

Twin Cities marks 25th anniversary of Juneteenth Celebration

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As it celebrates its 25th anniversary, the local Juneteenth Celebration continues to highlight the wellness and improvement of the African American community in the Twin Cities. The theme for this summer's event is "Celebrating the Spirit of Freedom and Community."

Juneteenth, the oldest celebration of the end of American slavery, began in Galveston, TX, in 1865, when Union troops enforced the Emancipation Proclamation declaring all slaves freed in revolting states. Upon notice of their freedom two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, the former slaves held community festivals oriented to support the former slaves in their efforts to realize their new freedoms through voting, education, and community welfare as well as picnics, family games, arts and music.

The Twin Cities' Juneteenth Celebration is one of the two largest in the nation, surpassing even that in Texas, where it's a state holiday.

Other notable facts: the buying power for Black Minnesotans increased sharply over the past decade, according to the Selig Center for Economic Growth; Blacks' disposable income increased to nearly \$4 billion, according to the Twin Cities Business Journal. And more than 30 percent of Black Minnesotans, who account for an 11 percent increase of the state's population, attend the Twin Cities Juneteenth Festival.

The festival will be held at the North Mississippi Regional Park, located at 5114 North Mississippi Drive in Minneapolis. A popular local recreation spot, the park has plenty of picnic facilities, and walking and bike trails, which connect with Webber Parkway and downtown commuter routes. There is also a boat launch and fishing dock. For more information about the festival, contact: **John Jamison at (612) 238-3733**