

RESOLUTION NUMBER 17 HONORING JUNETEENTH

WHEREAS, this Honorable Board of Aldermen of the City of St. Louis is keenly apprised of Juneteenth and its importance in the fabric of life in the City of St. Louis; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth is the oldest celebration in America growing out of the experiences of African-Americans and is a festivity originating with African-Americans celebrating the ending of chattel slavery in America; and

WHEREAS, Union forces won the Civil War when Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered on April 9, 1865 to Union General Ulysses S. Grant; and

WHEREAS, only until after being raised by African-American historians American history writers now agree and acknowledge that over 200,000 African American Soldiers fought in the Civil War for the complete, total and permanent freedom of their people; and

WHEREAS, not known to most, the 18th and 62nd Missouri Regiment of “Colored Union Soldiers” were both regiments of Black Soldiers stationed at Benton Barracks which is now Fairgrounds Park in North St. Louis; and

WHEREAS, African Americans in St. Louis founded one of this nation’s largest freedom/abolitionist organizations in the United States, called the Knights of Liberty and the Daughters of Tabor, which supplied over 47, 000 Black women and men already trained to fight for freedom, to the Union troops; and

WHEREAS, according to many historians the infusing of these already trained Black soldiers from the Knights of Liberty and the daughters of Tabor invigorated and pushed the Union forces to victory; and

WHEREAS, according to oral narratives of freed people of African descent, when the word hit Black communities held in bondage that the Union forces had won the war and that they were now free from bondage spontaneous celebrations broke out; and

WHEREAS, these spontaneous celebrations included praying, singing, dancing, cooking, walking off the property of those who held them in bondage to prove they were free, renaming themselves to rid themselves of the name of their oppressors and trying to find family members; and

WHEREAS, Black communities throughout the United States found out about freedom on various days in 1865 with some of the most notable notices reaching Texas on various days from June 13th - June 19th thus creating the name “Juneteenth African Freedom Day Celebration.”; and

WHEREAS, the oldest organized of these celebrations in St. Louis, which organized with members of the Knights of Liberty and various other Black organizations, was the “Freemen’s Fair” held during the week of June 22, 1868 at the Philharmonic Hall at Fourth and Washington Streets in downtown; and

WHEREAS, it is reported that huge crowds attended the Freemen’s Fair to listen to music, visit informative exhibits, acknowledge Black achievers, buy paintings of famous abolitionist, attend lectures, hear speeches, dance and help raise money to build schools in various Black communities in St. Louis; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth is not an event or a performance and no matter the weather and external conditions, including the present COVID-19 Pandemic, Juneteenth still takes place as a recognition and celebration of the ending of slavery and the work, sacrifice, desire, determination and commitment of a people to be free and equal to all others in the world.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Aldermen of the City of St. Louis that we pause in our deliberations during Juneteenth to recognize and honor the significant history of Juneteenth and its contribution to the cultural enrichment of this City and by adoption of this resolution we wish to recognize Juneteenth Freedom Days 2020 in St. Louis. We further direct the Clerk of this Board to spread a copy of this Resolution across the permanent rolls of this Board and to prepare a commemorative copy to the end that it may be presented to an honoree at a time and place deemed appropriate by the Sponsor.

**Introduced on the 19th day of June, 2020, by:
The Honorable John Collins-Muhammad, Alderman 21st Ward**

Adopted this 19th day of June, 2020, as attested by:

Terry Kennedy
Clerk, Board of Aldermen

Lewis E. Reed
President, Board of Aldermen