



CHATHAM COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Diana Hales, Chair
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COUNTY MANAGER

Renee Paschal

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Resolution of the Chatham County Board of Commissioners

Resolution to Commemorate Juneteenth

WHEREAS, the Constitution of the United States details the rights of all its citizens based on the philosophy of government outlined in the Declaration of Independence, which states, “all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness;”ⁱ and

WHEREAS, chattel slavery is legally defined as, “*A civil relationship in which one person has absolute power over the life, fortune and liberty of another*”ⁱⁱ and constitutes an egregious breach of human rights; and

WHEREAS, the United States intentionally breached the human rights of approximately 388,000 Africans forcibly brought to its soil and more than 4.4 million African-American men, women and children born in the U.S. by imposing chattel slavery on them between 1676 and 1863;ⁱⁱⁱ and

WHEREAS, the U.S. Census documents that of the total NC population of 992,622 in 1860, 33% or 331,059 were enslaved,^{iv} including 6,246 slaves living in Chatham County;^v and

WHEREAS, the Emancipation Proclamation, an executive order issued January 1, 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln immediately freed approximately five hundred thousand from generational bondage, but still left approximately 3.5 million enslaved across the United States; and

WHEREAS, African-Americans in Galveston, Texas adopted June 19, 1866^{vi} as Juneteenth, a Black Independence Day in celebration of America’s commitment to liberty and equality that has become a part of national African American history and culture; and

WHEREAS, the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of the United States abolishing slavery everywhere, except for punishment of a crime, was ratified by Congress on December 6, 1865; and

WHEREAS, Congress ratified the Vagrancy Act on January 15, 1866^{vii}, thereby reintroducing newly freed slaves with no jobs or permanent homes to slavery under yet another name; and

WHEREAS, despite codified reinventions of chattel slavery in the form of Black Codes, Jim Crow and convict leasing between 1865 and 1950, African Americans remain consistently strong, faithful and loyal to the ideals of America; and

WHEREAS, the history of African Americans is a study in resilience for the over 45 million people trapped in modern day slavery situations including, but not limited to, bonded labor, forced labor, child labor and other forms of human trafficking;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED, the Chatham County Board of Commissioners is honored to recognize Juneteenth and proclaims its observance on June 23, 2018, to underscore the freedom with dignity due to every human being and to commemorate the past and present victims of any form of slavery. As a governmental body, we oppose and reject any form of oppression in Chatham County, both actual and symbolic, and pledge to support residents, churches and organizations working to achieve genuine equality and protect the human rights of all citizens in Chatham County.

Adopted, this the 21st day of May, 2018.

Diana Hales, Chair
Chatham County Board of Commissioners

ATTEST:

Lindsay K. Ray, NCCCC, Clerk to the Board
Chatham County Board of Commissioners

REFERENCES

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- i <http://www.ushistory.org/Declaration/document/>
 - ii <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/Slavery>
 - iii Gates, Henry Louis Jr. "Slavery by the Numbers" <https://www.theroot.com/slavery-by-the-numbers-1790874492>
 - iv http://www.civil-war.net/pages/1860_census.html
 - v <http://chatham1860.blogspot.com/p/v-behaviorurldefaultvmlo.html>
 - vi Bouie, Jamelle. "The Black Holiday Everyone Should Celebrate, But Doesn't" http://www.slate.com/articles/news_and_politics/politics/2014/06/juneteenth_the_black_american_holiday_everyone_should_celebrate_but_doesn.html
 - vii <https://legal-dictionary.thefreedictionary.com/vagrancy>