

# HAWAI‘I CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

830 PUNCHBOWL STREET, ROOM 411 HONOLULU, HI 96813 · PHONE: 586-8636 FAX: 586-8655 TDD: 568-8692

February 18, 2021  
Rm. 016, 3:00 p.m.  
& Videoconference

To: The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Chair  
The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair  
Members of the Senate Committee on Government Operations

From: Liann Ebesugawa, Chair  
and Commissioners of the Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission

Re: S.B. No. 939

The Hawai‘i Civil Rights Commission (HCRC) has enforcement jurisdiction over Hawai‘i’s laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations, and access to state and state funded services. The HCRC carries out the Hawai‘i constitutional mandate that no person shall be discriminated against in the exercise of their civil rights. Art. I, Sec. 5.

S.B. No. 939 would add a new measure designating June 19 of each year as Juneteenth Day to commemorate the end of slavery in the United States. Juneteenth is the day that the news of emancipation reached the last state, Texas, in 1866, over two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued. The measure does not make Juneteenth a state holiday.

HCRC supports this measure. Juneteenth is a historical day for both African Americans and the country as a whole. It also shows how justice has been delayed for Black people. Considerable barriers remain for racial equality, and commemoration of Juneteenth is a step towards recognizing that.

**The HCRC supports S.B. No. 939.**



**CITY COUNCIL**  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
530 SOUTH KING STREET, ROOM 202  
HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-3065  
TELEPHONE: (808) 768-5010 • FAX: (808) 768-5011

**BRANDON ELEFANTE**

Councilmember District 8  
'Aiea, Pearl City, Waipahū  
Chair, Committee on Zoning and Planning  
Telephone: (808) 768-5008  
Email: belefante@honolulu.gov

February 16, 2021

The Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Chair  
The Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair  
And Members of the Committee on Government Operations  
415 South Beretania Street, Conference Room 016 and Videoconference  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Subject: SB 939 Relating to Juneteenth Day  
Hearing: Thursday, February 18, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.

This testimony is in support of SB 939, which would establish June 19 of each year as Juneteenth Day in the State of Hawai'i. Juneteenth, also known as "Juneteenth Independence Day," "Black Independence Day," "Emancipation Day," "Emancipation Celebration," and "Freedom Day," is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Juneteenth is a day to honor and reflect on the significant roles and contributions that African Americans have played in the history of the United States and in Hawai'i, celebrating resilience and strength and promoting unity, equality, and respect for all cultures.

On July 8, 2020, the Honolulu City Council unanimously adopted Resolution 20-154, FD1, proclaiming the annual date of June 19 to be "Juneteenth" in the City and County of Honolulu.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to submit testimony. For the foregoing reasons, I respectfully request your passage of SB 939 and urge the State of Hawai'i to join 47 other states, along with the City and County of Honolulu, in recognizing and celebrating Juneteenth in our Aloha State.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brandon Elefante".

Brandon Elefante  
Councilmember, District 8

**Maile Medeiros David**  
Council Chair  
Council District 6  
(Portion N. S. Kona/Ka'ū /Volcano)



Phone: (808) 323-4277  
Fax: (808) 329-4786  
Email: [maile.david@hawaiicounty.gov](mailto:maile.david@hawaiicounty.gov)

## HAWAI'I COUNTY COUNCIL

County of Hawaii'i  
West Hawaii'i Civic Center, Bldg. A  
74-5044 Ane Keohokalole Hwy.  
Kailua-Kona, Hawaii'i 96740

February 17, 2021

Honorable Sharon Y. Moriwaki, Chair  
Honorable Donovan M. Dela Cruz, Vice Chair  
Committee on Government Operations  
Hawaii'i State Capitol, Conference Room 016  
Honolulu, Hawaii'i 96813

Re: S.B. No. 939 – Relating to Juneteenth Day

Honorable Chair Moriwaki and Vice Chair Dela Cruz:

Aloha and mahalo a nui loa for this opportunity to support S.B. No. 939. My name is Maile David, Councilmember representing Council District 6 (rural districts of South Kona, Ka'ū, and Volcano Village). I express my strong support of Juneteenth, also known as Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, and Black Independence Day, which commemorates the end of slavery in the United States.

Juneteenth is a day not only to acknowledge freedom, but also embraces respect for all cultures.

Mahalo a nui loa for your favorable consideration.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maile David", is written over a large, stylized, circular flourish.

Maile David, Council Member  
Council District 6, S. Kona, Ka'ū, and Volcano Village

**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/12/2021 11:58:40 PM

Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b>  | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Michael Golojuch Jr | Testifying for LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

Aloha Senators,

The LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i, Hawaii's oldest and largest policy and political LGBTQIA+ focused organization, supports SB 939.

Mahalo nui loa for your time and consideration,

Michael Golojuch, Jr.

Chair

LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i

Statement Before The  
**SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**

Thursday, February 18, 2021

3:00 PM

Conference Room 016 and Videoconference

**SB 939**  
**RELATING TO JUNETEENTH DAY.**

Chair MORIWAKI, Vice Chair DELA CRUZ, and Members of the  
Senate Government Operations Committee

Common Cause Hawaii supports SB 939, which establishes June 19 of each year as Juneteenth Day.

