

RESOLUTION NO. 2023-

***RELATIVE TO RECOGNIZING JUNE 19th
AS JUNETEENTH IN THE CITY OF NIAGARA FALLS, NY.***

BY:

Council Chairman David Zajac
Council Member Traci Bax
Council Member Vincent Cauley
Council Member Donta Myles
Council Member Kenny Tompkins
Mayor Robert M. Restaino

WHEREAS, the City of Niagara Falls, New York, is firmly committed to celebrating and promoting diversity, inclusion, and the rich cultural traditions of our City’s ethnic communities; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth, also known as “Juneteenth Independence Day,” “Emancipation Day,” “Emancipation Celebration,” and “Freedom Day,” is the oldest African American holiday observance in our country, commemorating the end of slavery in the United States of America; and

WHEREAS, on September 22, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln issued the *Emancipation Proclamation*, which declared that as of January 1, 1863, all enslaved people in the Confederate states engaged in rebellion against the Union “shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free”; and

WHEREAS, prior to the end of the Civil War, on January 31, 1865, the United States Congress passed the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, which abolished slavery throughout the United States and its territories. Spontaneous celebrations erupted throughout the country when African Americans learned of their freedom; and

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WHEREAS, the state of Texas, as part of the Confederacy, resisted the Emancipation Proclamation. But on June 18, 1865, Union troops led by Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, to take possession of the state and enforce the emancipation of its slaves. Former slaves in Galveston rejoiced in the streets with jubilant celebrations. The following day, June 19th, became known as “Juneteenth.” Juneteenth celebrations began in Texas the following year; and

WHEREAS, initially a regional celebration popular in Texas and neighboring states which brought remaining family members together who had resettled after June 19, 1865, Juneteenth grew to become a national event during which African American communities gathered to share in the spirit of the day, featuring outdoor activities, food, and prayer services; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth education and celebrations declined in the early 20th century, but the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s saw a resurgence of interest in Juneteenth, along with renewed community celebrations of the day, which have now grown into an important national and local celebration of African American freedom, culture, and achievement.

WHEREAS, New York State has recognized Juneteenth as a state holiday, which has encouraged all residents to celebrate this day and to honor and reflect on the significant roles that African Americans have played in the history of our country; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement. It is time for rejoicing marked with celebrations, picnics, and family gatherings. It is also a time for reflection, assessment, self-improvement, and for planning the future.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City Council of the City of Niagara Falls and Mayor Robert M. Restaino hereby recognize and commemorate June 19th as “Juneteenth” in the City of Niagara Falls and join in celebrating Juneteenth as a day to honor and reflect on the significant role that African Americans have played in the history of the United States and how they have enriched society through their steadfast commitment to promoting unity and equality, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that all City residents and visitors are encouraged to share and participate in this important celebration of African American culture, history, and pride.

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