



Media Release

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Juneteenth 2024, A Freedom Celebration featuring the Black Book Expo To Be Presented in Richmond, Virginia June 7 - 9

Elegba Folklore Society, *Richmond's Cultural Ambassador*, presents **Juneteenth 2024, A Freedom Celebration** featuring the **Black Book Expo** in Richmond, Virginia, June 7-9. On Friday, June 7, 5p - 9p, and Saturday, June 8, 2p - 7p, the public is invited to the Virginia Museum of History & Culture, 428 N Arthur Ashe Blvd for a vast display of literature featuring topics including black history, social justice, science, health, African Diasporic culture, African spirituality, personal development, novels and children's books. There will also be live performances plus the Freedom Market filled with unique finds, tasty food and beverages on both days.

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On Friday, science writer, editor and ethicist, **Harriet Washington**, will present from her book, **Medical Apartheid: The Dark History of Medical Experimentation on Black Americans from Colonial Times to the Present** — a National Book Critics Circle Award Winner. This book chronicles the first full history of Black America's shocking mistreatment as unwilling and unwitting experimental subjects at the hands of the medical establishment. No one concerned with issues of public health and racial justice can afford not to read this masterful book. **Medical Apartheid** reveals the hidden underbelly of scientific research and makes possible, for the first time, an understanding of the roots of the African American health deficit.

*"[Washington] has unearthed a shocking amount of information and shaped it into a riveting, carefully documented book."
—New York Times*

A Terrible Thing to Waste: Environmental Racism and Its Assault on the American Mind is another of Ms. Washington's titles.

Elegba Folklore Society's performers will also appear and present excerpts from ***The Talking Drum***. This lively delivery of African and African American folktales and narratives combine with vocal and instrumental music to celebrate the drum as a legendary communications tool.

On Saturday, short talks by independent authors and book signings punctuate the day. A highlight is the **Get Woke Youth Summit** with lessons in freedom and **Heritage Crafts** in complement to this conscious literary festival in observance of Juneteenth.

The theme, ***Dancing With The Ancestors***, expresses gratitude, remembrance and optimism — an intersectionality of past with present and promise. The holiday commemoration, in total, will be sacred and joyful. On Sunday, the observance continues from 2p - 7p beginning at the Manchester Dock,

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1308 Brander St. Here, the program starts with riverside meditative community rituals for Ancestral homage. Attendees are asked to wear white, and they may bring ancestral offerings such as flowers, water or fruit. Then, ***A Tribute to the Ancestors, Along the Trail of Enslaved Africans*** immerses attendees in narratives, the historical record and music. It is a sacred, poignant pilgrimage of acknowledgement and recognition. There will be short walks to interpretive sites from the Manchester Dock, a point of entry of Africans into America to be sold into lifelong bondage, through Shockoe Bottom, a geographical and economic center of the trade of enslaved Africans in Virginia, to the Shockoe Bottom African Burial Ground, reclaimed as a site of memory. Participants will have the chance to ponder the impact of enslavement on the enslaved as shared in their own words and from their own view.

Along the Trail, there are some places to sit along the way including at the African Burial Ground. Buses will return attendees to their cars at the program's conclusion. Food and water will be available.

Juneteenth 2024, A Freedom Celebration featuring the **Black Book Expo** is a family event. It commemorates the history of Juneteenth, now a holiday, by remembering the impact of the trade of enslaved Africans in Virginia, during the 246 years, or approximately 10 generations, between our arrival in 1619 and 1865, the year government sanctioned enslavement ended — and now the 405 years, or approximately 16 generations, from 1619 to 2024. A constructive way to pay homage to enslaved Africans upon whose backbone Virginia was sustained, from the twelfth year following English settlement, **Juneteenth 2024, A Freedom Celebration** re-examines the legacy of their contribution and their forfeiture. Books by black authors, of course, help to create a socio-historical/ socio-cultural literary conduit for learning. Overall, the event provides a cultural framework for building bridges of understanding. In 2020 Juneteenth was first recognized as a Virginia holiday and a national holiday.

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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 for Friday are \$10, general admission, \$8, seniors, 65 and above, and for students 12 - 18. Children under 12 come free, in advance and at the door. Friday offers a Happy Hour from 5p - 6p where ticket buyers can enjoy a bonus BoGo, buy one and get one for 1/2 price, \$10 for one and \$15 for two. BoGo tickets are available at the door only.

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.

Juneteenth, A Freedom Celebration is one of the international signature events of the United Nations’ International Decade for People of African Descent. An excerpt of the inaugural declaration in 2011 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, Dominion Energy, Virginia Museum of History and Culture, Richmond Region Tourism, Richmond Department of Parks, Recreation & Community Facilities and ABC 8 News, are presentation partners with Elegba Folklore Society. 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 and the nation has now proclaimed ***Juneteenth*** an official 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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