Common Cause Hawaii is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy. We work to promote equal rights, opportunity, and representation for all.

SB 939 will recognize the importance of Juneteenth in American history. Even with the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared that as of January 1, 1863, all enslaved people in the states currently engaged in rebellion against the Union “shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free”, and the Civil War’s end in May 1865, confederate states still kept people enslaved. Union troops did not reach the westernmost confederate state of Texas, until June 19, 1865, which became known as Juneteenth, to end slavery. Juneteenth commemorates the freedom that this nation is still striving to achieve.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 939. If you have further questions of me, please contact me at [sma@commoncause.org](mailto:sma@commoncause.org).

Very respectfully yours,

Sandy Ma  
Executive Director, Common Cause Hawaii

February 17, 2021

Hawai'i State Capitol Building  
415 South Beretania St.  
Honolulu, HI 96813

Dear Committee Members:

This past June 47 states across the country celebrated *Juneteenth*, also known as Freedom Day, which commemorates June 19, 1865 - the end of African American enslavement in the United States. Sadly, Hawai'i was not one of them.

While communities across the island chain independently honor this historic day by participating in marches and rallies, Hawai'i remains just 1 of 3 states that does not designate Juneteenth as a state holiday. We implore the Hawai'i State Legislature to join the rest of the country by proposing and passing legislation that will finally recognize this monumental day as an official state holiday.

Municipalities across Hawaii have already passed resolutions that mark *Juneteenth* as a local day of remembrance, including the City of Honolulu whose city council unanimously passed a resolution to make Juneteenth "*an annual day of honor and reflection*". "*I think it's important that we recognize Juneteenth as a time to reflect on the contributions of the black community in Hawai'i, their unique experiences in our nation, and the ways we can engage with our friends, family, and the broader community to dismantle systemic racism,*" said Honolulu Councilmember Tommy Waters. ([KHON2, 6/18/20](#))

Hawai'i has a proud history of being on the forefront of racial and social justice. As early as 1852 the Kingdom of Hawai'i wrote into law that "*Slavery shall, under no circumstances whatsoever, be tolerated in the Hawaiian Islands; whenever a slave shall enter Hawaiian territory he shall be free, no person who imports a slave or slaves, into the King's dominions shall ever enjoy any civil or political rights.*" Today many of our citizens are direct descendants of former slaves. Rightfully recognizing *Juneteenth* will not only uphold their legacy, but will send a message of solidarity to all of Hawai'i's African-American leaders, tourists, businesses and respected community members. Furthermore, a State calendar date will serve to better educate Hawaii's youth on black history and the importance of equality for all.

As a state that prides itself on diversity and inclusivity, it is long overdue for Hawai'i to fully live out the Aloha spirit in this matter by standing with the 47 states that have chosen to make *Juneteenth* an annual day of remembrance and celebration.

Sincerely,

## Elected Officials



Councilmember Marcos Pine  
(D-1), City & County of  
Honolulu



Councilmember Waters (D-4),  
City & County of Honolulu



Councilmember  
Anderson (D-3), City &  
County of Honolulu



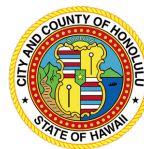
Councilmember Kobayashi (D-  
5), City & County of Honolulu



Councilmember Fukunaga (D-  
6), City & County of Honolulu



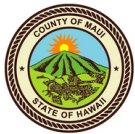
Councilmember Manahan (D-  
7), City & County of Honolulu



Councilmember Elefante (D-  
8), City & County of Honolulu



Councilmember Paltin,  
County of Maui (West  
District)



Council Chair, Alice Lee,  
County of Maui



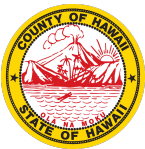
Councilmember King,  
County of Maui (South  
District)



Councilmember  
Hokama, County of  
Maui



Councilmember  
Poindexter (D-1),  
County of Hawaii



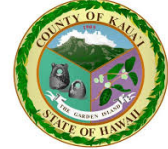
Councilmember  
Lehualani Kierkiewicz  
(D-4), County of Hawaii



Councilmember David  
Maile (D-6), County of  
Hawaii



Councilmember Cowden,  
County of Kauai



Councilmember Kualii,  
County of Kauai



Councilmember Evslin,  
County of Kauai

**Civil Rights Activists & Community Support**



Honolulu NAACP



Anti-Defamation League –  
Central Pacific Region



Best Buddies Hawaii



Coalition of Black Women  
Business Owners on  
Hawaii



African American  
Lawyers Association  
of Hawaii (AALA)



