

Join Us For Juneteenth 2026, A Freedom Celebration

Elegba Folklore Society, Richmond, Virginia's Cultural Ambassador, will present **Juneteenth 2026, A Freedom Celebration** on Saturday and Sunday, June 13-14 in Richmond, VA. Visitors come to Richmond from origin points throughout the Mid-Atlantic Region to attend. On Saturday, the public is invited to the annual ***Torch Lit Night Walk Along the Trail of Enslaved Africans***, beginning at 6:00p. On Sunday, the public is invited to ***Dancing with the Ancestors***, 2:00p - 7:00p. Both programs are free to attend.

On Saturday, the program begins at the **Manchester Dock**. **Attendees will access the Dock by shuttle, only, from the complimentary parking area at The Devil's Half Acre (Lumpkins Jail), 1500 E. Franklin St.** Way-finding signage will be provided. Registration is required. The Walk will also conclude at this area. On Sunday, the program happens at the **Shockoe Bottom African Burial Ground**. Complimentary parking will be available at the parking area at The Devil's Half Acre (Lumpkins Jail), 1500 E. Franklin St. Way-finding signage will be provided.

The ***Torch Lit Night Walk Along the Trail of Enslaved Africans*** immerses attendees in narratives given by the enslaved, themselves, in the historical record and music. It begins at a riverside importation point where African people arrived in Richmond to be further commodified and sold into lifelong bondage. The interpreted walk continues into Shockoe Bottom and to the areas where the dozens of dealers, holding pens, warehouses and auction blocks shaped the practice of the American enslavement of African people, where industries were born on the backs of unpaid black labor and where more than 350,000 black people were traded in Richmond's revolving economic doors, the Capital of the Confederacy, and shipped to the cotton fields of the deep south. Some of these people were held in captivity in Texas 2 1/2 years after the Emancipation Proclamation until June 19, 1865. This date became Juneteenth. The ***Torch Lit Night Walk Along the Trail of Enslaved Africans*** is a sacred, poignant pilgrimage of acknowledgement and recognition.

Then, during ***Dancing with the Ancestors***, attendees can ponder, reflect, understand and feel gratitude; engaging in ritual and enjoying music, dance, conversation, children's activities, food, shopping and more.

Elegba Folklore Society's African dancers and drummers will appear on stage along with **Olamina** and his thoughtful, palliative brand of reggae, and socially-conscious dance music with **Atilio Baqaba**.

Kólá Abímbólá will facilitate attendees' engagement in a **ritual for Ancestral reverence**. An internationally respected Babaláwo of Ifá, scholar, author, and educator, Kólá Abímbólá has devoted decades to the study and teaching of African philosophy, spirituality, and cultural traditions. His work bridges scholarship and sacred practice, offering profound insight into the wisdom systems of the Yoruba people indigenous to parts of Nigeria, Bénin and Togo in West Africa .

As we gather to honor the Ancestors and commemorate Juneteenth, Kólá Abímbólá will participate in an **onstage conversation** with Elegba Folklore Society's artistic director, Janine Bell to help guide us in deeper reflection, remembrance, and connection to the enduring legacy of African spiritual traditions and cultural reconnection.

Children and teens are invited to the **Get Woke Youth Summit** where they can learn about money in a cultural context, wealth-building practices and the financial stories of successful black people in history.

The **Healing Cyphers** offer opportunities for mind-body-spirit alignment and restorative self-care. Adults, children or whole families can visit the stations throughout the day.

People can shop affirmatively in the **Freedom Market**, and they can also purchase **food**.

Attendees are asked to **wear white**, and they may **bring ancestral offerings** such as flowers, water, fruit, spirits or prayers.

This commemoration opens a time when particularly people of African descent can surround themselves energetically with Ancestral vibration to recognize the foundational presence of African people in Richmond. Since the 1600s, African people were trafficked to Richmond in the Transatlantic Trade of Enslaved Africans and landed at/near the Manchester Dock for an entire century. Then, coffles, trains and boats exported enslaved Africans to the Deep South from various locations including the present-day Main Street Station and Rocketts Landing until 1865.

“In remembering our Ancestors who labored in bondage until the Emancipation Proclamation and those in Texas for whom freedom was delayed, attendees can expect a joyful and thoughtful gathering to be with one another and to say thank you for the strong shoulders upon which we stand,” says Janine Bell, president and artistic director of the Elegba Folklore Society.

The Society thanks the City of Richmond, Dominion Energy, the Walking Together grant and WRIC ABC 8 News for their partnership in presenting this program.

Questions? Email story1@efsinc.org or call 804.644.3900.