



# 1-Page Summary, CT Freedom Trail Application

## *Judge Constance Baker Motley Preserve, Chester, CT*

September, 2018

*The Judge Constance Baker Motley Preserve* at 99 Cedar Lake Road in Chester, CT honors a great American woman who advanced civil rights, women's rights, human rights and American jurisprudence. Her role as a pre-eminent civil rights attorney in the South for the NAACP Legal Defense Fund from 1946-1966, and her service on the Federal bench in the Southern District of NY (1966-2005) are a testament to one person's extraordinary legal achievements on behalf of freedom and equality. The subject of this application to the CT Freedom Trail—the 6.7-acre *Motley Preserve*—was an original part of the seasonal Motley homestead in Chester, CT used regularly by the Motleys for 40 years (1965-2005). This land was purchased by the Chester Land Trust (CLT) in 2016 and dedicated as a public *Preserve* by CLT in 2017.

**Judge Motley's Achievements for Freedom:** As lead attorney enforcing the landmark 1954 Supreme Court decision, *Brown vs. Board of Education*, Constance Motley litigated over 200 desegregation cases across 11 Southern states that resulted in the integration of black students in every major southern university. Her additional courtroom work for lunch counter sit-in protesters in NC (1960), Freedom Riders in MS (1961), and for Martin Luther King in Albany, GA (1962) and Birmingham, AL (1963), turned the tide for King and the civil rights movement at a crucial time. Her legal interventions also led to passage of the 1964 Voting Rights Act and the 1965 Civil Rights Act. She continued to expand justice and equality as a Federal Court judge whose rulings increased access rights of female sports reporters, the rights of anti-war protesters and workers, the equality of women and the humane treatment of prisoners.

**Judge Motley's Firsts:** Constance Motley's litany of "firsts" spans 59 years of public service (1946-2005). She was the first female attorney for the NAACP-Legal Defense Fund, and the first African American woman to argue before the U.S. Supreme Court. She was the first female African American NY State Senator (1964) and the first female President of the Manhattan Borough Council (1965). In 1966, she became the first African American woman to become a Federal Judge, and a Chief Federal Judge in 1982.

**Judge Motley's Awards:** Constance Baker Motley was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, NY in 1993, and into the Connecticut Women's Hall of Fame in 1998. She was awarded the Presidential Citizens Medal in 2001. With Honorary Doctorates from 30 universities, her remarkable life was chronicled in a 2012 PBS documentary *Justice is a Black Woman*, produced by Quinnipiac Univ.

**Judge Motley's Connecticut Roots:** Born and raised in New Haven, Constance Motley maintained deep roots in Connecticut. Between 1965-2005 she and her husband Joel Motley II and their son, Joel III, lived in their seasonal Chester, CT home at 99 Cedar Lake Road. Weekends, holidays and vacations, family reunions, moot court practice site, destination point for civil rights leaders, and her own retirement location, the Motley Chester home had a significant place in her life. The new *Motley Preserve* (6.7 acres of the original 8-acre Motley property) was purchased by Chester Land Trust from the Motley family in 2016. It was dedicated in formal ceremony with the family and the Land Trust on June 24, 2017. It serves now as public open space for individuals to walk, relax and learn about a great American trailblazer for freedom. The *Preserve* is directly across the road from the former Motley home, now privately owned. [Note: Motley's childhood home at 8 Garden St., New Haven, is already on the CT Freedom Trail.]

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