

Juneteenth 2021

A Freedom Celebration

Media Release

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Juneteenth 2021, A Freedom Celebration 25th Anniversary To Be Presented in Richmond, Virginia

Elegba Folklore Society, *Richmond's Cultural Ambassador*, presents **Juneteenth 2021, A Freedom Celebration** in Richmond, Virginia on Sunday, June 27 at the African Burial Ground, 1540 East Broad Street. The **Get Woke Youth Summit** begins at 1p. The stage and the grounds open fully at 2p, and the program concludes at 6p. **Juneteenth 2021, A Freedom Celebration** is Elegba Folklore Society's 25th Anniversary Juneteenth observance.

The theme, *Dancing With The Ancestors*, expresses gratitude, remembrance and optimism through the light filled prism of Afrofuturism; the intersectionality of past with present and the multidimensionality of the future and liberation.

This holiday commemoration will be sacred and joyful. Attendees are asked to wear white, and they may bring ancestral offerings such as flowers, fruit, sweets, libations or other gifts of personal significance. Priestesses from the *Obafemi Institute for the Divine Study of Ifa* will be on hand to administer a spiritual bath upon entry.

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Elegba Folklore Society will welcome an MC for the socially conscious, **Sa-Roc**, whose elevated and insightful lyricism, crisp articulation and fiery delivery will inspire the entire family. Born into a family where art and reading were emphasized albeit in the divested neighborhoods of Southeast Washington, DC, Sa-Roc attended the Sankofa Pan-African school. She was influenced by Gil Scott-Heron, Nikki Giovanni, Kwame Ture, Muta Baraku and Haile Gerima where she began to see how artistic expression could be used as a tool to educate, inspire and create change.

Relocating to Atlanta, **Sa-Roc** formed a partnership with noted DJ and producer Sol Messiah. Collaborative projects have included *Starseed*, *Babylon*, *Extraterrestrial* and the *Legend of Black Moses*. Music videos include *Hand of God*, *Goddess Gang* and the self-empowerment anthem, *Forever*.

Sa-Roc has toured in the states, in South America and in Europe sharing the stage with luminary artists, Carrie Mae Weems, Common, Rakim, De La Soul and Talib Kweli. In 2020, she embarked on a national tour with rapper, Rapsody, and made her debut on the NPR Tiny Desk At Home series. A health and wellness advocate, she is an ambassador for “Hip Hop is Green,” an organization that uses the power and influence of Hip Hop music and culture to expose and educate underserved communities about the benefits of plant-based eating.

The title of her album, *The Sharecropper’s Daughter*, pays homage to her father who grew up sharecropping tobacco. About the album **Sa-Roc** says, it is “a sonic reflection on the generational inheritance of trauma and triumph that shapes our humanity and influences the way we see the world.” At a time where people all around the globe are calling for social change, Sa-Roc is an MC whose energy and conscious lyrics are here to remind us all that Hip Hop was always about giving a voice to the people.

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Appearing virtually at **Juneteenth 2021, A Freedom Celebration**, **Dr. Gerald Horne** will provide the often neglected yet framing historical, political and social context for America's evolution and the presence of black people in it before the establishment of Juneteenth, on or about June 19, 1865 and after. **Dr. Horne** explains the imprint of this history and examines the structures and effects of socio-political and economic white supremacy with instruments and strategies for liberation. He will take live questions.

Dr. Horne is an eminent historian who holds the John J. and Rebecca Moores Chair of History and African American Studies at the University of Houston. He is the author of more than thirty books and one hundred scholarly articles and reviews. **Dr. Horne's** research has addressed issues of racism in a variety of sectors such as labor, politics, civil rights, international relations and war.

A sample of publications include *The Apocalypse of Settler Colonialism: The Roots of Slavery* (), *White Supremacy and Capitalism in Seventeenth Century North America and the Caribbean*, (2018), *Confronting Black Jacobins: The U.S., the Haitian Revolution and the Origins of the Dominican Republic* (2015), *Race to Revolution: The U.S. and Cuba During Slavery and Jim Crow*, (2014). *The Counter-Revolution of 1776: Slave Resistance and the Origins of the United States of America*, 2014. *Jazz and Justice: Racism and the Political Economy of the Music*. Monthly Review Press (2019) and *The Deepest South: The U.S., Brazil and the African Slave Trade*, 2007.

