



Diversity Task Force
Town Hall
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Groton, Massachusetts 01450
selectboard@grotonma.gov

Raquel Majeski, Chair
Michelle Collette, Vice Chair
Gordon Candow
Susan Hughes
Bhaskar Gupta Karpurapu
Deirdre Slavin Mitchell
James Moore
Fran Stanley

Regular Session Minutes

Date/Time: Thursday, June 2, 2022 at 7 pm
Location: Virtual meeting
Members in attendance: Susan Hughes, James Moore, Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell, Michelle Collette, and Fran Stanley
Referenced document: *Why Juneteenth is Important to Me* by James Santo Moore [revised version]
Groton Public Library Flyer describing Juneteenth events and a list of Juneteenth facts
Chelmsford Flyer promoting June 18 event with Raquel Majeski as Keynote Speaker

Michelle Collette called the meeting to order at 7:10 pm. Roll call was taken and members identified themselves. Cameras for Committee members were on.

Agenda item: Approve Minutes

Fran Stanley moved to approve the May 19, 2022 minutes as corrected. Susan Hughes seconded and the motion carried (5:0) by roll call vote of Hughes – aye, Moore – aye, Slavin-Mitchell – aye, Collette – aye and Stanley – aye (Gupta Karpurapu, Majeski and Candow absent).

Agenda item: Review Juneteenth events

Committee reviewed upcoming Juneteenth events:

June 1 – July 8: Groton Public Library will display an **original copy of the Emancipation Proclamation** on loan from the Groton History Center.

June 1 – June 25: Groton Public Library Children's Room will lead a series of **story strolls** for *Juneteenth* for *Maisie* through the reading garden behind the library.

Thursday, June 16 at 10:30 am: Groton Public Library Children's Room presents a **Juneteenth Storytime for preschoolers** read by Strega Mama (Jaquie Waters).

Saturday, June 18 from 1 to 3 pm: Committee members will participate individually in the **Chelmsford Juneteenth** event located on Chelmsford Common (4 North Street, Chelmsford, MA). Raquel Majeski will be the keynote speaker for the event.

Sunday, June 19 at 2 pm: ***George Boutwell and the Emancipation Proclamation: Saying What Lincoln Couldn't Say***. Historical talk given by Jeffrey Boutwell at The Center, 163 West Main Street. This free presentation in celebration of the Juneteenth holiday and the abolition of slavery is made possible by the Commissioners of Trust Funds. All are invited.

Monday, June 20 at 6 pm: **Free webinar with Annette Gordon-Reed**, the author of *On Juneteenth*. Sponsored by the Boston Public Library, MA State Library, WGBH and the Forum Network. Register via the Groton Public Library. Groton Public Library has 50 free copies of *On Juneteenth* purchased with funds from the Town of Groton Diversity Fund.

Tuesday, June 21 from 7 pm to 8:30 pm: **Outdoor musical performance *Celebrating Strong Roots: Exploring America's African Roots Through Music and Dance*** gazebo behind the Groton Public Library. From Pop/Rock/Neo-Soul music to Tap dance/Charleston and Lindy Hop, join pianist/composer Kevin Harris,

dancer/choreographer Ricardo Foster, and drummer Tyson Jackson for an outdoor performance to celebrate the legacy and resilience of Black Culture through music and dance. Bring your own chair or blanket and enjoy the celebration! Sponsored by Town of Groton's Trust Funds' Lecture Fund and the Groton Public Library Endowment Trust. Register via the Groton Public Library.

Agenda item: Approve James Moore's submission to the *Groton Herald*

James Moore and Susan Hughes worked to condense and edit down the original written piece to almost 900 words in hopes of fitting in with the *Groton Herald's* parameters for submission. The original piece will be carried in a different market/region by the *Worcester Magazine*.

Susan Hughes moved to accept James Moore's article and to have it submitted to the Groton Herald on behalf of the Diversity Task Force. James Moore seconded and the motion carried (5:0) by roll call vote of Hughes – aye, Moore – aye, Slavin-Mitchell – aye, Collette – aye and Stanley – aye (Gupta Karpurapu, Majeski and Candow absent).

Susan Hughes will send the approved text into the Groton Herald staff. James Moore share photographs in a .jpg image format.

