

PERSONNEL & ANIMAL WELFARE

MOTION

In 1619, just over 400 years ago, the first enslaved Africans were brought to America, marking the beginning of the Trans-Atlantic slave trade. Black people were considered to be only 3/5 of a human being and were subjected to harsh and inhumane treatment as they were forced to perform arduous labor, deprived of an education, and were subjected to countless acts of violence against them. At its height, nearly four million Black people were enslaved as the United States of America profited off their suffering to become one of the most powerful nations in the world.

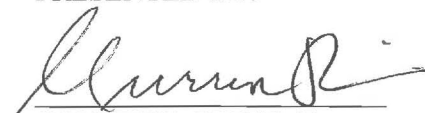
During the American Civil War – a battle that centered on the legality of slavery – President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, declaring “that all persons held as slaves within the rebellious states are, and henceforward shall be free.” In the majority of the country, Blacks who were enslaved were alerted of their new found freedom shortly after it was issued. However, this was not the case in Galveston, Texas where the message was not heard until June 19th, 1865, two years after the original proclamation. On June 19th, the news was met by both celebration and shock as many Blacks who were enslaved never imagined the day would come to fruition. As the years passed, June 19th became known as “Juneteenth” and became a day of celebration within the Black community to acknowledge how far they have come and how far there is to go in the quest for equality.

While Juneteenth is widely known within the Black community in the American South, nationally it is not recognized. In light of recent protests that have called for racial equity within the country in response to the unarmed killings of Black Americans at the hands of police like those of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and countless other Black Americans, there has been a new interest to commemorate, celebrate and acknowledge the historical significance of Juneteenth.

Here within the City of Los Angeles nearly half a million Black Angelenos call this City home. Their contributions to their communities are endless and vital to this City as they serve in various capacities as they are business owners, inventors, healthcare professionals, and educators. Because of this, it is with great importance that the City honors the historic contributions of Black Angelenos and Americans from the past, present, and future by establishing Juneteenth as a legal City holiday.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Chief Legislative Analyst, with assistance of the City Administrative Officer and the Civil and Human Rights Commission, to report on the historical importance and cultural impact of Juneteenth, and options for establishing Juneteenth as a legal holiday in the City of Los Angeles.

PRESENTED BY:


CURREN D. PRICE, JR.
Councilmember, 9th District


HERB J. WESSON, JR.
Councilmember, 10th District


MARQUEECE HARRIS-DAWSON
Councilmember, 8th District

SECONDED BY:


MITCH O'FARRELL
Councilmember, 13th District


PAUL KORETZ
Councilmember, 5th District

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