



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

John A. DeFrancisco

Pauline Copes Johnson

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Women of
DISTINCTION
HONORING WOMEN IN NEW YORK

Pauline Copes Johnson

Pauline Copes Johnson is the great-great-grandniece of Harriet Tubman, the famous American abolitionist and conductor on the Underground Railroad. She was born and raised in Auburn, New York, and graduated from West High School in 1945.

Upon her graduation, Ms. Johnson was hired by the New York Telephone Company as the first African-American telephone operator in Cayuga County. It was through her work as an operator that she learned about the NAACP and became a member.

Along her journey, Ms. Johnson developed a passion for speaking about her famous Aunt Harriet. She has served as a docent at the Harriet Tubman Home in Auburn, and traveled to several states across the country to give presentations at schools and community centers on the life of Harriet Tubman. Her unwavering mission is to uphold her aunt's legacy and to teach the importance of history.

Ms. Johnson was very instrumental in helping preserve the life and legacy of her Aunt Harriet through various advocacy efforts. She lobbied for the redesign of the \$20 bill to feature the image of Harriet Tubman. Additionally, she promoted the U.S. Department of Interior's efforts to establish the Harriet Tubman National Historic Park.

Ms. Johnson is an active member of the Thompson Memorial AME Zion Church in Auburn, where she plays piano every Sunday and serves as Choir Director. She is an active member of the Harriet Tubman Booster Club. Through her life's work, Ms. Johnson has demonstrated an unwavering passion for preserving the rich history of her family and our community, creating positive change on the local, state and national levels.