

Staff Summary for June 19-20, 2024

2. Juneteenth**Today's Item**Information Action

Recognize Juneteenth, celebrated annually on June 19, to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States.

Summary of Previous/Future Actions (N/A)**Background*****Origins of Juneteenth***

The Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, declaring that all slaves in the southern United States of America would be free. Due to confederate control, however, it wasn't until June 19, 1865 that over 250,000 enslaved people in Texas learned of their freedom, making it a significant day in history (Exhibit 1). As such, Juneteenth commemorates the end of slavery, recognizes the resilience and heritage of Black Americans, and provides a chance to reflect on a shared American history and the significance of freedom.

Through acknowledging Juneteenth, the Commission continues to celebrate the contributions of Black Americans, including to the conservation movement, while also recognizing the impacts of systemic racism on Black Americans throughout California's outdoor spaces.

Systemic Racism along California's Coastline

Experiences of Black Americans that settled in California taught our state that America's struggle for freedom did not conclude with the end of slavery, but continues to this day. For example, in 1922 public beaches in Santa Monica became increasingly inaccessible to Black communities. In 1927, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People worked to ensure public beaches in Santa Monica were accessible for all.

In 2008, a monument was established at Bay Street and Oceanfront Walk in Santa Monica called "A Place of Celebration and Pain" to honor the history of the beach as a historically important gathering place for the Black community, to recognize the efforts that have gone into ensuring it remains that way, and to recognize Nick Gabaldón, the first California documented surfer of African and Mexican American descent (Exhibit 2).

Legislation and Proclamations in Recognition of Juneteenth

On June 17, 2021, President Joe Biden designated Juneteenth as a U.S. federal holiday and, for the first time in California, in June 2023 Governor Gavin Newsom issued a proclamation declaring "Juneteenth National Freedom Day: A Day of Observance" in the State of California (Exhibit 3).

Today's Commission meeting marks the 159th year since the first Juneteenth of 1865. Today, the Commission will potentially adopt a resolution (Exhibit 4) recognizing Juneteenth to commemorate the ending of slavery in the United States; in addition, it will be integrating

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principles of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into its policies and practices to ensure equitable access to California's natural resources.

Significant Public Comments (N/A)**Recommendation**

Commission staff: Adopt the draft resolution in Exhibit 2 recognizing Juneteenth.

Exhibits

1. [National Museum of African American History & Culture, *The Historical Legacy of Juneteenth*](#)
2. [Santa Monica Conservancy, *African Americans and The Beach in Santa Monica at the Bay Street Site Controversially Known as the "Inkwell"*, written by Dr. Alison Rose Jefferson](#)
3. [News release: *Governor Newsom Proclaims Juneteenth Day of Observance*, dated June 17, 2023](#)
4. [Draft resolution, dated June 12, 2024](#)

Motion

Moved by _____ and seconded by _____ that the Commission adopts the draft resolution recognizing Juneteenth as part of its commitment to justice, equity, diversity and inclusion.

The Historical Legacy of Juneteenth

Note: Information extracted June 12, 2024 from the National Museum of African American History and Culture webpage located at <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/historical-legacy-juneteenth>

