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Loudoun County Public Schools, Equity Committee Meeting, Thursday, June 5, 2025

Date Thursday, June 5, 2025
Place LCPS Administration Building / School Board Room, Ashburn, Virginia
Length 1h 35m (video)

- Official meeting video (Vimeo / LCPS-TV): <https://player.vimeo.com/video/1091172731?rel=0>

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[00:00:00] Good evening. It is 535, and I'm calling the June 5th meeting of the LCPS Equity Committee to order. And we're going to start by asking, is there anyone who would like to have public comment?

[00:00:24] I didn't have a sheet over there, but I am open to anyone who would like to have public comment. You can start to prepare yourself, okay? For the committee members, you received the minutes as a part of a communication from the administration.

[00:00:55] Do I have a motion to approve the minutes, or were there some corrections noted? Tom Ketchum, I'll motion to approve.

[00:01:16] I have a motion. Do I get a second? Cassidy Gavineau, I second. Thank you. It's been properly moved and seconded that we accept the minutes of the meeting from the May meeting. and so we will of course file them with the school board for the next five years okay oh I'm sorry all in favor of accepting the the minutes that were approved let it be known by raising your

[00:01:49] hand okay we have a majority of the members yes okay our next item on the agenda is tonight's presentation, which is the celebration of Juneteenth. I want you to know, the committed to know, for those, there were some of you at the meeting, but at the last school board meeting,

[00:02:28] we actually gave a proclamation for Juneteenth 2025, and I'd like to share that with you because our panel is going to be talking about Juneteenth. Whereas Juneteenth observed annually on June 19th

commemorates the day in 1865 when the last enslaved African Americans in Galveston, Texas were informed of their freedom more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln, and whereas Juneteenth represents

[00:03:07] the triumph of freedom over slavery, the strength and unique historical experience of African American, African and black Americans, and the ongoing journey toward justice, equality, and civil rights in the United States. And whereas in 2021, Juneteenth was officially recognized as a federal holiday known as Juneteenth National Independence Day, becoming a symbol of the nation's commitment to reflecting on the past and building a more inclusive future whereas the commonwealth of

[00:03:46] virginia recognized juneteenth as a state holiday in 2020 as a celebration of black culture history resilience joy and freedom which are american values and whereas the loudoun county school board acknowledges the importance of teaching history in the full complexity and truth, including the legacy of slavery and the contributions of African Americans to our nation.

[00:04:18] Whereas African Americans make up 8.2% of residents in Loudoun County and 7.3% of students in Loudoun County public schools. And whereas LCPS is committed to fostering inclusive learning environments that honor the dignity, culture, and contributions of all people and to empowering students to become thoughtful, informed citizens who value diversity and justice.

[00:04:52] And whereas, especially on Juneteenth, we acknowledge and highlight the many achievements and profound contributions made by African Americans, Africans, and Black Americans to the economic, cultural, educational, and political development of Loudoun County, the Commonwealth of Virginia, and the United States.

[00:05:17] And now, therefore, be it resolved that the Loudoun County School Board recognizes and honors Juneteenth as a day of reflection, education, and celebration within our school community and an opportunity to engage in learning that will ensure improved relationships and respect and improved collective sense of belonging and freedom from prejudice and hate. Be it further resolved that the school board encourages all students, staff, and families to

[00:05:56] engage in meaningful learning experiences, classroom discussions, and community events that commemorate Juneteenth and promote equity, awareness, and unity. Having given that proclamation, I want to introduce to some and present to others our facilitator for the evening, Pastor Michelle C. Thomas.

[00:06:24] And we know that she is the president of the Loudoun branch of the NAACP, but we also know that she lives her culture every day. She lives her community every day. And so it is that I've asked her to facilitate this panel.

[00:06:45] And if you note, we had panels for the past two months, and this month we have a panel for Juneteenth. May I introduce to some and present to others, Pastor Michelle C. Thomas. All right. I'm a pastor. I like this mic.

[00:07:11] You want this? Is it here? Yeah, sure. Then I'll keep the panel together. I just thank you so much for having me here tonight. I also want to recognize that I am the founder and CEO of the Loudoun Freedom Center.

[00:07:30] The Loudon Freedom Center is an education hub dedicated to preserving, protecting, and promoting African-American history. We also have a new initiative in the last, I think, three years to creating opportunities for underrepresented people to get into IT.

