



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Velmanette Montgomery

## Senator Montgomery celebrates the Co-Naming of Monroe Street in Brooklyn in honor of John Steptoe, Award Winning Children's Book Author and Illustrator

SENATOR VELMANETTE MONTGOMERY August 27, 2016

| ISSUE: **AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, EDUCATION**





Senator Montgomery, Councilwoman Darlene Mealy, Community Board 3 Chairperson Tremaine Wright and Community Board 3 District Manager Henry Butler join the John Lewis Steptoe Estate, family and friends to celebrate the street co-naming of Monroe Street between Ralph and Howard Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn in honor of John Lewis Steptoe, renowned African-American Children's Book Author and Illustrator.

John Lewis Steptoe, author, and illustrator of award-winning children's books was born in Brooklyn, NY on September 14, 1950, and lived on Monroe Street in Bedford-Stuyvesant. In 1969, at the age of 18, his first book 'Stevie', a story based on his experiences growing up in his childhood home at 840 Monroe Street, received national attention when it was published in its entirety in LIFE magazine. It was hailed as "a new kind of book for black children."

In his 20-year career, Mr. Steptoe illustrated 16 picture books, ten of which he also wrote. He received honors and accolades including the American Library Association's Caldecott Honor for children's book illustration for: *The Story of Jumping Mouse* in 1985 and Mufaro's *Beautiful Daughters* in 1988, He also received the Coretta Scott King Award for Illustration, for *Mother Crocodile* (text by Rosa Guy) in 1982, and Mufaro's *Beautiful Daughters* in 1988.

While all of John Steptoe's work deals with aspects of the African diaspora experience, Mufaro's *Beautiful Daughters* an African Cinderella story was acknowledged by reviewers and critics as a breakthrough. While accepting the Boston Globe/Horn Book Award for Illustration he said, "I am not an exception to the rule among my race of people I am the rule. By that I mean there are a great many others like me where I come from."

Since his death there has been an exhibit of this artwork at the Transit Museum, his name has been placed in the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens Celebrity Path, Public School 181 has been named the John Lewis Steptoe School of the 21 Century, His name is etched in glass at the African American Heritage Center at the Macon Branch of the Brooklyn Public Library, his artwork hangs in the Raymond Bush playground in Bedford Stuyvesant, 'Mufaro's *Beautiful Daughters*' has been adapted as a play traveling nationwide and was chosen by the children's librarians at the New York Public Library as one of the '100 Great Children's Books/100 Years' He was an inspirational artist, a visionary who highlighted the best of Bedford-Stuyvesant/ African American culture with pride.