chairwoman Baskin**. "As I look back on Mrs. Jacobs-Watson's expertise in curating doll exhibitions that celebrate and empower the beauty found in women of color, I can't help but to think of all of the young women who have found inspiration and self-love in our event over these past five years. Over the years we have successfully presented a custom coloring book featuring Buffalo's Black female civic leaders, and provided a platform for local icons like author Connie Porter and beauty guru Zandra Cunningham to tell their experiences in self-admiration as Black women. I thank my colleagues in the County Legislature, the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library, doll curator Lisa Jacobs-Watson and all community partners who make this annual event possible."

"I am excited to once again share part of my doll collection in celebration of Black History Month. I am constantly inspired by changes in the doll industry that celebrate ethnic beauty. More than ever before, there are opportunities to create, purchase, and play with dolls that represent Black culture and its rise to success against all odds," **Jacobs-Watson said**.

"The hope with this year's theme of *Recognizing Royalty* is for young girls to view themselves as a princess who is bound to become a queen! This year's showcase includes some dolls that pay homage to royal African heritage and others that present a cultural twist to traditional fairy tale characters. I am happy to create a display that encourages a bridge between playtime and learning. I believe that girls see their worth in dolls that look like them. Dolls provide a way for children to strengthen their imagination and build self-esteem through fun learning. My partnership with Chairwoman April Baskin and the Buffalo & Erie County Public Library is a chance to share the benefits that dolls can offer when exploring our history and our future. I am grateful for the opportunity," **Jacobs-Watson continued.**

A special opening presentation ceremony will take place on Thursday, February 1 at 5:30 p.m. at the Downtown Central Library. Free and open to the public, the guest speaker is 23-year-old Zandra Cunningham, a Buffalo native and the founder of Zandra Beauty, a plant-based skincare company. Cunningham started developing her beauty brand at 9 years old, and she has been recognized by *Entrepreneur* magazine as one of the youngest and most successful business owners in the U.S.! She has also been featured on *TODAY* and *ABC News* television programs.

The Downtown Central Library is open:  
Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. – 7 p.m.  
Friday and Saturday from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.  
Sunday from 12 noon – 5 p.m.  
The Library is closed on federal holidays, including Presidents Day, Monday, February 19.

For more details, call the Library System at 716-858-8900 or visit [www.BuffaloLib.org](http://www.BuffaloLib.org).

Interviews and photos are available by request.

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