



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



May 27, 2021

Dennis Deer
Commissioner- 2nd District
Cook County Board of Commissioners

Dear Commissioner Deer:

Juneteenth, also known as Emancipation Day, is a day that holds great historical significance. As you are aware, on June 19, 1865, a declaration of freedom was issued in Galveston, Texas—freeing the Black people who were still enslaved after the Emancipation Proclamation of 1862. A year later in 1866, formerly enslaved Black people in Texas organized the first Juneteenth celebration—helping to not only ring in a new era of independence for Black people in the United States, but the beginning of a long journey towards equity and inclusion.

While slavery might have ended in the United States in 1865, it would be decades upon decades before Black Americans were integrated into American society. And to this day, we are still working to eliminate the modern-day manifestations of slavery that continue to keep far too many Black Americans from fully exercising their rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

So, while Juneteenth may be a day of celebration, it also serves as a day of reflection—urging us to recognize how far we've come and recommit to the work that still needs to be done in order to achieve true freedom. This work includes rooting the values of equity and inclusion within all of our institutions such as education, health, wealth-building, and justice initiatives.

Here in Chicago, I have been committed to this work for decades and will continue as Mayor to create a better future for all of our residents, particularly those who have suffered as a result of institutional racism. That's why I, on behalf of the City of Chicago, honor Juneteenth as a critically important day of remembrance and hope other leaders from across Illinois and the country will join me in this effort.

Sincerely,

Mayor