

HARLEM CONGREGATIONS FOR COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT, INC.

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**EMPOWERING HARLEMITES
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1986

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JUNETEENTH 2020 MESSAGE

“Nowhere in the annals of history has a people experienced such a long and traumatic ordeal as Africans during the Atlantic slave trade. Over the nearly four centuries of the slave trade - which continued until the end of the Civil War - millions of African men, women, and children were savagely torn from their homeland, herded onto ships, and dispersed all over the so-called New World. Although there is no way to compute exactly how many people perished, it has been estimated that between thirty and sixty million Africans were subjected to this horrendous triangular trade system and that only one third- if that- of those people survive ...” Dr. John Henrick Clarke.

Whereas African captives, through forced immigration and free labor, was the answer to a labor shortage and an economic crisis in the United States, Juneteenth is a celebration of Emancipation, Freedom and Hope for African men, women and children living in the United States of America.

Harlem Congregations for Community Improvement, Inc. (“HCCI”), its Board of Directors and staff join and support the more than 41.4 million African decedents of the formerly enslaved living in the United States of America in the celebration of Juneteenth on June 19, 2020, a uniquely African American Day of Emancipation. We encourage all decedents of Africa and all people of good will to join us in celebrating the Emancipation of the ancestors of African Americans in the U.S.

Juneteenth celebrates the end of slavery in the United States. It is also known as Emancipation Day—Juneteenth Independence Day and Black Independence Day, June 19, 1865, marks the date that Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, TX, and announced the end of both the Civil War and slavery.

The 1865 date is largely symbolic. The Emancipation Proclamation, issued by President Abraham Lincoln, had legally freed slaves on January 1, 1863, almost 2½ years earlier. Even after Lincoln’s Executive Order, read by General Granger, in Galveston Texas, a rumor was that some slave owners withheld the information from their captives, holding them in enslavement through one more harvest season.

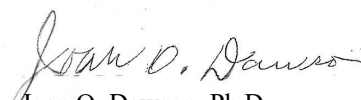
Since the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863, African American’s still continue to endure the hardships associated with systematic racism and purposeful violence. In spite of this continued system of inequities, African descendants have been on the forefront for building many institutional pillars of America including, but not limited to inventions, construction trade systems, schools, universities, vaccines, unique medical breakthroughs, visual and performing arts accomplishments and numerous other contributions to a quality of life that Americans enjoy while denying the descendent of slaves from enjoying that same privilege. The seat of our present day government was designed by an African American man, Benjamin Banneker, a brilliant mathematician and astronomer.


Challenges to these privileges are being addressed by HCCI through its mission and dedication to the total liberation of our communities from modern-day imbedded and structural systems of enslavement. These challenges exist in the form of inadequate physical and mental health, the pandemics of violence and racism coupled with poor housing conditions, inadequate and inappropriate education and endemic poverty.

Founded in 1986, HCCI is a coalition of inter-faith congregations that has implemented a comprehensive portfolio of programs to provide affordable housing and safe streets; offer opportunities for individuals and groups to become and remain economically independent; increase understanding of and access to health care; and provide substantive educational programs for adults and young people. Through alliances with other community organizations, elected officials and local residents, HCCI has also helped reduce crime in the community; increase public sanitation; and preserve and transform open space.

Leveraging more than \$550 million in support from federal, state, and city agencies, HCCI’s real estate office has developed more than 4,000 units of low, moderate and middle-income housing and more than 70 commercial spaces including a 45,000 sq. ft. supermarket. Our health office provides scattered-site housing for 60 families and individuals living with HIV/AIDS. HCCI’s adult education programs include soft employment skills, literacy training (in conjunction with Literacy Partners), and computer software training - all linked with job placement. To date, we have placed more than 2000 residents in employment opportunities. HCCI currently has operations throughout New York, NY, Atlanta, GA, and Seattle, WA.




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