



MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN

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**MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN CALLS ON THE NFTA TO RENAME THE
UTICA STREET NFTA TRANSIT STATION AFTER THE NATIONALLY RECOGNIZED
BLACK ARCHITECT, ROBERT T. COLES, WHO DESIGNED IT**

Robert Coles was a Buffalo resident and acclaimed architect who courageously championed the use of public spaces as a means to achieving racial equity

Buffalo, NY—Today, Mayor Byron W. Brown sent a letter to the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority's Board of Commissioners requesting they rename the Utica Street Transit Station to honor Robert T. Coles, the Black Architect and Buffalo resident who designed the station and passed away this past May.

Mayor Brown wrote, "Mr. Coles was widely acknowledged as a leader, innovator and trailblazer in both local and national architectural circles. Naming a station—one that he designed—in his memory would ensure that his public legacy leaves a lasting mark and serves as a continuing inspiration in the community he lived in and loved so much."

There are fewer than ten public spaces named after prominent Black persons in the City of Buffalo and across the country the lack of monuments and memorials to specific Black leaders has become a subject of national attention. The fact that there are far less memorials to Black individuals in Buffalo than there should be, especially in light of the prominent role Black residents have played in shaping our local and national history and culture, must be addressed. Renaming the Utica Street Station to honor Robert T. Coles and placing the appropriate interpretative signage and materials will be a critical step in addressing this disparity. By using Buffalo's public spaces to honor the history and contributions of Black people they can serve as a means of furthering dialogues around racial equity and the importance of Black artists, thinkers, clergy, inventors, architects, government leaders, educators and others who are critical to understanding Buffalo, New York State, and our nation's diverse heritage.

Robert Coles, who was born and raised in Buffalo, graduated with a master's in architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in 1955 and returned to Buffalo after studying abroad in 1961 to open his own firm. At the time of his death, his was the oldest Black owned architectural firm in New York State. His distinguished career included teaching positions at the University of Kansas and Carnegie Mellon University. He was a founding member of the National Organization for Minority Architects and in 1994 was named to the College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects. Other notable buildings he designed in Buffalo include the JFK Community Center, the Frank E. Merriweather Jr. Library, and the University at Buffalo's Alumni Arena.

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