

# Rep. Stubbs: The 2023 Juneteenth City-County celebration and flag raising ceremony

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MADISON - On Tuesday, June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2023, community leaders and members of the public gathered at the Madison City-County Building to celebrate Juneteenth and raise the Juneteenth flag.

Representative Shelia Stubbs (D-Madison) released the following statement:

“Today, I joined elected officials, pastors, and community leaders to begin celebrating the Juneteenth holiday and raise the Juneteenth flag above the Madison City-County Building. We celebrate Juneteenth in Madison thanks to the efforts of community activist, Mrs. Annie Weatherby-Flowers, who first brought the celebration to our community. In her words:

“Juneteenth is an essential celebration to the fabric of the African American community. I pay special regard to the Black church which has always given our community a safe space to foster our activism and rejoice in the work of Black liberation and transformation.”

“We celebrate Juneteenth across the nation due to the passion and activism of the late Dr. Reverend Ronald Myers who founded the original National Juneteenth Observance Foundation and is known as the father of the modern day Juneteenth movement. I pay my deep respects to Dr. Reverend Ronald Myers whose life work culminated in the federal recognition of this holiday, but who sadly, did not live to see this accomplishment. However, his legacy is felt now and always, through every celebration of Juneteenth. And of course, I honor the incredible activist Ms. Opal Lee, who is known as the grandmother of Juneteenth and whose work has been

integral to the national recognition of Juneteenth.”

“I am delighted to take part in these celebrations that honor the rich history and incredible cultural contributions of African Americans, and to demonstrate my commitment to enhancing and protecting the freedoms our ancestors fought so hard to gain. During my time on the County Board, I championed all efforts to recognize Juneteenth formally at our Madison City-County Building. Now, the flag continues to be raised every year and county personnel receive time off to learn, acknowledge, and celebrate this important holiday. I also brought the flag to our very own Wisconsin State Capitol. I have ensured our flag is flown to commemorate this holiday because Black history, Black independence is American history, American independence.”

“Juneteenth, known as America’s second Independence Day, has long been celebrated by the African American community, but only recently became a federal holiday in June of 2021. Juneteenth is a celebration of the historic day, June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1865, when more than 250,000 enslaved African Americans in the Confederate territory of Texas finally became free, nearly two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation took effect. On Juneteenth we recognize not only one day in history, but every day, every sacrifice, every triumph of the African American community. From the battle fields of the civil war where African Americans gave their lives for our nation; to the neighborhoods of Tulsa in 1921, where hundreds of African Americans’ lives, homes, and achievements were destroyed in a massacre by white supremacists; to the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, to which Civil Rights activists marched for freedom in 1963; to the Capitol square of Madison, Wisconsin in 2023, where our amazing community often gathers to continue the fight for equity and prosperity.”

“Unfortunately, in 2023, the legacy of racism still plagues our society. The Black community still suffers from the same harmful systems of power and oppression that were in place hundreds of years ago. These systems may look different, but make no mistake, they fulfill the same purpose as in the past. In Wisconsin, the Black community is disproportionately incarcerated; disproportionately killed by gun violence; Black mothers and Black babies face the worse health outcomes; Black families lack equal access to educational and economic opportunities; Black communities constantly face life-threatening interactions with the criminal justice system.”

“Juneteenth is a celebration of the strength, resilience, and empowerment of the African American community. Juneteenth is a time to pay our respects to the millions of lives that were wrongfully oppressed and enslaved for hundreds of years; to our ancestors who fought for our freedoms; to the African American community for fostering love and light even in the darkest of times. Today, we celebrate, but we also continue to fight. We fight to heal the wrongs of the past; to build communities where every person can thrive; to embrace one another as family no matter our different identities and backgrounds. We reflect and we recommit. We recommit ourselves to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; to equality; to equity. We pursue the dreams of our ancestors, to live free and live well; to build a more prosperous, perfect union for our children to enjoy. This is what Juneteenth is all about.”

“I would like to thank everyone who took the time to be at the flag raising. Thank you to every member of the public and every legislator who have taken time to understand the deep significance of the Juneteenth holiday. I quote the inspiring words of civil rights activist and former US Congressman, John Lewis, who said:

“Ours is not the struggle of one day, one week, or one year. Ours is not the struggle of one judicial appointment or presidential term. Ours is the struggle of a lifetime, or maybe even many lifetimes, and each one of us in every generation must do our part.”

Let us hear this call to action; this call for justice; this call for freedom.

Happy Juneteenth, Madison!”