Alpha Kappa Alpha - Lambda  
Chi Omega Chapter



**Local Businesses**



ALA MOANA HOTEL  
by mantra  
Ala Moana Hotel



Loco Boutique



Miss Hawaii USA Pageant  
Organization



**Political Support**



Democratic Party of  
Hawaii

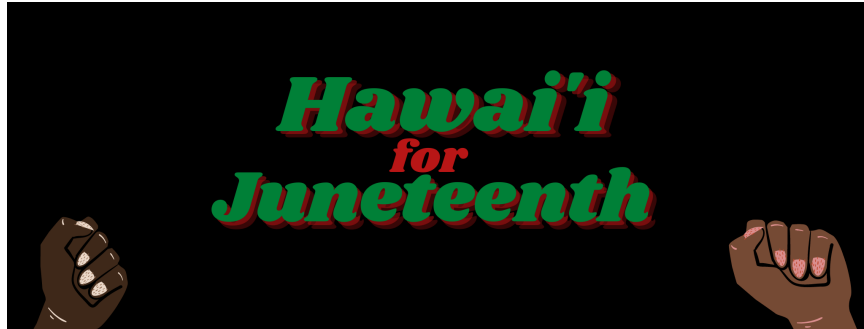


Democratic Party of Hawaii  
Hawaii County Committee



## **HELP MAKE JUNETEENTH A HAWAII STATE HOLIDAY**

*Hawaii is 1 of only 3 states that does not commemorate Juneteenth as an official State Holiday or Day of Observance (Congressional Research Service)*



Only North Dakota, South Dakota and Hawaii do not celebrate Juneteenth. With “*The Aloha State*” being the only Democratic state in the nation yet to acknowledge this historic and longstanding holiday.

### **WHAT IS JUNETEENTH?**

Juneteenth, also known as “Freedom Day”, commemorates the ending of slavery in the United States when on June 19, 1865, Union soldiers arrived to Galveston, TX with news that the war had ended and slaves were now free - two and half years after President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation in 1863.

Today Juneteenth celebrates African American freedom and achievement, while encouraging continuous self-development and respect for all cultures. Currently, Juneteenth has become a national day of pride with 46 states officially commemorating Juneteenth. Sadly, the State of Hawaii is not one of them. This needs to change.

### **HAWAII MUST ACT NOW**

The Hawaii State Legislature should join the rest of the nation by proposing and passing legislation that will finally recognize this monumental day in our country’s history as an official state calendar holiday.

#### **Solidarity**

Hawai’i has a proud history of being on the forefront of racial and social justice. As early as 1852 the Kingdom of Hawai’i wrote into law that “*Slavery shall, under no circumstances whatsoever, be tolerated in the Hawaiian Islands; whenever a slave shall enter Hawaiian territory he shall be free, no person who imports a slave or slaves, into the King’s dominions shall ever enjoy any civil or political rights.*”

Today many of our citizens are direct descendants of former slaves. Rightfully recognizing *Juneteenth* will not only uphold their legacy, but will send a message of solidarity to all of Hawai'i's African-American leaders, tourists, businesses and respected community members.

## Honoring the History of African American Influence in Hawaii

The sustained and substantial contributions of Hawaii's African American community throughout its history include:

- **Anthony D. Allen:** formerly enslaved, was a steward to King Kamehameha I
- **Oliver & George Washington Hyatt:** served as the first two leaders of the Royal Hawaiian Band under King Kamehameha III
- **Betsey Stockton:** formerly enslaved, started the first mission school in Lahaina open to the common people
- **Buffalo Soldiers:** built the 18-mile trail to the summit of Mauna Loa
- **Alice A. Ball:** a chemist who was the first woman to earn a master's degree from the University of Hawaii at Manoa and discovered the first treatment for leprosy (the "Ball Method");
- **Dr. Donniss Thompson:** the University of Hawaii's first women's Athletic Director who started the Rainbow Wahine Athletics Program and successful Wahine Volleyball Program
- **Helene Hale:** Hawai's first African-American woman elected to the Hawaii Legislature. She served on the Hawaii County Board of Supervisors. After becoming the first African American Mayor in Hawaii, she was featured on *Ebony Magazine*
- **Carlotta Stewart:** Lawyer who helped Hawaiians regain their kuleana lands. She became the first black principal in Honolulu when she took on the role at Ko'olau Elementary School
- **President Barack Obama:** First African American and first Hawaii born elected President of the United States.

## Education

A State calendar date will serve to better educate Hawaii's diverse youth on a monumental event in US history. Battling systemic racism first begins with a fundamental knowledge of our nation's racist history and how it has contributed to the white supremacist framework we see today. Providing today's youth with an accurate telling of history will not only educate them, it will equip them with the necessary information needed to challenge inequality and take steps towards a more inclusive society.

## Tourism

Hawaii relies heavily on tourism each year to generate tax revenue. According to the Hawaii Tourism Authority, in 2019, 10,424,995 visitors came to Hawaii. On average, there were 249,021 visitors in the Hawaiian Islands on any given day. Visitors to Hawaii spent \$17.75 billion that generated \$2.07 billion in state tax revenue. ([Hawaiian Tourism Authority, 1/29/20](#))

Large portions of these tourists represent communities of color. If Hawaii expects to continue to attract visitors from around the world, we must live out our promise of celebrating diversity through the celebration of Juneteenth.

## **WIDESPREAD, GROWING SUPPORT**

### **Honolulu Leads The Way**

Communities across Hawaii have already passed resolutions that mark *Juneteenth* as a local day of remembrance and celebration. On 8/18/20, The City of Honolulu unanimously voted to recognize Juneteenth as an official, citywide day of remembrance and observation.