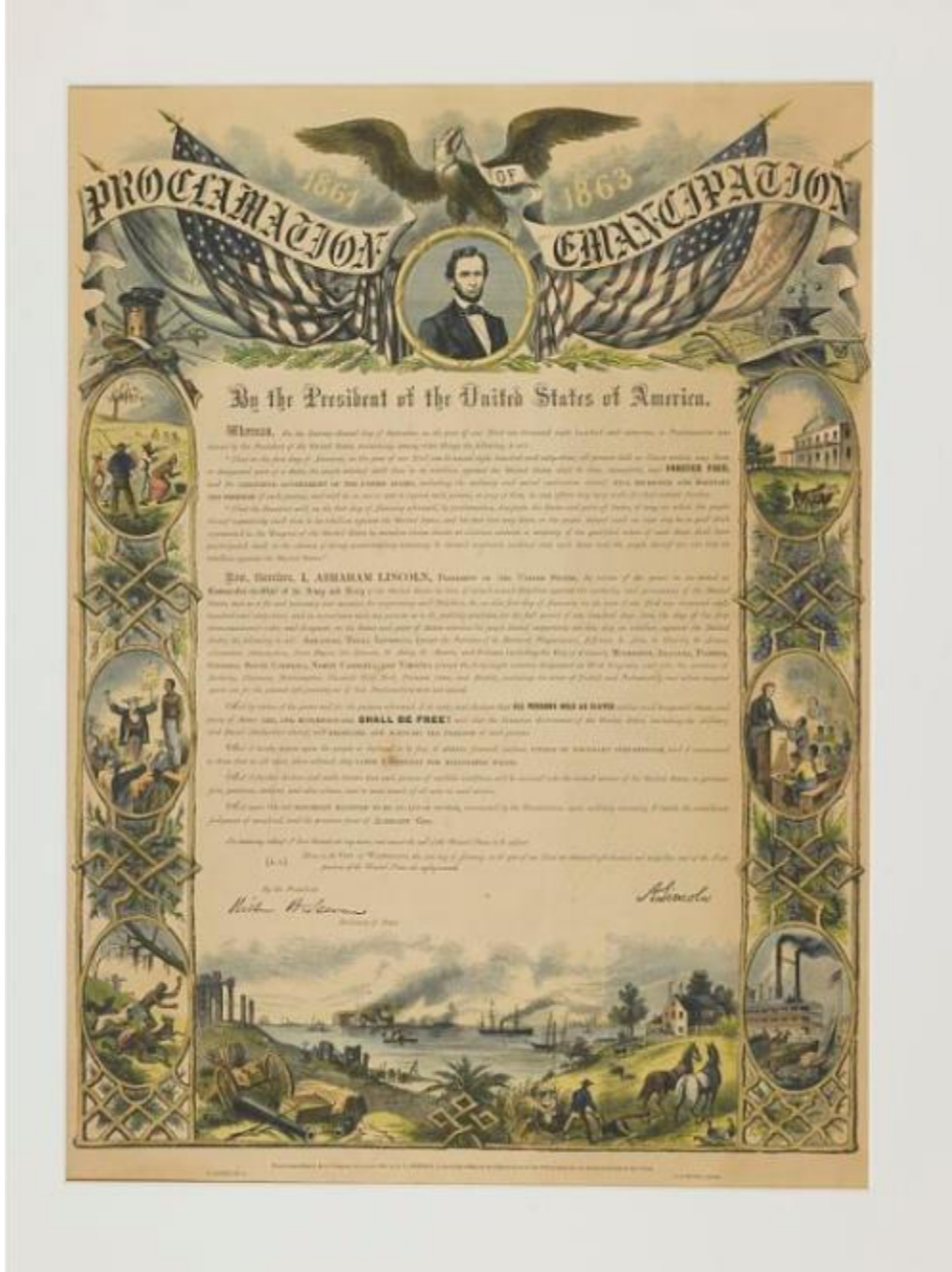


Emancipation Day celebration, June 19, 1900 held in "East Woods" on East 24th Street in Austin. Credit: Austin History Center.

On "Freedom's Eve," or the eve of January 1, 1863, the first Watch Night services took place. On that night, enslaved and free African Americans gathered in churches and private homes all across the country awaiting news that the Emancipation Proclamation had taken effect. At the stroke of midnight, prayers were answered as all enslaved people in Confederate States were declared legally free. Union soldiers, many of whom were black, marched onto plantations and across cities in the south reading small copies of the Emancipation Proclamation spreading the news of freedom in Confederate States. Only through the [Thirteenth Amendment](#) did emancipation end slavery throughout the United States.