[00:07:50] So that's the breadth of the Loudon Freedom Center. I see many faces that have taken our trips our field trips or PD if you've taken our PD raise your hands or your kids have been on field trips with us raise your hands and so I'm so happy to be with you tonight I want to introduce our esteemed panelists starting for the very end that is the baby of the bunch former Woodgrove High School student you guys may know Phil Thompson attorney Phil

[00:08:23] Thompson. He was the past president of the NAACP branch, former Commonwealth Attorney Buda Biberi, and your esteemed member, equity member, Robin Burke. Can you just give him a hand?

[00:08:39] I'm sorry. Oh, I'm sorry. I didn't give that. I just said the baby. Okay. So the baby of the bunch is Peyton Arnett, and she's a graduate from Woodgrove High School.

[00:08:55] what year was that 2023 and she's a current tuskegee university student and doing very well so we're excited about it i'm going to jump right into the panel let me just tell you how the rest of the night is going to go we're going to have about 30 minutes of a panel discussion uh we are literally taken from the theme uh juneteenth freedom deferred truth preserved juneteenth freedom deferred truth preserved and so we're going to talk about a couple of segments that

[00:09:27] just discuss the nuances of Juneteenth and then we're going to break out and it's hard to divorce Juneteenth from our history because it is so much misinformation around Juneteenth. As a matter of fact it's a sad state of affairs that Juneteenth is after kids get out of school because they won't have the privilege to really do a deep dive into Juneteenth. So let's open it up. We'll just have

[00:10:02] opening remarks from our esteemed guest. I want to hear about what you know about Juneteenth. What do you know about Juneteenth, Peyton? Good evening, everyone. Well, Juneteenth is the oldest national celebration of the ending of slavery in the United States of America. We know about the The Emancipation Proclamation General Order number three is its other note that was given on January 1st, 1863 by President Abraham Lincoln that announced the freedom or ending of slavery of the enslaved African Americans in the South at the time during the Civil War.

[00:10:38] And then we know Juneteenth to be on June 19th, 1865 because that was when General Gordon Granger, his name, Major General Gordon Granger, arrived to announce the last group of enslaved to African Americans, that they were free and that they were able to operate in the status of humanity and operate in the status of personhood rather than what they had formerly been known

[00:11:06] as just objects and things to be traded and sold.

[00:11:39] - To push us to, oh, okay, okay, okay.

[00:11:54] That's what pushed us to become, I mean, to have this holiday. It's a weird holiday and I say that because, You know, people don't know what to do. You know, we have a lot of events like this where people talk about black history and all that.

[00:12:12] But, you know, what really is Juneteenth about? And it's about freedom, you know, plain and simple. Just like Fourth of July, it's about freedom. So I think it should be a little bit more celebratory in

that aspect that we're talking about. The last individuals that were enslaved were actually freed at that point.

[00:12:32] And freedom's a very important element because I don't think people in this country understand that everybody didn't get their freedom on 1776. The original inhabitants of this country, I represented a lot of Native American tribes, Apaches, Arapaho, and worked in the Native American area for 35 years.

[00:12:53] People don't know that they couldn't vote until 1920s. The original inhabitants couldn't vote in an election until the 1920s. They didn't get their freedoms until the 50s when, you know, policies started to change and people were able to leave, you know, the reservation system was a little bit, was lacked up.

[00:13:14] People don't know that the Japanese Americans were interned, locked up like prisoners of war and then get their freedom back until 46. So I think that when you think about Juneteenth and we understand, you know, what happened with African Americans, but you got to think about across the board, what, you know, everybody didn't get their freedom.

[00:13:33] And I think that's what's important with this holiday. and I think I should be a little bit more celebratory on the aspect of gaining your freedom and what that means. Good evening. So it's interesting, and thank you, Phil, for making mention of the fact that but for the murder of George Floyd, I sure as heck wouldn't have known what the heck Juneteenth was.

[00:13:55] I grew up in New York City. I went to it, and there was a history buff, all these things. Never heard of it. George Floyd murder occurs, and then all of a sudden now we're starting to look at history in the broadest sense. And we realize, as a country, we have laws.

[00:14:15] The laws are not for everyone, and this was a great example to show that this law was in the books, on the books. It was made public, however, it wasn't made available to everyone. That was very important because of the fact that, as most of you know, my background is the law.

[00:14:36] And I try to associate everything with one and to make sure that we are aware of what our rights are, because if you're not aware of what your rights are, you don't have rights. Let that sink for a minute. Because until we know what we are entitled to by law, we can't act upon it.

