



CITY OF KIRKLAND
City Manager's Office
123 Fifth Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033
425-587-3007

MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager
From: Joy Johnston, Interim Communications Program Manager
Date: June 4, 2021
Subject: Juneteenth Proclamation

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Mayor proclaim June 19, 2021 as Juneteenth in Kirkland, Washington.

BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Juneteenth recognizes the day of June 19, 1865, when enslaved African Americans in Texas were informed by Major General Gordon Granger that they were "free," ending 246 years of chattel slavery. This was two and a half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation which had become official January 1, 1863.

Today, Juneteenth commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement. It is a day, a week, and in some areas, a month marked with celebrations, special events, picnics, and family gatherings. It is a time for reflection and rejoicing. It is a time for assessment and self-improvement and for planning the future. In cities across the country, people of all races, nationalities and religions are encouraged to join together to truthfully acknowledge a period in U.S. history that shaped and continues to influence our society today.

Despite the over 155 years have passed since chattel slavery was officially ended in the United States, people of African descent continue to have to fight to dismantle anti-Black systems and policies of oppression in our country. The tragic killing of George Floyd by a police officer on May 25, 2020 in Minneapolis, MN sparked national dialog about structural racism. Numerous marches and rallies in Kirkland called for an end to structural racism and for the City of Kirkland to demonstrate that Black lives matter.

On August 4, 2020 the City passed legislation (R-5434) related to examining and dismantling institutional and structural racism in Kirkland. The City has committed significant funding to support many actions outlined in the legislation. Some of actions started immediately as part of the Early Action Initiative and will continue as part of the 2021 Community Safety Initiative. For more information, visit www.kirklandwa.gov/5434.

Additionally, May 31, 2021 marked 100 years since a violent mob raided, firebombed, and destroyed approximately 35 square blocks of the thriving Black neighborhood of Greenwood in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Homes, businesses, and churches were burned. In all, as many as 300 Black Americans were killed, and nearly 10,000 were left destitute and homeless. This tragedy, which

came to be known as the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre, was a horrific example of the inequity and racial terror that has continued to exist in the United States. News about the massacre was wiped from many official sources for decades. Juneteenth provides an opportunity to reflect on and face the many people and events that have shaped history in the United States, not just in terms of tragedy, but also to celebrate the resilience and courage of those who have survived tragedy, have rebuilt, and continue to fight for justice.

By proclaiming June 19, 2021 as Juneteenth in Kirkland, the City reaffirms its strong commitment to doing the hard and necessary work to fight injustice and transform this country into one that is more equitable for all.

In honor of Juneteenth, the City of Kirkland is sponsoring an event, Eastside Honoring Juneteenth, along with the City of Redmond, Eastside Embrace, Eastside for All, and the Eastside Race and Leadership Coalition. The event takes place on Saturday, June 19, 2021 from 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 pm. at the Redmond Downtown Park.

Attending the City Council meeting to accept the proclamation will be Nikayla Rice, founder of Eastside Embrace, who may be accompanied by other community leaders.



A PROCLAMATION OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND

Proclaiming June 19, 2021 as "Juneteenth" in Kirkland, Washington

WHEREAS, Juneteenth recognizes and commemorates the day of June 19, 1865, when enslaved African Americans in Texas were informed by Major General Gordon Granger that they were "free," ending 246 years of chattel slavery; and

WHEREAS, though President Abraham Lincoln enacted the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, resistance to the Executive Order, as well as continued fighting in the state of Texas regarding the abolishment of slavery, significantly delayed the freedom of slaves; and

WHEREAS, on June 19, 1866, one year after Major Granger's announcement, the freed African American men and women in the state of Texas held the first "Juneteenth," or African American Independence Day celebration, and Juneteenth celebrations would later spread to all corners of the country; and

WHEREAS, for people of African descent in this country, Juneteenth is the closest occasion of a true "freedom day" to celebrate and the day is marked with special events, picnics, and family gatherings; and

WHEREAS, on May 13, 2021, Governor Jay Inslee signed House Bill 1016 declaring Juneteenth a state holiday in Washington and making June 19 a paid day off for state workers starting in 2022; and

WHEREAS, despite that over 155 years have passed since chattel slavery was officially ended in the United States, the nation continues to struggle with dismantling the lingering effects of discriminatory systems and structural racism in our country; and

WHEREAS, the murder of George Floyd by Minnesota police officers in 2020 sparked a national dialog and protests across the United States, including here in Kirkland, bringing continued inequities and injustices to the forefront of our collective conscience; and

WHEREAS, the City of Kirkland strives to create a Kirkland where Black people feel safe and respected and interpersonal, institutional and structural racism no longer exists and on August 4, 2020 the City passed Resolution R-5434 to examine and dismantle institutional and structural racism in Kirkland;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Penny Sweet, Mayor of Kirkland, on behalf of the City Council, do hereby proclaim June 19, 2021 as Juneteenth in Kirkland, Washington, recognizing its historical importance and calling on our community to join us in listening, reflecting and acting so that we can continue to make progress on the arduous journey toward achieve racial justice for all.

Signed this 15th day of June 2021

Penny Sweet, Mayor