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MAYOR DE BLASIO COMMEMORATES JUNETEENTH WITH NEW RACIAL JUSTICE AND RECONCILIATION COMMISSION

Commission will address systemic racism through policy action and documenting the history of racial discrimination in NYC

NEW YORK—Today, Mayor Bill de Blasio announced additional steps the City is taking to address disparities and structural racism that have been exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of that effort, the City will commemorate Juneteenth, a holiday celebrating the emancipation of enslaved Africans, with a new commission to understand the effects of structural and institutional racism in New York City. The Racial Justice and Reconciliation Commission (RRC) will be established to promote social learning, collective introspection, and policy action. In addition, the Commission will create a historical record of racial discrimination, with an emphasis on housing, criminal justice, environmental racism and public health.

“New York City is the safest big city in America with crime at all-time lows, yet communities of color bear the brunt of crime and incarceration,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Racism has been a pervasive and consequential force throughout the city’s history and we cannot go back to the status quo. We must use the past to inform and inspire the present, to promote the dignity and well-being of all New Yorkers, and their full inclusion in the life of our city.”

“Communities of color experience the painful cost of being black or brown every day, and confronting this legacy of systemic racism requires that we confront history,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. “Reconciliation is not an alternative to justice, but it is necessary to build trust and create a stronger, fairer City for generations to come.”

Racial injustices are manifested in a myriad of ways, from notorious episodes of racial violence to less visible policies and practices that reinforce racial segregation and impact the health and economic opportunity of New Yorkers. The RRC will examine how these forces shaped the physical and social geography of the city and provide a platform for New Yorkers to share their personal experiences and to participate in policy deliberations. The City will work with the Commission to identify and examine focus areas where discrimination has manifested, including housing, criminal justice, environmental justice, education and place-based disparities.

No major U.S. city or state has undergone a comprehensive truth and reconciliation process. New York City will model this process after universities and other nations, such as the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). Following the end of apartheid, the TRC format has been adopted in many places as a forum to reconcile historic injustice based on race or ethnicity with the need for perpetrators and victims to live together. They are based in the theory of restorative justice, focusing on rehabilitation through reconciliation with victims and the community at large.

Juneteenth Education

The Department of Education has shared lessons, discussion guides, readings, and other age-appropriate instructional [materials](#) for educators to teach lessons about Juneteenth. The DOE is encouraging teachers to use them today, but also in coming days to help students understand the American history of enslaving Africans, race, and racism in our culture. The Mayor is also making Juneteenth an official City and school holiday.

Black Lives Matter Murals

The Mayor also announced the locations for street murals in each of the five boroughs to commemorate the Black Lives Matter movement. The street murals will be at the following locations, to be completed in the next few weeks:

Queens: 153rd Street between Jamaica Avenue and Archer Avenue

Bronx: Morris Avenue between 161st Street and 162nd Street

Brooklyn: Joralemon Street between Adams Street and Court Street

Manhattan: Centre Street between Worth Street and Reade Street

Staten Island: Richmond Terrace between Hamilton Avenue and Ferry Terminal Viaduct

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