[00:14:56] And if we don't act upon it, then it doesn't exist for us. And if we don't act upon it, then we can't use it for our fellow citizens, for them to also be able to live by and be protected by the laws. So Juneteenth was a huge eye-opener because, again, it's, and George Floyd changed a lot of things for me because I realized over the course, and it's definitely a matter of age, not that I am OLD, but I'm getting there.

[00:15:23] It's a matter of this. The older you get, the more you realize, I don't know a hell of a lot of things. And I get annoyed and I get perturbed because, as I said, I was a history buff. I take my classes. I am actually, you know, I'm a student. How come there's not an asterisk in my history book?

[00:15:41] If you don't want to give me a whole daggone chapter on this, why don't you give me an asterisk point that says, by the way, back in 1865, this is what occurred. We didn't even get that. And I'll bring in another example of that when the movie came out, Hidden Figures.

[00:15:59] And it was about the U.S. going up in space. And the women who were behind making that possible were African-American women. For starters, one, women. Holy shucks, we are actually part of history.

[00:16:16] African-American women. Holy shucks, we're part of American history. And that was not made known because, again, it's a fact that were we not introduced to it? Were we not open to it? Were we not interested in it? I don't know. my life is a progression, but I'm hungry for it because I want to know why we did certain things at certain points in our history, because we're revisiting a lot of these same things now. So for me, Juneteenth, it was a maturation process because I got introduced to it to understand it a little

[00:16:52] bit more fully, but now it's also how do we apply it to our current events. So for me, African American. I attended Howard University, so HBCU, and that's when I began to realize the history behind Juneteenth. So growing up on the East Coast, like you, Buda, Connecticut, and New York, when we would have these family gatherings, especially with African Americans, there was always something red present. So we had like red velvet cake or watermelon or something. They'd be

[00:17:30] like, well, this is for Juneteenth. And I just thought it was, because the cookout was in June, that was, I didn't know the correlation, honestly, until I was 18 years old and a freshman at Howard University. Am I embarrassed by that? Yes. Because that Juneteenth or that celebration wasn't introduced to me in school at all, never mentioned. African-American history growing up on the East Coast was a footnote at best.

[00:18:03] So my introduction to Juneteenth and African-American history was through my family, oral history. I'm a direct descendant of the Hemings family, the largest family enslaved by Thomas Jefferson. And so imagine me. I'm in second grade in Ridgefield, Connecticut, African population probably less than 1%.

[00:18:26] And when we get to the topic of Tom, I'm related. Everybody's like, excuse me? Yeah, no, you're not. I am. So you can imagine even introducing those topics, how it would make me feel.

[00:18:42] So I kept that kind of to myself. Also, Beauty, you mentioned hidden figures. So I knew the story. My grandparents went to West Virginia State College with Katherine Johnson. So I knew those stories. So I think that's where being African-American, especially at my age and at this time, it's interesting, to say the least.

[00:19:08] Interesting. And as my role now as the executive director of the Loudon Freedom Center, I mean, my mind is blown every day. Stories that I thought I knew and had buttoned up and had checked all the boxes, the box opens again. I was like, whoa, I didn't even know that.

[00:19:24] And that's what I'm experiencing even now with Juneteenth. - Teaching, sorry, is that? Okay, the teaching of African American history and other parts of the African American experience must be normalized.

[00:19:43] And I will say that Loudoun County Public Schools have gone through great lengths to really revamp their teaching and to stamp out things that are problematic or incorrect. They've gone through several iterations of curriculum reviews in fourth grade and sixth grade and seventh grade.

[00:20:06] Many of those I have personally worked on. Eleventh grade, the adoption of field trips, the Journey to Freedom Heritage field trips, trying to find support for teachers to help teach difficult content.

[00:20:22] But around the issue of Juneteenth, we see that Juneteenth is constantly being billed as a unity event, as a unity. Have you guys kind of seen that, that it's kind of being marketed or diluted or co-opted as a unity event?

[00:20:47] Do you guys agree with that? Do you agree that Juneteenth is a unity event? Yes, ma'am. I would say, and I will say from what everyone on the panel spoke about in knowing Juneteenth, I am blessed being the baby of the group to get the experience, and I'm only 20, and a lot of people may not know, but I've worked alongside Pastor Michelle on a lot of these projects, and I was in the LCPS system.