Agenda item: Invitation to attend meeting of housing committees

Fran Stanley, speaking on behalf of the Affordable Housing Trust, invited the Diversity Task Force committee to attend a meeting of Groton's housing committees to be held Wednesday June 22, 2022 at 7 pm at The Center, 163 West Main Street. Invitees are Groton's three housing committees, the Select Board and the Diversity Task Force (due to the Task Force's interest in housing matters.).

As with last year's Housing Summit, this meeting will be public. Unlike the Housing Summit, the focus will be on communication between housing committees updating each other on their activities and intentions. Other topics may include MBTA Communities legislation regarding multi-family zoning, 40B applications (if there is activity in this area), and other affordable housing topics.

Michelle Collette said that the next meeting will include brainstorming on where to go from here with respect to Committee efforts. Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell requested an agenda item to have the Committee talk about why the Town Seal change ballot question failed.¹ Susan Hughes noted the contrast between the pro and con statements for the ballot question, specifically, the pro statement had facts and the con statement was entirely an emotional appeal. James Moore asked what do we do with a close vote. Michelle Collette said that post mortems are important. The group agreed that this is an important discussion to have.

Michelle Collette stated that she was working as an election clerk for precincts 1 and 3A during the May 24, 2022 local election and there were many inactive voters. She recounted that one inactive voter who was an Asian man said to her "I know why you are doing this. You don't want people who look like me to vote." Michelle Collette tried to reassure the person that this was not the case. Fran Stanley said that an inactive voter is still a registered voter and that voter activity resets each calendar year.

Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell said that her personal voter status was also inactive when she went to vote on May 24 and she votes at every election. She said that this experience was uncomfortable for her despite her many years in Town and recalls mailing in a completed town census. Deirdre Slavin-Mitchell surmised and the group agreed that a person hearing that they are inactive voter can be upsetting if someone doesn't feel personally integrated into the community. This might have been the perspective of the inactive voter who spoke with Michelle Collette.

Meeting adjourned at 7:39 pm.

Future meetings: Thursday June 16, 2022 at 7 pm (regularly scheduled meeting)
Wednesday June 22, 2022 at 7 pm (housing committees meeting at The Center)

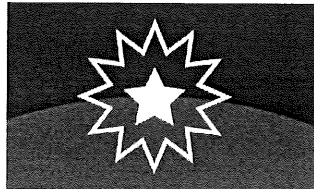
¹ In the May 24, 2022 town election, the non-binding referendum asking "Should the Seal of the Town of Groton be modified by removing the words "Holy Bible" from the image of the book in the center of the Seal, leaving the image of the book blank?" did not pass with 1063 voting 'no' and 968 voting 'yes'.

JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION

SATURDAY, JUNE 18

1PM-3PM

Chelmsford Town Common



Chelmsford Diversity, Equity
& Inclusion

Learn the history of June 19,
1865



Music, Food Vendors, Poetry
Community Engagement
Kids Activities & more



Raquel Majeski, Keynote Speaker
Chair of Groton, MA Diversity Task
Force and Head Assistant Head of
School for Equity and Community
Life at Lawrence Academy



Hello Juneteenth Participants,

On behalf of the Chelmsford Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee(DEIC) we want to thank you for being a part of our Juneteenth celebration.

We know our event will be successful because of your willingness to showcase your talents and businesses.

The Juneteenth celebration takes place on Chelmsford's Town Common. Set up for the event begins at 12 noon. The festivities begin at 1pm and concludes around 3pm. The breakdown begins immediately after the event.

There will be volunteers there to help guide and direct you. If you have a table and tent, please bring those with you. If you need any assistance prior to the event, please contact me, Cherrice @978-399-6892.

Again, thank you for your support and participation. We plan to have an awesome time

Kind Regards,
DEIC Juneteenth Working Group
Cherrice Lattimore, Carly Reim, Rachel Donovan, Latosha Dixon

Juneteenth: A Descendant's Perspective

Juneteenth is a celebration of the final chapter of a tale of sin and sorrow, embellished with ignorance, hatred and greed, punctuated with violence, and concluded with a theme of courage, perseverance, hope and love. Ironically, it is a story of freedom from a society that blindly claimed to be free. It is an American story to be

celebrated by all Americans because it is filled with the mistakes of our past as well as our ability to grow and become a better nation - more united, more understanding and more loving of each other and our world.

