Sacred Ground and Storied Eyes

Timeline: Eatonville Rising

From founding to Eatonville Rising — 140 years of incorporation, culture and preservation, and the 90th anniversary of Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

1887 FOUNDED

17 MILESTONES

2027 EATONVILLE RISING

1887 **Eatonville is incorporated in the State of Florida on August 15 — the first incorporated African American municipality in the United States.**

1897 Robert Hungerford Normal and Industrial School is founded, becoming one of Florida's leading educational institutions for African Americans.

1937 **Zora Neale Hurston publishes *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, immortalizing Eatonville in American literature.**

1987 Preserve the Eatonville Community, Inc. (P.E.C.) is founded — initially an advocacy organization focused on preservation strategies, including an historic survey of the town and opposing a "community-busting" road-widening project.

1990 In January, P.E.C. launches the first annual Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts. In July, P.E.C. opens the Zora Neale Hurston National Museum of Fine Arts (The Hurston Museum).

1991 P.E.C. establishes the ZORA! National Planners, bringing together distinguished scholars, artists, and cultural leaders to guide the festival's vision.

1996 The Zora Neale Hurston Festival of the Arts and Humanities is recognized as part of the

1996 Atlanta Olympics Cultural Olympiad.

1998 After a 10-year advocacy campaign, P.E.C. is successful in its efforts to have an Eatonville Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

2020 The Town of Eatonville receives designation as a Florida Main Street community.

2023 Eatonville is featured on CBS Sunday Morning with Jane Pauley, bringing national attention to preservation efforts and the historic Hungerford property.

2024 The National Trust for Historic Preservation names Eatonville one of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places. Orange County Government invests $1.3 million to encourage marquee arts and cultural blockbuster events in Orange County.

2025 The 36th annual ZORA! Festival celebrates "Placemaking — Exploring Its Implication in a 21st Century Context" and continues its national growth, welcoming audiences from across the country and around the world.

2026 The 37th annual ZORA! Festival celebrates "Hurston, History & Heritage: Commemorating America 250."

Aug 2026 **P.E.C. officially launches Eatonville Rising: *Sacred Ground and Storied Eyes* — A Celebration of Two American Milestones, introduced at the Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival and launched nationally at the NABJ Convention & Career Fair in Atlanta.**

2027 **P.E.C. presents Eatonville Rising, a six-event cultural heritage tourism series celebrating two American milestones: 140 years of Eatonville's incorporation and the 90th anniversary of the publication of *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, funded in part by Orange County Government through the Arts & Cultural Affairs Program.**

Join us as we honor the past, celebrate the present and build for the future.

EATONVILLE RISING · 2027