But not everyone in Confederate territory would immediately be free. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation was made effective in 1863, it could not be implemented in places still under Confederate control. As a result, in the westernmost Confederate state of Texas, enslaved people would not be free until much later. Freedom finally came on

June 19, 1865, when some 2,000 Union troops arrived in Galveston Bay, Texas. The army announced that the more than 250,000 enslaved black people in the state, were free by executive decree. This day came to be known as "Juneteenth," by the newly freed people in Texas.



Publishers throughout the North responded to a demand for copies of Lincoln's proclamation and produced numerous decorative versions, including this engraving by R. A. Dimmick in 1864. *National Museum of American History, gift of Ralph E. Becker*

The post-emancipation period known as Reconstruction (1865-1877) marked an era of great hope, uncertainty, and struggle for the nation as a whole. Formerly enslaved people immediately sought to reunify families, establish schools, run for political office, push radical legislation and even sue slaveholders for compensation. Given the 200+ years of enslavement, such changes were nothing short of amazing. Not even a generation out of slavery, African Americans were inspired and empowered to transform their lives and their country.

Juneteenth marks our country's second independence day. Although it has long celebrated in the African American community, this monumental event remains largely unknown to most Americans.

The historical legacy of Juneteenth shows the value of never giving up hope in uncertain times. The National Museum of African American History and Culture is a community space where this spirit of hope lives on. A place where historical events like Juneteenth are shared and new stories with equal urgency are told.

African Americans and the Beach in Santa Monica at the Bay Street Site Controversially Known as the “Inkwell”

Note: Information extracted June 12, 2024 from Santa Monica Conservancy webpage PDF document located at <https://www.smconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/AfAm-Beach-Description-REVMay2017-FinalFinal.pdf>

“A Place of Celebration and Pain.” These words top the plaque that commemorates the oceanfront site controversially known as the “Inkwell,” an important gathering place for African Americans long after attempts at racial restrictions at public beaches were abandoned in 1927. This seaside refuge was located down the hill from nearby Phillips Chapel Christian Methodist Episcopal (CME) Church, the first African American church established in Santa Monica in 1905, and the earliest African American community settlement in the 4th and Bay Streets vicinity.

For leisure activities from the 1920s to the early 1960s, African Americans were able to locate some places where they were relatively free from bigotry to enjoy themselves and take pleasure in the picturesque outdoor offerings of the state. At this time, discrimination and restrictive real estate covenants prevented them from buying property in certain areas and from using various public or private facilities.

The African American beach site was originally situated near Pico Boulevard where Shutters Hotel and the Casa del Mar are today, south to Bicknell Street. It emerged as a popular gathering place for African American beachgoers in the County of Los Angeles in the four decades after the mid-20s. African Americans from the Santa Monica and the Los Angeles County environs met for parties and to socialize at this beach. Here they enjoyed the ocean breeze, swam and played games with less racially motivated harassment than at other Southland beaches.

History suggests white Americans probably first used the term “Inkwell” to describe more than one leisure site around the United States associated with African Americans during the Jim Crow era. This term was a derogatory term referencing the “blackness” of the beach-goers’ skin color. Agency was taken by some African Americans to repurpose the offensive term to describe these places they frequented and enjoyed, transforming the hateful moniker into a badge of pride or belonging. The name Inkwell has not been used or recognized universally within any community as the name of these leisure locations, with some refusing to use the name at all.

Although this site was enjoyed by African Americans, there were white American homeowners and business people of the Bay cities who tried unsuccessfully to “purge” them from their enjoyment of this stretch of the beach. In 1922, the Santa Monica Bay Protective League blocked the development effort of a black investment group, the Ocean Frontage Syndicate led by Norman O. Houston and Charles S. Darden, Esq.,

with plans to build a “first-class resort with beach access” where Shuttlers Hotel is located today near Pico Boulevard.