Gerald Horne has been recognized with, among others, the *Carter G. Woodson Scholar's Medallion for Lifetime Achievement*, 2014, Association for the Study of African-American Life & History, the *Ida B. Wells and Cheik Anta Diop Award for Outstanding Scholarship and Leadership in Africana Studies*, National Council for Black Studies, 2017 and he was a *McIntire Lecturer* at the University of Virginia in 2015.

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In opening the stage, **Butcher Brown** takes careful note of the history and legacy of jazz. The group's music blends jazz with hip hop, funk, rap, rock and soul. In honoring each musical genre, **Butcher Brown** also challenges traditional musical boundaries. The result is recognizably grounded as it, in an Afrofuturistic way, imagines the possibilities that are born from self determination. The members of the group are Tenneshu, Morgan Burrs, Corey Fonville, Andrew Randazzo and DJ Harrison.

Elegba Folklore Society's African Dancers, Drummers, Singers and Masquerades complete the performing arts element of **Juneteenth 2021, A Freedom Celebration**. The company's interactive performance will be rooted in the music, dance and lifestyle traditions of West Africa's the Manding and the Yoruba while paying homage to Ancestral calls for social justice and liberation and acknowledging the same calls 156 years after the inception of Juneteenth in 1865.

The performance will communicate a philosophy of Afrocentricity articulated by Dr. Molefi Kete Asante who says, "Africans were not simply removed from Africa to the Americas, but Africans were separated from philosophies, languages, religions, folklore and cultures. Finding a way to...reorient our thinking was essential to the presentation of an African cultural reality." Dr. Asante's intention is that African Americans can bring more to the table of humanity that just the adaptive experiences of Europeans.

Elegba Folklore Society's performing company has appeared in several states, in Africa, Europe and the Caribbean. It was recognized in 2019 for *Best African Choreography* by the RVA Dance Awards.

This **25th Anniversary commemoration** offers the opportunity to ponder concepts of freedom from both an external or societal view and an internal or personal and spiritual view. Accordingly, attendees are invited to activate their spirits in **Healing Cyphers** on the grounds at **Juneteenth 2021, A Freedom Celebration** and to shop in the **Freedom Market**. Food will also be available.

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The **Get Woke Youth Summit** invites children and teens to participate in an open dialogue about relevant societal issues while learning how to use mindfulness to promote positive change, unity and personal growth. Youth can also make an **I Am Somebody Charm** to wear as a reminder and a protector.

Juneteenth 2021, A Freedom Celebration is a family event. It commemorates the Juneteenth holiday known as *Juneteenth National Freedom Day* by remembering the impact of the trade of enslaved Africans in Virginia, during the 246 years between our arrival in 1619 and 1865, the year government sanctioned enslavement ended — and now the 402 years from 1619 to 2021. A constructive way to pay homage to enslaved Africans upon whose backbone Virginia was sustained, from the twelfth year following English settlement, **Juneteenth 2021, A Freedom Celebration** re-examines the legacy of their contribution and their forfeiture. It provides a cultural framework for building bridges of understanding. In 2020 Juneteenth was first recognized as an official Virginia holiday.

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. Now, Africa’s children with the children of European captors can reclaim and understand hidden history. An enhanced level of understanding can bring needed clarity to our lives today.”

Tickets are \$5, general admission. Children under 12 come free.

For tickets or more information 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. Background about the holiday follow.

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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."

The City of Richmond, Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, Dominion Energy, Richmond Memorial Health Foundation, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond Region Tourism, Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities, ABC 8 News, along with Initiatives of Change USA are partners with E̲legba Folklore Society in presenting **Juneteenth 2021, A Freedom Celebration**, the *25th Anniversary* commemoration. The Arts & Cultural Funding Consortium provides partial support.

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The History of Juneteenth

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.

The freedom message reached different parts of America on various dates between 1863 and 1865, but migrated black Texans continued the ***Juneteenth*** celebration as they moved to cities in the North and across the country. Today, this holiday is observed from California to New York. Some in Virginia have observed Emancipation Proclamation Day annually on January 1. Virginia has now proclaimed ***Juneteenth*** an official state holiday. It was first observed on June 19, 2020.

An instructive way of uniting these commemorations in a day of national importance is through ***Juneteenth National Freedom Day***.

Juneteenth Freedom Day. Independence Day Our Way.

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