

**BEFORE THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON**

PROCLAMATION NO. 2024-052

Proclaiming June 19, 2024, as Juneteenth Day in Multnomah County, Oregon.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Finds:

1. June 19th, 1865 is a day that is nationally recognized as Juneteenth Day, commemorating the emancipation of enslaved Black men, women, and children in the United States, one hundred and fifty-nine years ago.
2. Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Liberation Day, or Emancipation Day, marks the day when Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, arrived in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, to enforce the end of slavery, two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln.
3. Despite the claims that many enslaved people did not know they were free, the fact is that many enslaved people not only knew they would be freed but anticipated their freedom and began celebrating New Year's Eve that very night as "Watch Night" knowing the Emancipation Proclamation was to take effect on Jan. 1, 1863. Many enslaved and free Black people stayed up waiting for the Union Army to arrive to enforce the proclamation. Up until this day in 1863, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day were once the two days of the year that enslaved people dreaded the most for it meant that they could be spending their last night with their families and friends before any one of them could be sold away, never to see their loved ones again. Today, for many Black Americans, the eve of the New Year represents the eve of new beginnings and new opportunities in the year ahead.
4. Juneteenth is a day of reflection, remembrance, and celebration of Black American freedom, heritage, and culture. It is significant because Texas was the last state in the Union where Black men, women, and children were enslaved and where they were finally forced to be set free legally. The enforced emancipation of these men, women, and children from slavery marks the official end of legal chattel slavery in the United States. Juneteenth also serves as a reminder of the struggles and triumphs of Black Americans throughout history and their ongoing fight for the many freedoms that are promised to every American citizen - racial equality and justice - but are rarely given freely and almost never prevail for the Black people in this country.

5. Black American communities have played and continue to play an integral role in shaping the history, culture, and prosperity of Multnomah County and Oregon. From the early pioneers who settled in the Pacific Northwest to the leaders of the civil rights movement, Black Americans have contributed to every aspect of society, including education, politics, the arts, business, and social justice. Despite the abolition of slavery, the elimination of Jim Crow laws, and the victories that came out of the fight for civil and human rights, Black Americans continue to face systemic racism, discrimination, and social injustices in various forms, including economic inequality, unequal access to education and healthcare, police brutality, and mass incarceration. Juneteenth serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggle for racial equity and the need for continued efforts to address systemic racism, bias, and unfair treatment and the need to promote social justice.
6. As we gather to commemorate this significant occasion, let us remember the importance of honoring and remembering our ancestors. It is crucial to acknowledge that we were enslaved longer than we have been free. The emancipation of enslaved Black men, women, and children 159 years ago marked a pivotal moment in our history. Following this, there was a brief period of Reconstruction, where it seemed that Black men, women, and children would be treated equally and fairly. However, this dream was quickly snatched away with the introduction of Jim Crow laws, which were designed to condemn Black families and individuals to generational poverty and limited opportunities.
7. We honor our ancestors, not only by remembering their struggles and sacrifices, but by continuing their fight for justice and equality. Their resilience and perseverance have laid the groundwork for the progress we see today and we must continue this work. Anyone who believes in truth, justice, and equality would find reason to celebrate the ending of chattel slavery and honor our ancestors who lived, died, and survived the evil and peculiar institution of chattel slavery.
8. There are those who choose to remain willfully ignorant about the significance and importance of Juneteenth and who have oddly taken the holiday as a personal offense or threat to their history or culture, not realizing that this is American history. Woefully, these very same people will carry on the tradition of hate, racism, intolerance, and madness that has permeated throughout this land since the unlawful and inhumane colonization of these Indigenous lands by Europeans, but we must forge ahead toward the future and multiply our efforts to create a more just, fair and inclusive city, county, state, country and world.
9. Despite the adversities our ancestors faced, we face and our children born and unborn will face in the future, we must look at how far we have come and continue to find joy in being alive and being who we are, unapologetically. As we stand here today, we must continue to look forward and imagine how far we will be 159 years from now. The path to true equality and justice is long, but by

continuing to honor our past, understand our present, and strive for a better future, we will ensure that the legacy of our ancestors leads to a world where all individuals are treated with dignity and respect. Let us commit ourselves to this ongoing journey and to building a future that fulfills the dreams of those who came before us, to ourselves and to our current and future descendants.

10. Multnomah County is committed to honoring and celebrating Juneteenth as a day of reflection, education, and community empowerment. By recognizing Juneteenth Day, Multnomah County reaffirms its commitment to eradicating racism and anti-Blackness in our institutions and departments by promoting racial equity, diversity, and inclusion and to working towards a more just and equitable society for all employees.

The Multnomah County Board of Commissioners Proclaims:

June 19, 2024, as Juneteenth Day in Multnomah County, Oregon, and encourages all residents to participate in Juneteenth events and activities, to reflect on the significance of this historic day, and to continue working towards racial equity and social justice.

ADOPTED this 13th day of June, 2024.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

Jessica Vega Pederson, Chair

REVIEWED:
JENNY M. MADKOUR, COUNTY ATTORNEY
FOR MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON

By:

Jenny M. Madkour, County Attorney

SUBMITTED BY: Jesse Beason, District 2 Commissioner