[00:21:14] so I saw the changes as they happened live time going from fourth grade we did our Jamestown trip and Juneteenth wasn't even a thought to graduating and being a part of the start of the African American class African American history classes and those things so I'm blessed to be in the seat of receiving the information but I do completely agree pastor about seeing Juneteenth is I try to find the words to put it but I say that it's often that when it comes to certain things with the African American community unity is the priority but when it comes to other minority groups they're allowed to focus solely on themselves so when you see a

[00:21:53] holiday like Juneteenth you see oh it's the freedom of the Africa of the last enslaved group but unity and how can we as a community how can African Americans partner with other groups to help us all succeed and I think it's a beautiful thing to focus on unity but it's important to also acknowledge that no, the African-American community was separated and isolated for so long.

[00:22:17] So in this day and age, yes, unity is important, but it is just as important to spend a moment to focus on this is our history and this is how it plays into America, but it is not to be overshadowed by the fact that it is within American history that they are both important individually and collectively.

[00:22:39] When she says she was able to see this as a young person at my age, When I was her age, we didn't see nothing like this. There was nothing, absolutely. I mean, and for a lot of African Americans, especially, you know, my age and older, even to even talk about slavery was not very kosher because we didn't want to be known, you know, you have to understand African Americans were coming out of Jim Crow and they were trying to get their pride in the 70s, you know, say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud.

[00:23:11] And we didn't look at slavery the way we look at it now as an institution. We were trying to get, say, hey, we're here, we're proud, you know. So it wasn't big then to talk about slavery. And I think that all changed. You know, I'm old enough to remember that Roots blew our minds because Roots was the first time you saw this content put there that starkly.

[00:23:34] You know, we hear from, you know, I still hear the story my mother tells me about her great grandmother who dropped something when she was a slave and the slave owner put a hot coal in her hand and held it in her hand to teach her not to do that ever again. You know, so but, you know, your parents are telling you this and you're young.

[00:23:52] It's like, yeah, whatever. It's like my father tell me about World War Two. It's like, whatever. You start to see it with roots. And I think roots was the first time you ever saw this type of abject violence and pulling families away from each other and that kind of stuff.

[00:24:08] So I guess I got a different different aspect on Juneteenth. Again, I think it should be more of a celebratory aspect because, you know, I tell my kids all the time, somebody decided to stay alive instead of jump off a boat or succumb to disease on a slave ship.

[00:24:30] Somebody decided to not run away or not, you know, survive these horrible aspects for you to be here today. People had to survive things. So I think you have to celebrate the fact that people survive slavery.

[00:24:47] It isn't so much slavery was imposed on us. It's people survive this horrible institution, and we are the byproduct of that survival, that they survived, and now we do what we do and able to do what we do. And I think that, to me, should be more of an aspect of Juneteenth, of people getting freedom, and that's the first step for you to get to where we are today.

[00:25:11] So we know most holidays somehow become commercialized. We know that. I mean, Christmas, come on. So I think that's kind of what's happening with Juneteenth. However, as we celebrate, especially at Christmas, the birth of Christ, people understand the history behind that celebration. So my hope is before it's completely commercialized that everyone is educated and understands the purpose or why

[00:25:47] we commemorate, I don't necessarily celebrate, but commemorate Juneteenth. I believe as far as that commercialization, I remember when it became a national holiday in 2021, Walmart had the brilliant idea to make Juneteenth ice cream. Anybody remember that? We weren't having that.

[00:26:14] No, that got canceled. That's, what is it, cancel culture? Yeah, that got canceled very quickly. So my hope, I mean, it became a national holiday in 2021. I think at least a decade needs to be spent on educating the nation on the purpose and why we commemorate before we commercialize.

[00:26:41] My lens was not that it was a unifier. Mine was more as it was an opportunity to educate. And I still see that even today, now we're in our fourth year of actually commemorating it, is really just learning more every time that I go to an event or every year we have something, to learning more again.

[00:27:03] How did we get to be there at that moment that two years had to pass before ultimately somebody said, no, we're not going to let the intentional ignorance continue, but we're going to do something about sharing the information. So that was my perspective.

[00:27:20] I wanted to circle back because I'm an Atlanta girl, so you would think, you know, black history is in my bones. But I just wanted to be fair about this conversation that everybody that is African American or grew up in the South, they may still have some misconceptions about Juneteenth.

[00:27:41] And so education, as we continue to adopt this and bring this into our mainstream, we have to be cognizant that everybody doesn't know Juneteenth. So in Atlanta, you know, black history is very important.

[00:27:57] I would not be honest if I didn't say that I didn't know the fundamentals of Juneteenth. That was top. The celebration was not. Growing up, there was no celebration of Juneteenth. You had Dr. King's Day.