[\(KHON2, 6/18/20\)](#)

*"It is important that our City sends a clear signal that we stand in solidarity with the Black community as we all work together for social justice. But it's also important that we celebrate and lift up the contributions and achievements of Black people in Hawaii from the time of the Hawaiian Kingdom to today. Recognizing Juneteenth is a way to do both."*

- **Mayor Kirk Caldwell, City & County of Honolulu**

*"I think it's important that we recognize Juneteenth as a time to reflect on the contributions of the black community in Hawai'i, their unique experiences in our nation, and the ways we can engage with our friends, family, and the broader community to dismantle systemic racism."*

- **Councilmember Tommy Waters (D-4), City & County of Honolulu**

## **CURRENT SUPPORTERS**

A growing coalition of local leaders, nonprofits and advocacy groups are committed to making Juneteenth a State Holiday and are urging the Legislature to act now:

- Honolulu Hawaii NAACP
- Democratic Party of Hawaii– Hawaii County Committee
- ADL - Anti-Defamation League - Central Pacific Region
- Island Black Girlz
- Af3irm - Hawai'i
- African Americans on Maui (AAOMA)
- Dear White Women
- Alpha Kappa Alpha - Lambda Chi Omega Chapter
- Ala Moana Hotel
- African American Lawyers Association

- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)
- Time to Talk Hawaii
- Best Buddies Hawaii
- Pride at Work Hawaii
- Ala Moana Hotel
- LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawai'i
- County of Maui (West District) Council Member Paltin
- County of Maui (South District), King
- County of Maui Council Chair Alice Lee
- County of Maui Council Member Hokoma
- City & County of Hawaii, Councilmember, Valerie Poindexter, (D-1)
- City & County of Hawaii, Councilmember, David Maile (D-6)
- City & County of Hawaii, Councilmember, Lehualani Kierkiewicz (D-4)
- City & County of Honolulu, Councilmember, Kym Pine (D-1)
- City & County of Honolulu, Councilmember Anderson (D-3)
- City & County of Honolulu, Councilmember Tommy Waters (D-4)
- City & County of Honolulu, Councilmember Kobayashi (D-5)
- City & County of Honolulu, Councilmember Carol Fukunaga (D-6)
- City & County of Honolulu, Councilmember Manahan (D-7)
- City & County of Honolulu, Councilmember Elefante (D-8)
- Loco Boutique
- Guava Press
- Samantha Neyland, Miss Hawaii USA 2020
- Miss Hawaii USA Pageant Organization

## **JOIN US: SUPPORT JUNETEENTH**

We encourage the State Legislature to draw from existing laws that have already been successfully implemented in 47 states across the country.

While there is a growing movement in other states to provide a paid-day off work for all state employees, we are not advocating that Hawaii do the same at this time. We are simply urging Hawaii Stated elected officials to celebrate Juneteenth with the full and proper acknowledgement our African American community deserves.

As a state that prides itself on diversity and inclusivity, it is long overdue for Hawai'i to fully live out the Aloha spirit by standing with the 47 states that have chosen to make *Juneteenth* an annual day of remembrance and celebration.

# MISS HAWAII USA URGES LEGISLATURE TO MAKE JUNETEENTH A STATE HOLIDAY

Hawaii's first African American Miss USA Hawaii is launching a coalition to urge the Hawaii State Legislature to make Juneteenth a state holiday.

Hawaii is just one of four states that do not commemorate Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day. June 19, 1865, was the day that Union soldiers rode into Galveston, Texas, declaring the end of the Civil War and that all slaves were free.

The holiday is a "celebration of African American freedom and achievement, encourages continuous self-development and respect for all cultures," the coalition says in a news release.

"As a state that prides itself on diversity and inclusivity, it is long overdue for the Hawaii Legislature to fully live out the Aloha spirit and stand with the 46 states that have chosen to make Juneteenth an annual day of remembrance and celebration." Miss USA Hawaii Samantha Neyland said in the release.

"Many of our citizens are direct descendants of enslaved African peoples. Rightfully recognizing Juneteenth will send a message of solidarity to all of Hawaii's blacks leaders, tourists, businesses and community members during this very critical moment as we seek to dismantle systematic racism.

Neyland won the 2020 Miss Hawaii USA contest in November and will compete for the Miss USA crown later this year.

The coalition is made up of elected officials, nonprofits and civil-rights activists, including the Anti-Defamation League, LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii, the Honolulu NAACP, the African American Association of Maui as well as the majority of the Maui County Council and



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Amya Watson, 11, prints "Black Power" on a poster celebrating Juneteenth during the "Black Joy as Resistance! Juneteenth Celebration" in the historic Farish Street business district in downtown Jackson, Miss., on June 19.

Honolulu City Council members.

Governor David Ige has signed proclamations in recent years to acknowledge Juneteenth, but advocates would like to see more.

"When the Hawaii State Legislature convenes, it's crucial that they send a clear and resolute message of support in solidarity with the African American community by introducing and passing legislation to make Juneteenth a permanent day of commemoration in Hawaii," said City Councilman Tommy Waters.

The coalition points out Hawaii's proud history of being on the forefront of racial and social justice going back to 1852 when the Kingdom of Hawaii wrote into law that "Slavery shall, under no circumstances whatsoever, be tolerated in the Hawaiian Islands; whenever a slave shall enter Hawaiian territory he shall be free, no person who imports a slave or slaves, into the King's dominions shall ever enjoy any civil or political rights."

On Tuesday, the Maui County Council will vote on a resolution that would make Juneteenth a local holiday.





