



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
ADAM J. BELLO
MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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**MONROE COUNTY EXECUTIVE ADAM BELLO UNVEILS NEW
FREDERICK DOUGLASS AIRFIELD OBSERVATORY AND EXHIBITS
AT FREDERICK DOUGLASS GREATER ROCHESTER
INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT**

Redesigned observation deck exhibits the life and legacy of civil rights leader and longtime Rochester & Monroe County resident Frederick Douglass

ROCHESTER, NY — Monroe County Executive Adam Bello today unveiled the new Frederick Douglass Airfield Observatory at the Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport. Joining him were local dignitaries and Kenneth Morris, founder and president of Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives (FDI), and a direct descendant of Frederick Douglass.

The redesigned observation deck has been transformed into a high-tech visitor center designed to introduce visitors to Douglass and the Rochester community that he called home. The new observatory showcases adaptable exhibits and cutting-edge interactive learning tools.

The Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport airfield now features a large welcome sign celebrating Douglass for all departing and arriving passengers to see.

“Frederick Douglass holds an unparalleled place of prominence in the history of Rochester and Monroe County. We proudly honor his contributions and his connections to our community through these exhibits,” **said County Executive Bello.**

“This tribute to Douglass is possible thanks to Governor Kathy Hochul, the New York State Department of Transportation, our New York State delegation, Senators Schumer and Gillibrand, and Congressman Joe Morelle.”

Frederick Douglass, a towering figure in American history, escaped slavery and became a leading abolitionist, orator, writer, and statesman. He lived in Rochester from 1847 to 1872, where he published his influential newspaper, *The North Star*, and remained a prominent voice for civil rights and women's suffrage. His legacy extends far beyond the abolition of slavery, encompassing a tireless fight for equality and justice for all, leaving an indelible mark on the struggle for human rights in the United States and inspiring future generations to continue the pursuit of a more just society.

The observation deck is part of the \$32 million airport renovation project that was funded by a \$27 million New York State Department of Transportation grant and a \$5 million federal Bipartisan Infrastructure & Jobs Law grant.

“Today we honor the enduring legacy of Frederick Douglass and reaffirm our community’s commitment to justice, resilience, and hope,” **said Congressman Joe Morelle.** “This observatory will greet every visitor with a message about who we are—and the responsibility we all share to keep marching forward in pursuit of equality and freedom.”

“The Frederick Douglass Greater Rochester International Airport is relied upon by Rochesterians and visitors alike to get from Point A to Point B. I’m proud to support this meaningful investment and celebrate the newly redesigned observation deck, paying tribute to the extraordinary legacy of Frederick Douglass,” **said State Senator Jeremy Cooney.** “Thanks to County Executive Bello, the NYS Department of Transportation, our state delegation, and our federal partners for helping to make this possible and maintain our airport as a symbol of pride for our community.”

“It’s been my honor to help develop the Frederick Douglass Airfield Observatory,” **said Kenneth B. Morris, Jr., president of Frederick Douglass Family Initiatives and a member of the airport’s exhibit committee.** “The installation provides an opportunity for Rochester-area residents—especially students—and for travelers passing through one of the city’s most visible gateways to connect with a story that shaped this community and changed the nation. For many young people, it will be their first genuine encounter with the life and legacy of Frederick Douglass and the Douglass family in Rochester. We hope that this installation sparks curiosity, conversation, and a deeper understanding of Rochester’s pivotal place in the American struggle for freedom and human rights.”

“The legacy of Frederick Douglass in the City of Rochester, where he spent 25 years of his extraordinary life, is alive and is a vibrant symbol of courage and truth for people across the globe,” **said State Department of Transportation Commissioner Marie Therese Dominguez.** “The Frederick Douglass Airfield Observatory, located at the airport named in his honor, offers visitors and travelers an opportunity to pause and reflect on the importance of the principles that Frederick Douglas lived by including standing firm against injustice. The Observatory also highlights how airports can serve a greater purpose beyond connecting people to their destinations - as a link to our nation’s history and heritage - and the New York State Department of Transportation is honored to have played a role in this groundbreaking achievement.”

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