[00:28:12] You had all the other days. You even had Kwanzaa, but I think I was probably in my 19 or so. I'm 54 now. I was old when I heard about Kwanzaa for the first time. And so there's still a gap.

[00:28:28] If it feels like you guys are left out of the Juneteenth conversation, no, you're not. It's a lot of people learning together. So don't feel as if, you know, you have missed out on something. So I wanted to kind of level set there. The idea of Juneteenth being a day to celebrate unity, we need to be very clear and honest about what happened.

[00:28:49] So people get hurt when they're unintentional ignorance that happens. So there can be no unity celebration without truth. And the truth of what happened for Juneteenth is two and a half years prior to June 19th of 1865, the Emancipation Proclamation was signed.

[00:29:15] And that was on, actually, it went into effect on January the 1st, 1863. So imagine in Galveston, Texas, a population of African-American people who are enslaved just did not become aware of their freedom.

[00:29:38] That is challenging to me, challenging to the point where as I began to research, I wanted to figure out, well, why didn't they know? Was it because they couldn't read or write? Because that's the story that is often told, that African Americans couldn't read or write. It was not it. They actually have recordings of people who were enslaved that spoke to their ability to read and write during that time.

[00:30:04] that's a god's honest truth you can google it bring it or whoever you subscribe to that is true they have these recordings so it wasn't a matter of ignorance it wasn't a matter of literacy it was a systemic orchestrated um willful intention to continue with slave labor they were more beneficial to those persons who own them as property than enslaved and they were free.

[00:30:43] And, you know, at that time, the enslavers were looking out for what they thought was their best economic interest. And that meant not making people aware of their rights and their freedoms. The question that I have, and I'm gonna, this is the last question for the panel.

[00:31:02] And then you guys, those who are in the audience, can ask questions as well. Do we have systems in place that willfully keep groups of people oppressed? And what do we do about those systems? We understand that a general had to go all the way to Galveston, read a, you know, article that says that, you know, enslaved people are going to be freed. And then after that, if you read the article, my Lord have mercy, it's something.

[00:31:40] There's a lot in that article. It was a lot that was said that freedom wasn't free. You're not free to stay around. You're not free. You're not free to do it. You know, it wasn't just free and, you know, and here's a way to start your life.

[00:31:59] It was a free, it was free. And don't you do anything else or you're going to be locked away. And that was unfortunate. Do we have systems in play today that do not purport the full participation of citizens?

[00:32:22] And I'm sure my colleague to my right will speak of that. I would say the prison system. So prior to, during the time of enslavement, do you believe black people were in prison? Just show of hands.

[00:32:39] Raise your hand if you believe they were in prison. That answer is no. They weren't humans. They weren't human beings. So they never had a trial. They never had anything. They were property. So that was like putting a dog or a cat or a horse in jail.

[00:32:54] So they were not in prison at all prior to the Emancipation Proclamation. However, soon thereafter, prison population went through the roof. Why? Another form of enslavement.

[00:33:11] So you see the chain gangs and you see them now being leased out to these southern farms and doing the work of the enslaved, modern day slavery. I think that is happening today. The incarceration rate of African Americans is higher than any other population.

[00:33:30] I may be wrongly speaking, but it seems that way. And I believe that is probably the largest system that still enslaves our community, mind, body, and soul.

[00:33:47] So I'm going to tag on that. So you've got the incarceration and the conviction system within the criminal justice system. And then now move to the next level, which is then the disenfranchisement of

voters. Because now when you go through the criminal justice system, unless your rights are restored and you're convicted of felony, guess what?

[00:34:06] You don't get to vote. how do we excuse you or excise you from your ability to be able to participate in your communities in any effective way? We don't allow you to vote. So that would be the add-on to what you just said, Robin. Thank you. I would say going a slightly different direction, but I definitely agree on the prison system and criminal justice areas. But for me speaking from a student's perspective, it's the education system as well. Because we've talked about, you all have mentioned directly not

[00:34:41] being taught about this at all and being in the space of coming from Loudoun County where we have great high quality education system up here this is a great county to be in to learn to establish to matriculate through but I do attend a historically black college institute in Tuskegee University I love my school but I attend the university and a lot of different students that I've we all come from different places you have people from New York Texas west coast who they're coming from entirely different systems, and a lot of the knowledge and intelligence that I'm blessed

