

OPINION

Letter to the Editor

Mixed Emotions in Making of Holiday

Vancouver NAACP on progress; challenges ahead



Editor's note: Vancouver NAACP President Jasmine Tolbert shares the following message about making Juneteenth a new federal holiday and the need to continue efforts to dismantle systemic racism.

My Dear Community,
For many Black citizens, this past Juneteenth stirred up mixed feelings. The signing of Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday, brought on frustration that other items like reparations, voting rights, or the restructuring of policing have not been passed. Folks want to celebrate our true Independence Day, but they also want to be liberated from the things that keep them from freedom. Please know that a holiday being passed does not stop your

leaders at the NAACP from continuing to fight for change and dismantle systemic racism. We will still celebrate for a day that many of our ancestors could only dream of celebrating. For long-time NAACP member Carol Collier, the Juneteenth holiday is the first step towards reparations. A former Vancouver NAACP treasurer and Juneteenth Committee chairperson, Collier said the signing of the legislation last Thursday making Juneteenth a federal holiday marked the first

step of a long held dream and vision. Collier served on the Juneteenth Committee since its inception 10 years ago, nine of them as chair. Growing up in Lake Charles, La., about an hour and 45 minutes from Galveston, Texas, Juneteenth was a day that her family celebrated as traditionally as the Fourth of July. The celebration always involved oral and recorded accountings of the story behind it and included the mantra that Juneteenth should be known and recognized throughout the nation. Collier was excited to help bring the history and culture of Juneteenth to Vancouver. For her, formalizing the holiday was just the first step towards America coming to terms with the need to make reparations for slavery. "Juneteenth is now a holiday as a result of education and truth in education helping people understand this nation's history and come to terms with recognizing and memorializing that truth," Collier said. "For me this is the real first step towards reparations

for descendants of slaves in this country. I carry that hope and will continue to work towards that goal. It may not happen in my lifetime, but maybe it will happen for my grandchild." Collier advises us to all explore our family history and document and pass that information on to future generations because she believe that one day, we'll need proof that we are descendants of slaves in order to qualify for reparation payments. "Our long overdue forty acres and a mule," she said.

Warmly,
Jasmine Tolbert,
president of NAACP
Vancouver Branch 9

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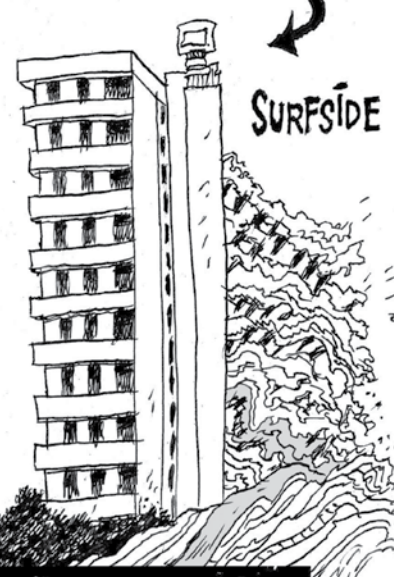
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