Juneteenth, perhaps above all else, is a celebration of redemption. For my family, redemption began with my great-grandfather, William James Moore.

The son of slaves emancipated during the Civil War, William (as he was known), was born in 1872 in West Chester, PA. Because his father was a sexton at the First Presbyterian Church, William's playmates included the white children of the town's elite families. Like many kids, they enjoyed spending time together in the woods, absent from the heavy eyes of their parents. They played various games, most of which led to discovery and exploration. They also read and William, whose parents were refused a formal education and were considered chattel to be bought and sold, acquired a true passion for the universe around him. In the late 1800s, the idea that a Black person had the capacity to master the complexities of the "educated" world was folly. Regardless, William became a strong student.

William was the first Black student to graduate high school in West Chester. In 1892, he graduated from Howard University and was later asked to start a school for Black youth in Cape May, NJ, a segregated town that lay on the border that separated the North from the South less than 30 years previously. He was given charge of a one-room schoolhouse with children of all ages since the education of Black youth was inconsistent at best. The school grew and evolved, and he was an educator there for 53 years. He had a truly inspiring record of getting young, Black students to college.

This was not making William a rich man, so to supplement his income and help support his family, he started to work summers cleaning the locker rooms at the Cape May Golf and Tennis Club. Not only a great teacher but also a fine athlete, he picked up the game of tennis in his thirties and eventually became the first Black tennis pro in the country, teaching others how to play and improve their game using a unique and effective teaching style that is still recognized today. The tennis courts became his home away from home. In his honor, this club was eventually named the William J. Moore Tennis Center.

William lived for 100 years, dying when I was 8-years-old. One night, when I was 32, he came to me in a dream. His message was clear: our family had gotten off the path. Within three years, I was standing in front of a group of students in a high school classroom in Worcester.

How many Americans have benefited from the cloth of caring that William lovingly wove? This does not only include the myriad of students that walked into his classroom or onto his courts. His spirit of supporting others is the fibers threaded through my family. My grandfather served in the Coast Guard; my father was in the Army and coached youth track; my two brothers are both retired New Jersey State Troopers; I taught for 21 years; my daughter manages a community farm. How many of us will never even know the considerable gifts emancipation has given us?

Of course, the ongoing transition from a slaveholding society to one of true equality has not been smooth, but things of such importance are rarely so. We are still learning. These are lessons in need of thoughtful teaching and continual patience, and with the vitriol of today, too many of us are teaching poorly. I believe William would agree. As difficult as these lessons are, we need them because we continue to make mistakes that will need to be corrected. In her book *On Juneteenth*, Annette Gordon-Reed wrote, "Love does not require taking an uncritical stance toward the object of one's affections. In truth, it often requires the opposite.... How that is done matters, of course. Striking the right balance can be exceedingly hard" (Gordon-Reed 141).

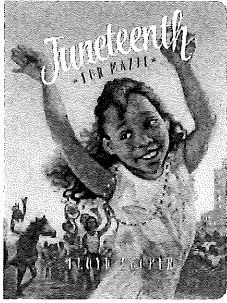
It is my hope that we can continue to work towards our collective future together, no matter what "side" we are on, as Americans and as human beings, with the determination that comes with a knowledge that no matter how clumsily we proceed, we really can become a more loving and caring people. It is my hope that we can all learn, embrace and cherish the lessons of Juneteenth.

James Santo Moore lives in Groton and is a member of the Diversity Task Force. An expanded version of this article can be found at <https://rsjq.org/>

*The Groton Public Library has 50 copies of *On Juneteenth* by Annette Gordon-Reed available for free. The books are donated by the Diversity Task Force and made available through the Town of Groton Diversity Fund.*

[photos omitted]

FREE Juneteenth Events 2022



June 1- 25

The Groton Public Library Children's Room will have a "story stroll" of *Juneteenth for Mazie*. It will be located in the reading garden behind the library June 1 through the week of Juneteenth.

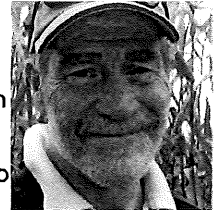
Thursday, June 16 at 10:30 am

Groton Public Library Children's Room presents Strega Mama (Jacquie Waters) for a Juneteenth Storytime for pre-schoolers featuring *Juneteenth for Mazie*.