FILE – In this Friday, June 19, 2020 photo, fireworks explode during Juneteenth celebrations above the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood in the Brooklyn borough of New York. The Manhattan skyline is seen in the background. They light up the sky in celebration, best known in the U.S. as a way to highlight Independence Day. This year, fireworks aren't being saved for special events. They've become a nightly nuisance from Connecticut to California, angering sleep-deprived citizens and alarming local officials. (AP Photo/John Minchillo, File)

## Miss Hawaii USA launches coalition to make Juneteenth a state holiday

### HONOLULU (KHON2)

This past June, 46 states across the country celebrated Juneteenth, commemorating the ending of slavery in the United States. While communities across the island chain independently honor this historic day through marches and festivals, Hawaii remains just one of four states that does not designate Juneteenth as a state holiday. Miss Hawaii USA plans to change that.

Hawaii's first African-American Miss Hawaii USA, Samantha Neyland, is leading a coalition of advocates who are urging the State Legislature to recognize Juneteenth as an official state holiday.

Juneteenth, also known as "Freedom Day," commemorates the ending of slavery in the United States on June 19, 1865. Today, it is a celebration of African American freedom and achievement, while encouraging continuous self-development and respect for all cultures.

*"As a state that prides itself on diversity and inclusivity, it is long overdue for the Hawaii Legislature to fully live out the Aloha spirit and stand with the 46 states that have chosen to make Juneteenth an annual day of remembrance and celebration."*

- SAMANTHA NEYLAND, MISS HAWAII USA 2020

Neyland also adds that a state calendar date will serve to better educate Hawaii's diverse youth on Black history while celebrating the importance of equality.

The growing coalition is comprised of elected officials, nonprofits and civil-rights activists, including: the Anti-Defamation League, LGBT Caucus of the Democratic Party of Hawaii, the Honolulu NAACP, the African American Association of Maui as well as the majority of Maui and Honolulu County Council members.

On Tuesday, Aug. 18, the Maui County Council will vote on a resolution that would make Juneteenth a local holiday. Neyland hopes state legislatures will follow suit.

# Honolulu to officially recognize Juneteenth

6/18/20

HONOLULU (KHON2)

In a press release, Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell announced that Juneteenth will be officially recognized. The press release is as follows:

“Mayor Kirk Caldwell and the Honolulu City Council worked together today to recognize Juneteenth as an important national day of commemoration and celebration. Mayor Caldwell ordered that Honolulu Hale be illuminated in yellow and black from the evening of Friday, June 19 through Sunday, June 21 in recognition of “Juneteenth” and the Black Lives Matter movement. Earlier today, a key Honolulu City Council committee passed Resolution 20-154, proclaiming June 19 as “Juneteenth” and an annual day of honor and reflection going forward for the City and County of Honolulu.

“It is important that our City sends a clear signal that we stand in solidarity with the Black community as we all work together for social justice,” said Mayor Caldwell. “But it’s also important that we celebrate and lift up the contributions and achievements of Black people in Hawai’i from the time of the Hawaiian Kingdom to today. Recognizing Juneteenth is a way to do both and I’m proud of the way our community has come together and grown stronger in the face of injustice.”

Honolulu City Council Member Tommy Waters, Chair of the Committee on Public Safety and Welfare, helped guide a resolution to unanimous approval by the Committee earlier in the afternoon. The resolution highlighted the fact that the Kingdom of Hawai’i had declared that slavery would not be tolerated in any way a full decade before the US Civil War, and the support provided from Hawai’i for Dr. Martin Luther King during the civil rights struggle.

“I think it’s important that we recognize Juneteenth as a time to reflect on the contributions of the black community in Hawai’i, their unique experiences in our nation, and the ways we can engage with our friends, family, and the broader community to dismantle systemic racism,” said Councilmember Waters.

Juneteenth, also known as “Juneteenth Independence Day”, “Emancipation Day”, and “Freedom Day” is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. Juneteenth signifies the date June 19, 1865 when Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston and announced the emancipation of enslaved people in Texas almost two and one-half years after United States President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation.

“The City and County recognizing not only the presence, but also the contributions of Black residents of Honolulu via the Juneteenth resolution is a significant step,” said Akiemi Glenn, the Executive Director of the Pōpolo Project. “It is also important to note that the City takes this step as the world is erupting in an unprecedented global call for justice for Black people, connecting this moment to 1852 when Hawai’i enshrined in its constitution an affirmation that Black lives matter on this ‘āina because they matter everywhere.”

Texas was the first state to officially recognize Juneteenth in 1980. Today, 49 of the 50 US states recognize Juneteenth as either a state holiday or ceremonial day of observance. The only state that does not yet recognize Juneteenth is Hawai’i, making the resolution passed by the City and County of Honolulu with approximately 70% of the state’s population an important step to finally bringing this day of recognition to the entire nation.

“Millions of Americans are dealing with the pain and agony of systemic racism and civil unrest,” said Alphonso Braggs, President of the Honolulu Hawai’i NAACP. “In Hawaii, it’s comforting to see our local government leaders recognize the importance of celebrating one of the most significant events in African-American history. This year’s celebration includes a renewed commitment to work together on police reform and community building.”

