

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, on January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring that enslaved Americans in Confederate territory were free, paving the way for the passage of the 13th Amendment, which formally abolished slavery in the United States; and

WHEREAS, word of the Emancipation Proclamation was delayed by over two years, until June 19, 1865, when U.S. Army troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, to enforce General Order Number Three, informing residents that all enslaved people were now free; and

WHEREAS, June 19th, known as "Juneteenth," has been celebrated by the Black community for more than 150 years as Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, and as a symbol of liberation, resilience, and the ongoing pursuit of justice; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth celebrations have spread from the South and are now observed in states throughout the country; and

WHEREAS, in 2007, Washington State officially declared Juneteenth as a recognized holiday, and in 2021, it was established as an official state holiday, reflecting a growing commitment to acknowledging the full history of the United States and honoring the contributions of Black Americans; and

WHEREAS, the City of Olympia recognizes that the legacy of slavery, segregation, exclusion, and systemic racism continues to shape disparities experienced by Black communities today, and acknowledges the importance of truth-telling, healing, and meaningful action to address historic and present inequities; and

WHEREAS, the history of slavery and the struggle for Black freedom is also part of Olympia's own story, including the life of Charles Mitchell, a 13 year-old boy enslaved in Olympia in the 1850s, who courageously escaped enslavement in 1860 through the assistance of Black abolitionists and the maritime Underground Railroad to freedom in Victoria, British Columbia, reminding us that the pursuit of liberty and human dignity has deep roots in our region's history; and

WHEREAS, in the spirit of Juneteenth and its call to advance freedom and justice for all, the City of Olympia has demonstrated leadership in advancing racial justice and equity by becoming the first and currently only city government in the State of Washington to adopt a resolution calling upon state government to study and pursue reparations for the harms and lasting impacts of slavery, systemic racism, and discriminatory public policies experienced by Black Americans, affirming the City's commitment to truth, accountability, and restorative justice; and

WHEREAS, the State of Washington has now taken historic steps toward examining the lasting impacts of slavery and systemic racism through the creation of the Charles Mitchell and George Washington Bush Study on Reparative Action for Washington State's descendants of enslaved African people in the United States reflecting a growing statewide commitment to truth, historical understanding, and the pursuit of reparative justice; and

WHEREAS, Black community members including cultural groups, local places of worship, youth groups, and civil rights organizations have been observing Juneteenth celebrations in Thurston County for over forty years; and

WHEREAS, in 2026, the City of Olympia is honored to support regional community partners in hosting Juneteenth celebrations that uplift Black voices while encouraging all residents to learn, reflect, and participate; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Olympia City Council, does hereby proclaim June 19, 2026 as

JUNETEENTH

in the City of Olympia, Washington, and urges all residents to join in celebration of the significant moment in American history and its role in the heritage of our nation and city.

SIGNED IN THE CITY OF OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON THIS 16th DAY OF June 2026.

OLYMPIA CITY COUNCIL

Dontae Payne

Mayor