Sunday June 19 @ 2:00 PM

George Boutwell & the Emancipation Proclamation: Saying What Lincoln Couldn't Say

Jeffrey Boutwell will return to Groton and speak about George Boutwell's role in ending slavery. In the spring and summer of 1862, George Boutwell was Abraham Lincoln's point man in advocating for emancipation, both as a moral duty and a military necessity, at a time when the President had to be cautious about getting ahead of public opinion. This Groton History Center program will take place at the Groton Center.



Monday June 20 at 7:00 PM

Boston Public Library, MA State Library, WGBH, and the Forum Network are having a webinar with Annette Gordon-Reed, Pulitzer Prize winning author of *On Juneteenth*. Interweaving American history, dramatic family chronicle, and searing episodes of memoir, Annette Gordon-Reed, the descendant of enslaved people brought to Texas in the 1850s, recounts the origins of Juneteenth and explores the legacies of the holiday that remain with us. A commemoration of Juneteenth and the fraught legacies of slavery that still persist, *On Juneteenth* is a stark reminder that the fight for equality is ongoing"

Sign up at gpl.org/calendar.

The Town of Groton Diversity Task Force has 50 FREE copies of *On Juneteenth* by Annette Gordon-Reed to give away at the Groton Public Library.

Tues June 21st at 7:00 PM

(rain date Thurs June 23)

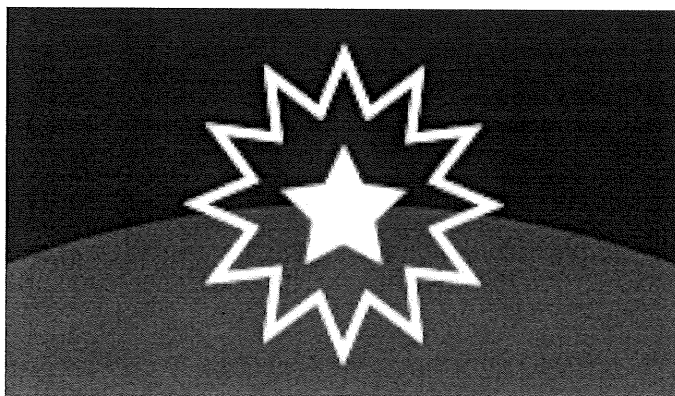
Celebrating Strong Roots: Exploring America's African Roots Through Music and Dance with The Kevin Harris Project

Pianist and composer Kevin Harris, drummer Ricardo Foster and dancer/choreographer Tyson Jackson come together for a lively performance at the Gazebo behind the Library. Music will begin at 7pm but feel free to bring a picnic dinner for the whole family to celebrate together! RSJG will provide cupcakes for all! Sign up at gpl.org/calendar
Sponsored by the Town of Groton Trust Fund's Lecture Fund and the GPL Endowment Trust. Presented by Groton Public Library with the Racial Social Justice Group.



June 1- July 8

GPL will display an original copy of the Emancipation Proclamation on loan from the Groton History Center.



10 Facts of Juneteenth

- Juneteenth celebrates the abolishment of Slavery.
- The Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 abolished slavery; *however, it took 2.5 more years* for the Union Army to take over the Confederacy in Texas.
- Union Army General Gordon Granger arrived in Texas and announced that ALL SLAVES ARE FREE on, you guessed it, June 19, 1865!
- Juneteenth is remembered as 'the end of slavery', however, the slaves of Delaware and Kentucky didn't get emancipated until December 18, 1865.
- Even though slaves were freed, people were often forbidden to publicly celebrate this fact in parks under Jim Crow laws.
- While it had been celebrated since its first anniversary in 1866, Juneteenth didn't become a state holiday in Texas until 1980 and a national holiday until 2021.
- Strawberry soda and red velvet cake are some of the traditional foods enjoyed on Juneteenth as their color symbolizes the bloodshed of the enslaved.
- The swell of the Black Lives Matter movement following the murder of George Floyd gave momentum to the value of commemorating Juneteenth.
- Juneteenth is also called Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Liberation Day, Emancipation Day, Second Independence Day, and African American Independence Day.