Juneteenth will be recognized on June 19 this year with a sunset ceremony at Makalei Park near Leahi to honor ancestors and those working for a future where every individual is truly free.

The Pōpolo Project is

a Hawai’i-based nonprofit organization that redefines what it means to be Black in Hawai’i and in the world through cultivating radical reconnection to ourselves, our community, our ancestors, and the land. To learn more about the Pōpolo Project, visit [thepopoloproject.org](http://thepopoloproject.org).”

# Danny De Gracia: It's Time For Hawaii To Officially Recognize Juneteenth

2/8/2021

Hawaii is one of only three states that don't yet officially commemorate Juneteenth, the day that marks the historic end of slavery in the United States.

When Samantha Neyland was crowned Miss Hawaii USA 2020, she saw a unique opportunity to bring people of diverse backgrounds together and do something special for Hawaii.

Neyland brought attention to the Legislature that Hawaii was one of only three states that didn't yet have an official recognition of Juneteenth – June 19 – the day that commemorates the historic end of slavery in the United States.

"I wanted to do something about it," Neyland said in a telephone interview last week.

Hawaii, which has struggled over the years to overcome its complicated history of annexation and plantations, has many ethnic and economic divisions to this day that draw parallels to the plight of African Americans who have been held back by structural or institutional violence.

As a point in case, a report recently released by the Honolulu Police Department showed that even Honolulu had a noticeable difference in the way police used force against Pacific Islanders, Native Hawaiians, and African Americans.

That these three local vulnerable populations are experiencing more stringent treatment from law enforcement in a place like Hawaii highlights the need to ameliorate race relations and change the way we perceive one another.

Recognizing Juneteenth in Hawaii would be one way to bring attention, particularly in public education, to the historical pattern of racial inequality in America, and might be a way to raise keiki who are aware of systemic issues and willing to fix them.

At the Legislature, there are currently four measures that seek to recognize Juneteenth in Hawaii. Senate Bill 16, Relating to State Holidays, introduced by Sen. Stanley Chang, would give local workers another day off to consider the importance of Juneteenth.



"Senate Bill 316, introduced by Sen. Brian Taniguchi, Senate Bill 939, by Sen. Glenn Wakai, and House Bill 1308, by House Vice Speaker John Mizuno, all recognize and commemorate Juneteenth, but do not designate it as a state holiday.

Neyland believes that giving people a symbolic day to reflect on and to study about the past would be a win for Hawaii, because all people, not just African Americans, can understand that freedom is what empowers everyone to accomplish great things.

Mizuno, who authored and introduced the House version in collaboration with Neyland, said that these types of moral "wins" are all the more important when the country is recovering from such a divisive and agonizing experience in the previous election year.

Mizuno said that domestic unrest and economic frustration are things that the Legislature needs to be sensitive to, and giving people a day that represents release from oppression and historic attention to injustice would be useful, even in Hawaii.





As we celebrate Black History Month, it's important to remember that disparities have significant impacts on an entire society," Mizuno said in a telephone interview.

"Celebrating Juneteenth is as much about Black Lives Matter as it is about bringing attention to the disparities between our vulnerable populations that make them more at-risk during the COVID-19 pandemic," he added.

Mizuno, who represents Kalihi Valley, is also acutely aware of the historical link that Filipinos and African Americans have shared. For much of America's history, both population groups were often relegated to menial positions in government and private sector occupations.

Only in the last 50 years have Filipinos and African Americans been able to start to assume more senior or meaningful positions of influence. "The civil rights movement broke the barriers and paved the way for all the other groups," Mizuno said.

I mentioned to Neyland this pattern, and how some of the country's most exceptional people have fought with all their human might for just the right to be considered human among their peers.

*"It's important to remember that disparities have significant impacts on an entire society." — House Vice Speaker John Mizuno*

When I think of the struggles for respect in America, I think of individuals like Benjamin O. Davis Jr., a Black officer who was appointed to West Point by the only Black member of Congress at the time, Rep. Oscar De Priest. While at the U.S. Military Academy, Davis was intentionally ignored during his four years and no one spoke a word to him at all.

In spite of this prejudice, Davis later became a WWII fighter pilot and a lieutenant general in the Air Force, and is one of many "all-stars" of African American history for his talent and determination.

What has always bothered me is that the individuals we commemorate are often people who succeeded because they were the absolute best-of-the-best. The people whom we don't hear about are the millions of other hard-working, ordinary individuals who never made it because they faced discrimination and were forced out. These people, if given a fair chance, probably would have become great in their fields.

"That's a good point," Neyland told me in response. "And I have always believed that true freedom is the freedom to fail and still be respected as a person. And that's what all this is about. Freedom to be a person; freedom to know that with all your imperfections and all your achievements, you are still always someone worthy of respect."

Now those are words of wisdom we all need to hear in 2021. Neyland's hope to make Juneteenth a recognition of these fundamental truths would be a great credit to both Hawaii and our aloha traditions, should these measures pass. Contact your representatives and senators and tell them you'd like to have a hearing scheduled for these bills. Together we can learn from the past and build a better future.



## RESOLUTION

PROCLAIMING JUNE 19TH AS JUNETEENTH FOR THE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU.

