

Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace Commemorates Juneteenth

The Interfaith Communities United for Justice and Peace (ICUJP) joins our African American sisters and brothers in celebrating Juneteenth, looking to their leadership in the constant struggle for justice and peace. We lift up the spirit of the murdered George Floyd and far too many other Black and Brown men and women killed by people in uniform, as part of the cruel legacy of slavery that persists to this day.

It was on June 19th, 1865, that Union soldiers marched into Texas to tell all the people that the Civil War was over and slavery had been ended – two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863. Immediately, many newly emancipated people took off for northern states, went to look for family members in other southern states, joined the more than four thousand self-liberated men and women who had been welcomed into México, or traveled even further to homestead in the West.

Founded immediately after 9/11, ICUJP has worked under the banner of “Religious Communities Must Stop Blessing War and Violence.” We recognize that as we work to end foreign wars, rein in our military, stop torture in Guantánamo, and deny the use of racist designations to label our "enemies" abroad, we must also work locally to rein in on our police, stop torture in our prisons and jails, and deny the use of of racist designations to label "dangerous criminals" at home. We recognize that as

our military must be seriously defunded, so must our police forces.

But we also believe that poverty is violence. Like bombs and batons, poverty kills. And like police violence, incarceration, homelessness and paltry health care, poverty disproportionately affects the lives of our African American sisters and brothers. We are appalled that, though only 22 percent of counties in the United States are disproportionately Black, 60 percent of the nation's COVID-19 deaths are in these counties.

Therefore, ICUJP celebrates Juneteenth as part of our ongoing struggle to free:

- enslaved people throughout the world who are trafficked for labor or sex,
- people in wage slavery, working low-wage and often dangerous jobs for lack of alternatives, disproportionately the descendants of those freed by the Emancipation Proclamation or liberated on Juneteenth,
- exploited prison labor,
- people who are locked up, deported and being separated from their families because of their immigration status, for trying to find a better violence-free life, and
- all victims of racial, economic, judicial, and environmental violence and injustice.

A better, just, and equal world is possible.