

Proclamation

THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF SAN MATEO, STATE OF CALIFORNIA PROCLAMATION TO OBSERVE
THE 400TH ANNIVERSARY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES
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African American Community Initiative

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WHEREAS, AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITY INITIATIVE and the Office of Diversity and Equity, part of San Mateo County Health’s Behavioral Health and Recovery Services division, call upon the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors to observe the 400th anniversary of the forced arrival of African people who were sold as slaves in the United States. This established American slavery of Africans and their descendants, which has affected the economic, physical, and emotional wellbeing of generations of African Americans during slavery and since its abolition in 1865; and

WHEREAS, in 1619, 20 African people were brought to Jamestown, a British colony (now Fort Monroe in Hampton, Virginia), against their will to be used as slave labor. 150 years later, Jamestown would become a part of the United States. The demand for more African slave labor helped establish the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, which would see 4 million indigenous Africans and their descendants forced into a cruel system of forced labor based on their skin color. The 17 trillion dollar slave industry was the most significant financial contributor to the origins of American capitalism. It spawned attitudes and beliefs about black people that set the foundation for generations of racism, discrimination, inhumane treatment and suffering that persist across the nation today; and

WHEREAS, although California was not a slave state, it allowed slaves from other slave-holding states to remain slaves if their slave masters brought them to California. The state also allowed slaves to be returned to slave owners if they were determined to be runaways. In the San Francisco Bay Area, white slave owners brought their slaves to help them mine for gold during the 1840s California Gold Rush. Many slaves, realizing they were in a “free state” received legal and financial help from Bay Area abolitionists to remain in California and escape slavery; and

WHEREAS, African Americans continue to experience health inequities related to the legacy of slavery. From health insurance coverage to mother and baby outcomes, African Americans tend to fare worse than the national average in the United States. Studies show that these health outcomes do not persist in other countries and are not genetic. Here in San Mateo County, African American residents have life expectancies that are 7 years shorter than the County average. Systematic and social disadvantages for African Americans continue to have real and tragic consequences; and

WHEREAS, October 12th to October 18th was the national week of observance of those first 20 indigenous Africans who were forcefully brought to Jamestown 400 years ago. The African American Community Initiative commemorates their lives and observes the great injustice they experienced as the first African people to be sold into slavery, the first victims of what would become the American slave trade. San Mateo County to recognize our true American history, the impact of American slavery on African Americans nationally and in San Mateo County, and the contributions the San Francisco Bay Area made to abolish slavery.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of San Mateo County does hereby recognize the 400th Anniversary of African American Slavery in the United States.

Dated: December 3, 2019

SUPERVISORS:

CAROLE GROOM, PRESIDENT

DAVE PINE

DON HORSLEY

WARREN SLOCUM

DAVID J. CANEPA

Attest: _____
Deputy Clerk of the Board of Supervisors