WHEREAS, Juneteenth, also known as "Juneteenth Independence Day," "Emancipation Day," "Emancipation Celebration," and "Freedom Day," is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth, a name derived from a portmanteau of the words "June" and "nineteenth," signifies the date June 19, 1865, when Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston and announced the emancipation of enslaved people in Texas, proclaiming General Order No. 3, almost two and one-half years after United States President Abraham Lincoln issued the *Emancipation Proclamation*; and

WHEREAS, the first Black people arrived in the Hawaiian Islands in the early 1800's as deckhands on merchant and whaling ships, and came from Cape Verde, Africa, the Caribbean and the United States. These early Black residents ended their maritime careers and settled in Hawaii, with many of them becoming successful musicians, businessmen, and respected government officials; and

WHEREAS, a decade before the United States Civil War and the *Emancipation Proclamation*, the *Kingdom of Hawaii Constitution of 1852* provided that "Slavery shall, under no circumstances whatsoever, be tolerated in the Hawaiian Islands; whenever a slave shall enter Hawaiian territory he shall be free, no person who imports a slave or slaves, into the King's dominions shall ever enjoy any civil or political rights in this realm"; and

WHEREAS, in 1897, Black citizens of the Kingdom of Hawaii joined Kanaka Maoli in their fight for liberation by signing the Ku'e Petition, protesting the annexation of the Kingdom of Hawaii by the United States; and

WHEREAS, the sustained and substantial contributions of Black people to Hawaii's community throughout its history include: Anthony D. Allen, formerly enslaved, was a steward to King Kamehameha I; Oliver and George Washington Hyatt, served as the first two leaders of the Royal Hawaiian Band under King Kamehameha III; Betsey Stockton, formerly enslaved, started the first mission school in Lahaina open to the common people; Buffalo Soldiers built the 18-mile trail to the summit of Mauna Loa; Alice A. Ball, a chemist who was the first woman to earn a master's degree from the University of Hawaii at Manoa and discovered the first treatment for leprosy (the "Ball Method"); Dr. Donnis Thompson, the University of Hawaii's first women's athletic director who started the Rainbow Wahine athletics program and successful wahine



## RESOLUTION

volleyball program; and many, many more unnamed contributors to Hawaii's excellence and history; and

WHEREAS, the history of the African diaspora in Hawaii and indigenous island communities across the Pacific, have endured shared systemic oppression and adversity, and have exhibited historical solidarity with the civil rights movements in the United States, including multiple visits by Dr. Martin Luther King to Oahu in 1959 and 1964, and with Dr. King and other civil rights leaders symbolic wearing of lei gifted to them by Reverend Abraham Akaka during the historic 1965 civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth commemorates Black African-American liberation, their reconnection to family and community, and collective abundance. It is a day, a week, and in some areas, a month, marked with celebrations, guest speakers, picnics, and family gatherings. It is a time for reflection and rejoicing as well as a time for assessment, self-improvement, and planning for the future; and

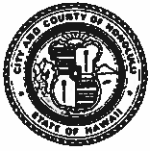
WHEREAS, our Black community is the current manifestation of their ancestors, continuing to contribute to the betterment of Hawaii as leaders, innovators, entrepreneurs, educators, athletes, artists, cultural practitioners, activists, environmentalists, healthcare professionals, scientists, attorneys, and policymakers; and

WHEREAS, there has been an outpouring of aloha from the broader Oahu community to support the peaceful protests and liberation efforts of the "Black Lives Matter" movement in the face of structural and systemic racism in the United States; and

WHEREAS, Juneteenth remains an important day of observance in the Black community that celebrates resilience and strength, and reminds all people that it is possible to have radical change to oppressive structures of society, affirming the freedom of all humanity; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu that it proclaims the annual date of June 19th to be "Juneteenth" in the City and County of Honolulu; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Administration is urged to join the Council in recognition of Juneteenth; and



**RESOLUTION**

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the City Administration and the people of the City and County of Honolulu are urged to join in celebrating Juneteenth as a day to honor and reflect on the significant role that the Black community has played in the history of the United States and in Hawaii, and how this community has enriched society through its steadfast commitment to promoting unity and equality; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Mayor and the Managing Director.

INTRODUCED BY:

Tommy Waters

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DATE OF INTRODUCTION:

June 12, 2020  
Honolulu, Hawaii

\_\_\_\_\_  
Councilmembers

CITY COUNCIL  
CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU  
HONOLULU, HAWAII  
CERTIFICATE

RESOLUTION 20-154, FD1

Introduced: 06/12/20 By: TOMMY WATERS

Committee: PUBLIC SAFETY AND WELFARE

Title: RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING JUNE 19<sup>TH</sup> AS JUNETEENTH FOR THE CITY AND COUNTY OF HONOLULU.