There were some unfortunate personal assaults on individual African Americans to inhibit their freedom to use the public beaches to the north and south of the City of Santa Monica. By 1927, as a result of legal challenges to these discriminatory practices by the National Association of Colored People, the beach became free for all the public’s enjoyment, and racial restriction attempts at public beaches began to fade away. In spite of these unpleasant events, which persisted in various forms even into the 1950s, many African American Angelenos continued to visit this wonderful site for enjoyment of the sun and surf.

On February 7, 2008, the City of Santa Monica officially recognized this important gathering place controversially known as the “Inkwell,” as well as Nick Gabaldón, the first California documented surfer of African and Mexican American descent, with a landmark monument at Bay Street and Oceanfront Walk. In the celebration of our American, California and Santa Monica heritage, we are encouraged to take a harder look at the complex layers of our history. Although some may not recognize it, these stories of the Inkwell and Nick Gabaldón are part of American history. All of us, no matter how recently arrived, share in these stories.

With this landmark monument, the African American Bay Street beach site controversially known as the “Inkwell,” touches many people’s lives as they come to enjoy the beach in this Santa Monica location. Stories told by the text on the plaque are being infused into the collective memory of local, regional and national public culture. So let us embrace our layered national, regional and local heritage, and renew our sense of civic pride and identity.



Verna Decker and Arthur Lewis at the beach site (sometimes known as the "Inkwell") in Santa Monica, CA 1924. *Los Angeles Public Library Online Collection*

Text written by: historian Alison Rose Jefferson, Ph.D.

Contact: alisonrosejefferson@gmail.com www.alisonrosejefferson.com

To learn more about the history of Santa Monica, Los Angeles and African Americans in the region, see:

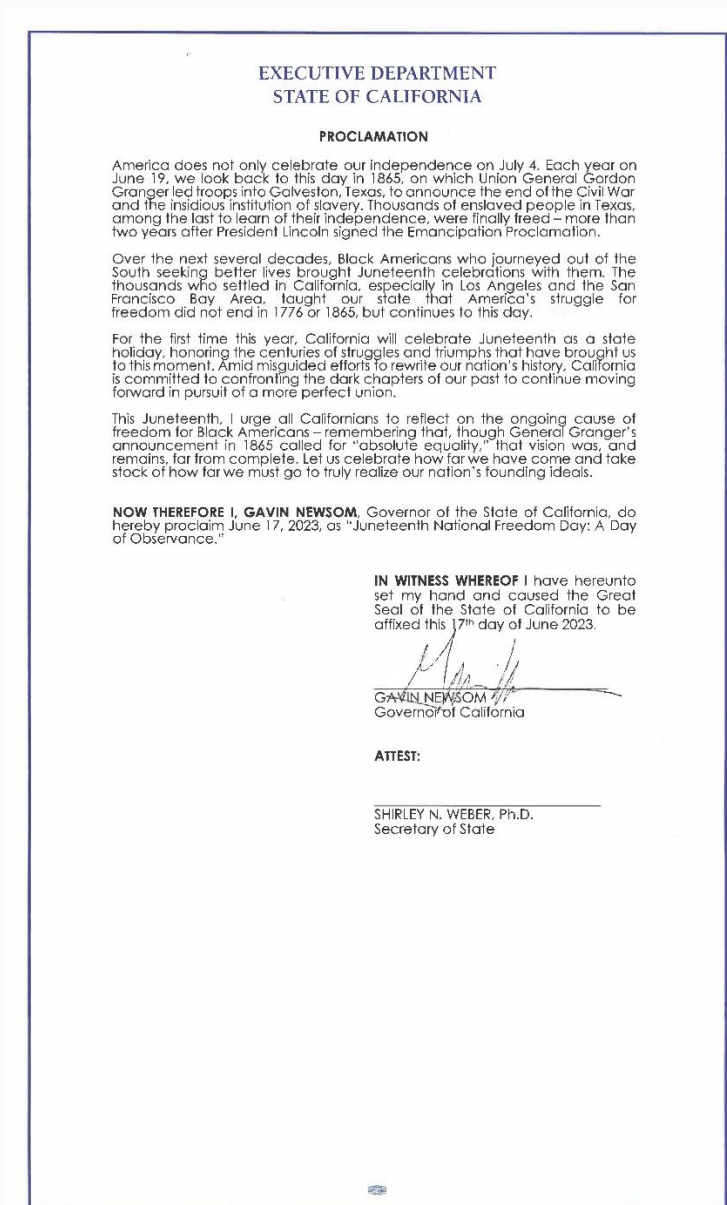
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Governor Newsom Proclaims Juneteenth Day of Observance

