



# JUNETEENTH CULTURAL CELEBRATION

## VIRGINIA MARDI GRAS

### ORIGIN

The Juneteenth Cultural Celebration / Virginia Mardi Gras was the brainchild of Councilman Greg McLemore as an economic development program for the city of Franklin Va. to help the economically disadvantaged citizens of the city who had been burdened with a \$25,000,000.00 debt causing tax and fee increases on the small 65% African American population. The city needed a way to generate revenue without requiring the citizenry to pay even more of their below poverty disposable income. So, having a professional background in marketing and promotion the councilman determined that the city of Franklin was ignoring its rich historical geographical location, Southampton County.

The term and holiday of Juneteenth was created on June 19<sup>th</sup>, 1865, in Galveston Tx. The holiday was a method celebrating national emancipation from government-imposed slavery of black people in the United States. The historical end of slavery across all the States of the United States came with the issuance of the emancipation proclamation by President Abram Lincoln in 1863 freeing all slaves. But the last people to learn of this freedom were the slaves of Galveston Texas.

However, Juneteenth itself was a day of jubilee and recognized by former slaves as Independence Day across the county. So, even though the holiday of Juneteenth had its origin in Galveston, the fact of emancipation from slavery was a national recognition and it was the Commonwealth of Virginia that held the distinction of being the origin of the beginning of the chattel slavery system which was the worst system of slavery ever known to mankind. Virginia in Southampton County was also the home of the greatest slave revolt of record and birthplace of more famous slaves than any other County in America. Nathaniel Turner being the most famous but, in the company of Dredd Scott, Anthony Gardineer who was to become a President of Liberia and John Brown all from Southampton County.

Why not celebrate the great emancipation where it all began and led the way for such a horrific chapter in the history of the United States? The Virginia is the Mardi Gras is another tradition unique to Virginia with a high marching band parade with an emancipation theme. The goal of the Juneteenth Cultural Celebration / Va. Mardi Gras is an attempt to create an event so spectacular in its content that it becomes an annual national tourist destination event. Welcome and thank you for creating history.

