The Committee on Departmental Diversity and Pediatric Health Equity

Juneteenth National Independence Day

“That on the first day of January in the year of our Lord, one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State, or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.”

These words, written as part of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, led to the freedom of the 3.5 million enslaved African Americans in those states that had seceded from the US; “the rebellious states”. Confederate states actively in rebellion blocked the enforcement of this proclamation throughout the nation. It wasn’t until 2 years later, on June 19, 1865, that the 250,000 enslaved people of Confederate state of Texas (the farthest western state) would be granted their freedom by the presence of 2,000 Union troops who’d arrived in the Galveston Bay of Texas. This day would be marked as Juneteenth…. our country’s Second Independence Day.

Following the Emancipation Proclamation, the Thirteenth Amendment was passed by the Senate in April of 1864. President Lincoln had to work hard to get it passed through the House on January 31, 1865. It would be this Amendment that would then go on to end slavery in ALL of the US; “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”

This process for fulfilling the promise of justice, rights, and liberty, has been a continual one. It has required the persistence of hope, the strength of a people, and the collaboration of a nation. In all of our national celebrations of freedom, we are reminded that African Americans who were so important in those events, were not truly free and thus, the celebrations were not truly fully inclusive. Juneteenth provides us with an opportunity to increase the inclusivity of our national celebrations and it comes at no better time, when our society is still struggling to meet its ideals of equity. Today as we celebrate the making of Juneteenth a National Holiday (signed into law on June 17, 2021 by President Joseph Biden), we celebrate its representation of a resilience of a people and “the value of never giving up hope in uncertain times” as a nation. Although we recognize the continued needed efforts to right the wrongs from the 400 years of slavery, it is with that same resilience, strength, and perseverance of the idea that it is only through opportunity for ALL PEOPLE that we have true opportunity as a COLLECTIVE PEOPLE, and that equity in all facets of our society can only be achieved through embracing our diversity and supporting it through inclusivity.

Join us in celebrating this great step in our Nation’s history…the passing of THE JUNETEENTH NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE DAY ACT.

Happy first JUNETEENTH NATIONAL INDEPENDENCE DAY!!!!!
Further Reflection on the 13th Amendment:

Please consider this description of the Angola Prison Tower from the National Museum of African American History & Culture (https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/13th-amendment-us-constitution-passed): “It was through the exception in the Thirteen Amendment, “as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted,” that a new form of slavery developed in the 20th century. The Angola Prison guard tower, part of our Defending Freedom, Defining Freedom exhibition shares in the legacy of this post-Civil War incarceration practices. The tower belonged to the Louisiana State Penitentiary, originally a slave plantation on the banks of the Mississippi. After the Civil War, black codes and other discriminatory laws made it easy for local officials to arrest African Americans and other poor residents for minor infractions. Angola is one of the largest maximum-security prisons in the U.S. Samuel James, a major in the Confederate Army, bought the plantation land and secured the lease to run the state’s penitentiary. The prison cells were located on the old slave quarters. The prison officially opened in 1901 and drew some of its labor directly from the state’s prisons in a common post-Civil War penal labor practice known as convict-leasing that allowed private individuals to lease prisoners out for forced labors. Convicts built roads, erected levees, toiled in factories, or worked at any other task that needed labor. For some states convict labor became a major source of revenue. The prison tower remains a harsh reminder of the surveillance and segregation a largely black prison population faced.”

Potential Celebrations:

From Sacramento’s 18th annual Juenteenth Festival: We will celebrate in William Land Park from 11 to 6 pm on Saturday June 19th. Bring a lawn chair, grab a shade tree and celebrate the freeing of those enslaved in the United States of America. Today President Biden signed legislation making Juneteenth a national holiday. This is a good first step, acknowledgment is always the first step. 8 local artist will compete in this years Juneteenth Art Contest, Kings and Queens Rise will host basketball and golf skills camps and much more. Please come out and celebrate our history and the progress. (https://www.facebook.com/Sacramento-Juneteenth-Festival-138039652931859)

From The first annual 40 Acres Juneteenth Block Party (i.e. the organization owned by Kevin Johnson): A day-long FREE celebration of activities filled with art, music, food and entertainment in and around the 40 Acres Complex in Oak Park. WHERE IS IT? 40 Acres is located on the intersection of 35th Street / Broadway in Oak Park. WHAT TIME DOES IT START AND END? The event opens at 10am with main stage activities and vendors. The block party will conclude at 5pm.

The Main Stage will be located in the heart of the block party and filled with programming hosted by DJ Supe and Emcee Dru Burks. The entertainment filled day includes children’s programming, giveaways, cultural performances, gospel choirs, a Juneteenth talent contest, a barbershop haircut contest and featured musical performance by the “Remembering James Brown” musical group.