Voting Legend: \* = Aye w/Reservations

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|          |                           |  |
|----------|---------------------------|--|
| 06/18/20 | PUBLIC SAFETY AND WELFARE | CR-164 – RESOLUTION REPORTED OUT OF COMMITTEE FOR ADOPTION.<br>4 AYES: FUKUNAGA, MENOR, TSUNEYOSHI, WATERS.<br>1 EXCUSED: MANAHAN.   |
| 07/08/20 | COUNCIL                   | AMENDED TO FD1 (OCS2020-0654/6/30/2020 12:42 PM).<br>9 AYES: ANDERSON, ELEFANTE, FUKUNAGA, KOBAYASHI, MANAHAN, MENOR, PINE, TSUNEYOSHI, WATERS.<br>CR-164 AND RESOLUTION 20-154, FD1 WERE ADOPTED.<br>9 AYES: ANDERSON, ELEFANTE, FUKUNAGA, KOBAYASHI, MANAHAN, MENOR, PINE, TSUNEYOSHI, WATERS. |

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I hereby certify that the above is a true record of action by the Council of the City and County of Honolulu on this RESOLUTION.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
GLEN I. TAKAHASHI, CITY CLERK

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
IKAIKA ANDERSON, CHAIR AND PRESIDING OFFICER



Young Progressives Demanding Action  
P.O. Box 11105  
Honolulu, HI 96828

February 17, 2021

**TO: SENATE COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS**  
**RE: Testimony in Support of SB939**

Dear Senators,

Young Progressives Demanding Action **strongly supports SB939**. It is way past time for Hawai'i to join the 47 other states that honor this important day. Juneteenth, also known as "Freedom Day," commemorates the ending of slavery in the United States on June 19, 1865. North Dakota, South Dakota and Hawai'i are the only states that do not celebrate Juneteenth. "The Aloha State" should acknowledge this historic and longstanding holiday.

Hawai'i has a proud history of being on the forefront of racial and social justice. As early as 1852 the Kingdom of Hawai'i wrote into law that "Slavery shall, under no circumstances whatsoever, be tolerated in the Hawaiian Islands; whenever a slave shall enter Hawaiian territory he shall be free, no person who imports a slave or slaves, into the King's dominions shall ever enjoy any civil or political rights." Rightfully recognizing Juneteenth will not only uphold this legacy, but will also send a message of solidarity to all of Hawai'i's African-American community members.

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify,

Will Caron  
Board President & Secretary  
action@ypdahawaii.org

**LATE**

**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/17/2021 11:28:46 PM  
Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b>                      | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Thomas Brandt       | Testifying for Foresight/Policy Analysis | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

Support.

**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/16/2021 9:24:41 AM

Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Samantha Neyland    | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

Samantha Neyland, Miss Hawaii USA 2020, will be speaking on behalf of herself and the Hawaii For Juneteenth.



**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/12/2021 7:19:46 PM

Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mike Golojuch, Sr.  | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

It is important to recognize Juneteenth. Please pass.

Mike Golojuch, Sr.

**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/14/2021 5:08:26 AM

Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Edward B Hanel Jr   | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

Diversity should always be supported in the Rainbow State. Creation of "Juneteenth Day" is an easy and inexpensive means to promote Diversity. Concur with Common Cause Hawaii comments in support of this bill.

**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/14/2021 8:58:35 AM

Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Dyson Chee          | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

Mahalo for the opportunity to testify in support of SB939.

**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/14/2021 9:19:57 PM

Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Eileen McKee        | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

Aloha,

I strongly support the passage of SB939.

Mahalo for considering my testimony.

Eileen McKee

Kihei, HI

**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/15/2021 8:55:03 AM

Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| laurie boyle        | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

I support sb939 for the simple reason that the USA turned us away from slavery and bondage and finally toward freedom and justice. Just as we abolished slavery, we need to undo the brain bondage of racism and hatred of those who are of a different color or place of origin.

Mahalo for your attention.

**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/15/2021 11:59:08 AM

Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Zara Nicholson      | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

**Aloha e Chair, Vice-Chair, Members of the Committee,**

**My name is Zara Nicholson and I am testifying in support of SB939.**

**I believe this bill will create a great positive impact in our community. Hawaii holds a unique diversity of residents and thus should be on the forefront of progress and inclusivity. However, Hawaii is currently one of the four states that has not yet recognized Juneteenth as an official holiday. This is unacceptable. Recognizing Juneteenth as a holiday is an important way to support our black community members. Please push this bill to be passed.**

**Mahalo nui loa for the opportunity,**

**Zara Nicholson, CPA**

**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/15/2021 12:23:50 PM

Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Leimomi Khan        | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

Support. As an advocate for Native Hawaiian well-being, aware of the struggles and discrimination against our people, I can relate to the struggles of those enslaved in the United States and celebrate the end of the Civil War and the end of slavery. This bill will remind us of those struggles and the contributions of African Americans in the history of the United States and in Hawaii.

**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/17/2021 1:18:49 PM

Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Mary Lacques        | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

Testimony in strong support of SB 939. Let's follow the Honolulu City Council's lead by annually proclaiming the date of June 19 to be "Juneteenth" across the Hawaiian Islands.



**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/13/2021 1:22:23 PM

Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Gerard Silva        | Individual          | Oppose                    | No                        |

Comments:

This is just plain STUPID!!

**LATE**

**SB-939**

Submitted on: 2/17/2021 7:56:23 PM  
Testimony for GVO on 2/18/2021 3:00:00 PM

| <b>Submitted By</b> | <b>Organization</b> | <b>Testifier Position</b> | <b>Present at Hearing</b> |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Barbara J. Service  | Individual          | Support                   | No                        |

Comments:

Please support the establishment of June 19th as Juneteenth Day. This is long overdue!

Mahalo!

Barbara J. Service MSW (ret.)

Senior Advocate