



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Vice Mayor Chappie Jones

SUBJECT: SEE BELOW

DATE: August 23, 2021

APPROVED:

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF THE RECOGNITION OF JUNETEENTH AS A CITY-OBSERVED HOLIDAY

RECOMMENDATION

Approve the Recognition of Juneteenth as a City-Observed Holiday effective June 19, 2022.

DISCUSSION

On November 2, 2020, Council Members Foley, Jimenez and I issued a memo to the Rules and Open Government Committee recommending designation of June 19th as a public holiday within the City of San José in order to recognize the ending of slavery in the United States. I am grateful for the leadership of the Federal Administration and for their action to reconcile America's disturbing past with racial minorities, specifically African Americans.

The recognition of Juneteenth as a City-observed holiday is long overdue. It aims to celebrate Juneteenth as the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States; a day which commemorates Black and African-American freedom and achievements, while encouraging continuous self-development and respect for all cultures.

Historically, while the Emancipation Proclamation freed enslaved people in Confederate states in 1863, it was not until June 19, 1865, over two years later, that many Black people still held in bondage in Texas were told that the order had freed them. Texas' isolation from the rest of the country kept Union soldiers from enforcing the message as rapidly there as they had been able to elsewhere. It was not until months later with the passage of the 13th Amendment that slavery was abolished on the federal level across the country, and not just in states that had aligned themselves with the Confederacy.

As a City rich in diversity, it is incumbent upon us to not just educate ourselves about the history of the Black and African American community, but to take bold actions moving forward and

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remove the systemic obstacles to success of all racial minority populations, specifically in the housing market, criminal justice system, and environment.

Because African-Americans are still fighting for equality and justice today, this holiday allows us as a City to reflect on our commitment to creating a nation that lives up to our American ideals of liberty and justice for all, regardless of race, color, or national origin. While there is still much more progress to be made, this milestone is an important hallmark in celebrating and honoring the contributions that Black and African Americans have made and continue to make in our City.