SACRAMENTO – Governor Gavin Newsom today issued a proclamation declaring "[Juneteenth National Freedom Day: A Day of Observance](#)" in the State of California.

California will celebrate Juneteenth as a state holiday for the first time this June under legislation [enacted](#) into law this year.

The text of the proclamation and a copy can be found below:



PROCLAMATION

America does not only celebrate our independence on July 4. Each year on June 19, we look back to this day in 1865, on which Union General Gordon Granger led troops into Galveston, Texas, to announce the end of the Civil War and the insidious institution of slavery. Thousands of enslaved people in Texas, among the last to learn of their independence, were finally freed – more than two years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

Over the next several decades, Black Americans who journeyed out of the South seeking better lives brought Juneteenth celebrations with them. The thousands who settled in California, especially in Los Angeles and the San Francisco Bay Area, taught our state that America’s struggle for freedom did not end in 1776 or 1865, but continues to this day.

For the first time this year, California will celebrate Juneteenth as a state holiday, honoring the centuries of struggles and triumphs that have brought us to this moment. Amid misguided efforts to rewrite our nation’s history, California is committed to confronting the dark chapters of our past to continue moving forward in pursuit of a more perfect union.

This Juneteenth, I urge all Californians to reflect on the ongoing cause of freedom for Black Americans – remembering that, though General Granger’s announcement in 1865 called for “absolute equality,” that vision was, and remains, far from complete. Let us celebrate how far we have come and take stock of how far we must go to truly realize our nation’s founding ideals.

NOW THEREFORE I, GAVIN NEWSOM, Governor of the State of California, do hereby proclaim June 17, 2023, as “Juneteenth National Freedom Day: A Day of Observance.”

IN WITNESS WHEREOF I have hereunto set my hand and caused the Great Seal of the State of California to be affixed this 17th day of June 2023.

GAVIN NEWSOM
Governor of California

ATTEST:
SHIRLEY N. WEBER, Ph.D.
Secretary of State

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California Fish and Game Commission
Draft Resolution Recognizing Juneteenth

June 12, 2024 Draft

WHEREAS, the California Fish and Game Commission (Commission) recognizes the importance of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in fulfilling its mission to conserve, restore, and manage California's fish and wildlife for the sustainable use and enjoyment by all people; and

WHEREAS, the Commission is committed to serving all people of California, acknowledging that people with a multitude of backgrounds, cultures, and lived experiences hold essential perspectives that strengthen our collective decision-making; and

WHEREAS, the Commission recognizes environmental justice as essential to addressing historic and current inequities, and to creating equitable access to environmental benefits; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth, celebrated annually on June 19, commemorates the emancipation of enslaved Black Americans in the United States almost 160 years ago; and

WHEREAS, the Commission acknowledges that on July 2, 1964, almost 60 years ago, the 1964 Civil Rights act was established, affirming that Black communities should be allowed to enjoy California's outdoor spaces, such as national and state parks; and

WHEREAS, by acknowledging Juneteenth, the Commission honors the struggles and celebrates the achievements of Black Americans who have helped shape the nation's conservation movement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Commission is committed to promoting equity through more inclusive decision-making that considers and corrects for disproportionate burdens on historically marginalized communities; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Commission seeks opportunities to collaborate with organizations led by and serving Black communities to ensure inclusive participation in the stewardship of California's fish and wildlife.

Proposed for adoption on June 19, 2024