Juneteenth 2022
A Freedom Celebration

Media Release

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Juneteenth 2022, A Freedom Celebration
To Be Presented in Richmond, Virginia


The theme, Look Back ☀ Focus Forward, 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.
Elegba Folklore Society will welcome scholar activist, Professor James Small, a transformational speaker, educator and consultant, Professor Small is an expert on African and African American world history and politics, Pan-Africanism, African spirituality, urban issues, Malcolm X and African folklore. He has served on the faculty at the City University of New York, City College of New York's Black Studies Department and at the New York City Technical College. He conducts educational and cultural tours throughout Africa and the United States. Professor Small is the CEO of Sanaa Lodge Enterprise, Ghana, Ltd., CEO & President of the African-American Management Company, Ghana, Ltd., Vice-President, World African Diasporan Union (WADU), International Vice-President of the Organization of Afro-American Unity (O.A.A.U.), a priest of Oya and Babalorisha in the Ifa Tradition and past President of the Eastern Region of Association for the Study of Classical African Civilization (ASCAC). To break the programming of mis-education, he will speak to the theme, Look Back Focus Forward.

Kólá Abímbólá, a Babaláwo of Ifá, the spiritual path of the Yoruba people indigenous to parts of Nigeria, Bénin and Togo in West Africa, will facilitate attendees' engagement in spiritual ceremony for Ancestral reverence. He was ordained as Ifá Priest by the Ògeese conclave of diviners of His Imperial Majesty, the Aláàfin of Òyó.

He studied the Ifa Literary Corpus as an apprentice under Wande Abimbola and Babalola Adeboye Ifatoogun. He undertook his PhD studies in Philosophy of Science under John Worrall at the London School of Economics and Political Science, and a second PhD in the Law of Evidence and Criminal Justice under C. John Miller at the University of Birmingham. Kola is the Editor of Journal of Forensic Research and Criminology. He was President of the International Society for African Philosophy and Studies from 2006 to 2010, and a British Council Commonwealth Academic Scholar from 1989 to 1992. He is an associate professor of philosophy at Howard University.
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Singer and songwriter, Jaylin Brown will open the stage at Juneteenth 2022, A Freedom Celebration, with her own brand of neo-soul/folk vibes. Her music is grounded as it imagines Afrofuturism that evolves from challenges and the possibilities born from self determination.

Kevin Davis and BanCaribe’s musical brand, “Clavé Soul,” is a marriage of Afro-Cuban music with other Caribbean influences, rhythm & blues and Afro-pop. This band’s set of original compositions and musical interpretations to the clavé rhythm pattern replaces the traditional drum set with the Latin percussion ensemble of timbales, congas, bongos, maracas and clavés. The guitar chords and harmonic vocals provide the soul, offering a smooth African Diasporic groove. Says Davis, “Rhythm is connected to my spirit. Music is a part of my heritage, soul, heartbeat and blood.” The band easily invites the audience into this intimacy for listening and dancing.

Elegba Folklore Society’s African Dancers, Drummers, Singers and Masquerades complete the performing arts element of Juneteenth 2022, 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 157 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 is 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.

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This 26th year of Juneteenth, A Freedom Celebration 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 2022, A Freedom Celebration and to shop in the Freedom Market. Food will also be available.

The Get Woke Youth Summit invites children and teens to participate in an open dialogue about relevant societal issues while learning the biographies of African American forebears to stimulate positive change, unity and personal growth. Youth can also make Oh My Dolling Afropunk Dolls to carry as a reminder to Look Back © Focus Forward.

Juneteenth 2022, 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 403 years from 1619 to 2022. A constructive way to pay homage to enslaved Africans upon whose backbone Virginia was sustained, from the twelfth year following English settlement, Juneteenth 2022, A Freedom Celebration re-examines the legacy of their contribution and their forfeiture. It provides a cultural framework for building bridges of understanding.

This year Juneteenth 2022, A Freedom Celebration is collaborating with Hand-Made in RVA’s Juneteenth in Celebration of Ourselves, 10a - 4p at 4360 S. Laburnam Ave, Henrico, VA 23231. This event features artisans and their wares, music and a children's paint and sip. Hand-Made in RVA began in 2018 with the focus of creating safe spaces for black people through cooperative economics.

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Schedule:

4:00p  Get Woke Youth Summit
4:45p  Jaylin Brown
5:00p  The Freedom Market Opens
      Healing Cyphers for Adults & Children Begin & Continue until 8:00p
5:45p  Elegba Folklore Society
6:15p  Awaken Your Spirit with Kola Abimbola
7:00p  Professor James Small
8.00p  BanCaribe
9:00p  Close

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. Scholarships are available for students 12 to 18. 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.
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, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Virginia Union University, Richmond Region Tourism/BLKRVA, Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities, ABC 8 News and City Parking Inc. are partners with Elegba Folklore Society in presenting Juneteenth 2022, A Freedom Celebration. The Arts & Cultural Funding Consortium provides partial support.
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*.


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