

Juneteenth 2020

A Freedom Celebration

Media Release

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Juneteenth 2020, A Freedom Celebration To Livestream Saturday, June 20 at 5p

Elegba Folklore Society will present **Juneteenth 2020, A Freedom Celebration** virtually from Richmond, Virginia, on Saturday, June 20 at 5p. The theme, *Independence Day Our Way*, invites attendees to have a good time at a holiday backyard party, to engage in culture and history, to circle up in community, feel empowered, feel joyful and consider what matters. The platforms will be Facebook, YouTube and Vimeo.

The event will feature performances by Plunky Branch, Sam Reed and Elegba Folklore Society's African dancers and drummers with theatrical performances featuring J. Ron Fleming. Attendees can enjoy cooking demonstrations, shopping, of course, ceremonies, craft making for children and the *Get Woke Youth Summit*, commentaries, some cameo appearances from our international family and an *Independence Day Our Way* musical blend by celebrity music meister, DJ Drake, keeping the party going in the backyard.

Juneteenth, A Freedom Celebration is Virginia's flagship Juneteenth holiday commemoration. First presented in 1996, it is reflective of Richmond and Virginia's particular and poignant stories of enslavement and emancipation, and

it highlights the resolve and resilience of Africa's children in America.

Richmond is ground zero with regards to the country's evolution in its racial mores, disparities and hierarchies. **Juneteenth 2020, A Freedom Celebration** will be a vital part of our community's reset and healing.

Juneteenth 2020, A Freedom Celebration is a family event. It commemorates the Juneteenth holiday also known as *Juneteenth National Freedom Day* by remembering the impact of the trade of enslaved Africans in Virginia, during the 246 years between 1619 and 1865 — and now the 400 years from 1619 to 2019 — and its legacy. A constructive way to pay homage to enslaved Africans upon whose backbone Virginia was sustained, from the twelfth year following English settlement, **Juneteenth 2020, A Freedom Celebration** re-examines the legacy of their contribution and their forfeiture. It provides a cultural framework for building bridges of understanding.

Janine Bell, President and Artistic Director of the Elegba Folklore Society, appreciates the cultural enrichment **Juneteenth, A Freedom Celebration** gives. She says, "This event is about acknowledgment. Africans who were brought to Richmond to live out their lives in bondage here and in other states have not been properly acknowledged. In one example, the multi-billion dollar, multi-national tobacco industry was built on their backs neither to their own benefit or the benefit of their descendants. African Americans are still largely without benefit. Through this event, Africa's children with the children of European captors, can reclaim and understand hidden history. How did we get to where we are? An enhanced level of understanding can bring needed clarity, in 2020, to our lives today."

Juneteenth, A Freedom Celebration was one of the international signature events of the United Nations' International Year for People of African Descent. An excerpt of the declaration says, "The international community has affirmed that the transatlantic slave trade was an appalling tragedy not only because of its barbarism but also because of its magnitude, organized nature and negation of the essential humanity of the victims.... Even today, Africans and people of African descent continue to suffer the consequences of these acts and should be fully integrated into social, economic and political life and at all levels of

decision-making.” More at: www.un.org.

For more information about **Juneteenth 2020, A Freedom Celebration**, visit www.efsinc.org, visit Elegba Folklore Society’s Cultural Center, 101 E. Broad Street in the downtown RVA Arts District or contact the Elegba Folklore Society at 804/644-3900 or at story1@efsinc.org.

Juneteenth is a freedom celebration that became a tradition when, on June 19, 1865, General Gordon Granger sailed into Galveston harbor and issued a proclamation that gave freedom to a quarter of a million blacks in Texas who were still in bondage 2 1/2 years after the Emancipation Proclamation that President Abraham Lincoln issued was enacted on January 1, 1863. The tradition is so firmly rooted in Texas that it was made a state holiday in 1980, and *Juneteenth* has come to be regarded as the earliest African American holiday. *Juneteenth Freedom Day* is now celebrated in cities across America.

Links to attend will be shared as soon as they are generated.

The City of Richmond, Dominion Energy, Initiatives of Change, USA and ABC8 News sponsor **Juneteenth 2019, A Freedom Celebration**. The Arts & Cultural Funding Consortium provides partial support.