



City of Phoenix
Office of Mayor Kate Gallego

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Phoenix to Recognize Juneteenth as an Official City Holiday *Today's action celebrates equality and preserves history.*

(Phoenix, AZ, USA) – Mayor Kate Gallego and members of city council today unanimously approved Juneteenth as a City of Phoenix holiday, in honor and acknowledgement of the history and experiences of African Americans in this country.

Juneteenth references June 19, 1865, the day when enslaved people in Galveston, Texas – the last enslaved Black people in the United States – received word they had been freed at the end of the Civil War. It was two months after the end of the war, and two years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

“Juneteenth reminds each of us of the promises of freedom, equality, and opportunity,” said Mayor Gallego. “Recognition of this holiday on the city calendar is important, as this day does more than recognize the past; it calls for action today and in the future.”

Dr. Wil Counts, founding Dean of Students at South Mountain Community College, agrees. “In actuality, Juneteenth represents a time that America corrected a very dark part of its past, to make it positive. So, Juneteenth is a positive celebration, and it's a time when people of all races and creeds come together to celebrate.”

In Phoenix, the city's initial Juneteenth celebration was held in 1911. Vernell Coleman, a longtime community leader who, along with a group of Matthew Henson residents, revived the celebration at Dunbar (Elementary) school in 1968. The event that brought seniors and youth together over 50 years ago, grew into a festival that continues today at Eastlake Park.

“I think this is a great way to recognize the contributions of African Americans to our country, and cement a history that has mostly been passed on verbally,” said Dr. Josephine Pete, a retired deputy superintendent of the Phoenix Union High School District. “Our children need to know that we were segregated, we were exploited, and this action is wise to help our youth understand where we came from, where we are, and what we need to do to move forward.”

Today's move makes June 19th an annual city holiday beginning in 2022. Most city and federal employees will have it as a paid day off, as will several local private-sector employers, including those at Allstate, Citigroup, Nike, and Target.



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Phoenix, Arizona is the fifth largest city in the United States. With a population of 1.7 million, it is also the fastest growing city in the nation. For more information about Phoenix and services available through the city, please visit phoenix.gov.

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