



MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN



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MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN RECOGNIZES JUNETEENTH 2020 IN THE CITY OF BUFFALO

Juneteenth, annually June 19, is now a holiday for City employees beginning in 2021

Buffalo City Hall and other City landmarks will be lit in red, black and green tonight to commemorate Juneteenth

Mayor Brown urged all people to become more aware of the significance of this celebration in African American History and in the heritage of our nation and City of Buffalo

Buffalo, NY – Mayor Byron W. Brown, joined by Juneteenth of Buffalo Festival Organizers, today recognized Juneteenth, a world-wide celebration which commemorates the end of slavery in the United States. The event, celebrated on June 19th of each year, commemorates the arrival of Union Troops to Galveston, Texas in 1865 to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation to free all remaining enslaved African Americans. Today's gathering at Martin Luther King Jr. Park followed Mayor Brown's announcement earlier this week that Juneteenth will be a holiday for City employees beginning in 2021.

Mayor Brown stated, "I am pleased to announce that June 19th will be a holiday for City employees, beginning in 2021. June 19th, also known as Juneteenth, is the celebration of the final freeing of slaves two years after emancipation. Buffalo has had one of the largest Juneteenth celebrations in the country and I am proud to honor the significance of this important day. We will use this day to focus on the urgent work that has to be done to wipe out racial injustice in our City and nation. While we celebrate freedom from enslavement on this joyous occasion, we must continue to push for racial equity, not just for one day, but for 365 days a year."

"I am so proud to see the recognition of Juneteenth brought into mainstream American culture," said Marcus Brown. "As the President of Buffalo's Juneteenth Committee our organization is committed to educating the world about African American history and culture all year long, not only for one weekend in June. Mayor Brown has always been a supporter of our festival, organization and mission and we are proud to stand with him as he leads the way in revealing that racial justice for African Americans is not just a black issue, but an American issue."

The Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo is one of Buffalo's biggest summer festivals, and one of the longest running and largest Juneteenth celebrations in the world. This year, it holds even greater significance, in light of the protests in communities across the country, including the City of Buffalo, against racial injustice and police brutality, sparked by the death of George Floyd. Due to the coronavirus pandemic this year, the Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo's 45th consecutive celebration went digital this year, beginning June 13th, with all sorts of online educational and cultural activities. Traditional festival activities such as Sankofa Days, which is a

period of reflection about black culture, and the Maafa Memorial, which remembers the African Holocaust of enslavement, continues through Sunday, June 21st.

Mayor Brown concluded, "Honoring Juneteenth as an annual holiday for City employees underscores the importance of black history as American history and reinforces the idea that laws and policies must be followed by decisive action to attain true racial equity for black people."

For more information about the Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo, go to Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Zoom and JuneteenthOfBuffalo.com.

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About the Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo

The Juneteenth Festival of Buffalo was started in 1976 by B.U.I.L.D., a community-based organization, as a culturally relevant alternative to the country's Bicentennial Celebration. The group blocked off part of Jefferson Avenue -- the "Main Street" of Buffalo's Black community -- for a weekend celebration. Murals were painted and vendors set up booths to sell ethnic foods and wares -- entertainment and festivity were abundant. After several years, the Juneteenth Festival outgrew Jefferson Avenue. It is now held in Martin Luther King Jr. Park at the intersection of Best Street and Fillmore Avenue. Juneteenth Festival Inc. received 501(c) (3) status in 1985. In 2000, the name of the organization was changed to Juneteenth of Buffalo, Inc. to reflect its broader mission.

Juneteenth of Buffalo, Inc. exists exclusively for charitable and educational purposes. Staffed by volunteers, its mission is to actively preserve and promote the broad spectrum of African American heritage through educational and cultural activities that will benefit the community as a whole. Juneteenth Festival, Inc. partners with existing organizations with similar community-based objectives to help achieve its mission.