[00:35:15] to bring, they've never heard of some of the things I talk about. So when you go in, see, we're at the number three HBCU in the nation. We're at the highest level of education, one of the highest levels of education, and we have students who don't know certain information, at least historically, or don't even, they can't tell you about the three branches of the government. They can't break down what legislative, executive, and judicial do. They can't tell you what the president versus a congressman does. And you have that conversation, you see, wait a minute, if you don't understand how the government works, to Ms. Beverly's point, if you don't know how the government works,

[00:35:51] then what are you voting for? You don't know. I am blessed to be a registered voter. I did vote in the last election, but I was aware because I came up and understood what it was that I was voting for. I knew how to file for my absentee ballot. I knew how to do my mail-in and all these different things but when you have an education system that disenfranchises minority communities and then when you have students who are in a position such as myself where I'm in I'm not in a disenfranchised community but there are still hurdles I had to jump to make sure that there were teachers and educators who didn't want me to be in honest classes because I didn't think I could

[00:36:27] handle it that was proven very wrong but when you have a perspective that's these they are incapable of doing so, which ties back to what Pastor Michelle spoke of with literacy, of course you're going to have students who are disenfranchised who then, what do they do? If you're in an inner city area or area that has gangs, they think I'm not going to succeed. I'm not going to be able to go to college. So let me go work with the dudes who make money on the street.

[00:36:52] Okay. Now you pipeline them into the prison system. So it's like the cycle is created where if you're not in a community that's going to give you at least a little bit more access than somewhere else, it's almost like you're straight-shotted into an unsucccess rate. And even in the prison conversation and you're looking at incarceration, when they come out, they're not given the keys to succeed post. So it's like, well, if you're not given the keys to succeed once you completed your time, you're ultimately going to end right back up there, which is what we see with situations like the Central Park Five, or excuse me, the Exonerated Five. You see that story, and my mom's from Brooklyn, New York. She knows that story like the back of her hand

[00:37:30] because she saw it firsthand. And she talks about how they were pipelining through back and forth because they were not able to do anything but that because they're not handed the they're not even not even asking to be handed but they're not given the opportunity to do otherwise so for me coming from a student perspective if we're not learning what it looks like and what it can look like then we don't know anything you don't have a way to dream of doing better if you aren't taught that that is an option the biggest inhibitor for African-Americans, in my mind, in this country, is between our ears. You know, all you have to do is

[00:38:08] look and see what people do every day. Loudoun County is an example. You see African-Americans that do everything, fly airplanes, litigate cases, work on computers, doctors, lawyers, engineers. So you can't say that success is not there. You can't say that you can't get there. A lot of it's people's heads and that's that's one of the byproducts of slavery and and oppressing people is that they get in their own minds that they can't secede uh when we should you know more

[00:38:41] focus needs to be on that again i come from the i was a child a child coming up in the 60s and 70s and it was say it loud i'm black and i'm proud it was james brown we don't want anything just open the door and we'll get it ourselves that message got lost with a lot of what we see today which is oh it's the systems are stacked against us it's terrible it's bad it is bad but it's not insurmountable and that's I think the story that we have to tell what do you think those slaves thought when they got when they got freedom you think they wanted to sit down and tell you about how bad bad slavery was what they wanted to do was celebrate and if you go down to Oklahoma and

[00:39:20] Texas where this originally occurred it was a celebration they had parades they celebrated Somehow we've twisted this into, not twisted, but somehow because I think the way it became forward with George Floyd and the national dialogue, we've lost the idea that this is a celebration.

[00:39:39] What happens when you get free? What do you do? Every 4th of July, what do we do? We blow up fireworks. We scream. We wear funny clothes. We barbecue. We do all these things. And for some reason, this holiday, we can't do that. When that's exactly what it was, somebody got free.

[00:39:56] And we got to get back to that point. People got free, and they did not mourn and look back. They were happy. One of the largest, what we don't teach, and one of the things we don't teach in this school, one of the greatest growths for African-American in this country was reconstruction.

[00:40:13] You had people went from slave fields to Congress, to Congress. So to say, you know, somehow we've got to get a little bit more positive in our message and say that there are things that can be done. You know, this lady down here and myself, we didn't take no for an answer on anything.

[00:40:34] You know, I was kind of not used to sitting on this side talking because I was usually on that side yelling. So, you know, it's it's we just got to start working a better message, a different, not a different message, but additional message that slavery in our history was bad.

[00:40:50] But look where we are today. I'd like to open the floor for any questions that you have, Juneteenth-related, education-related. Yes, ma'am. I don't really have a question, but I did want to piggyback off of the oppressed groups back to the prison system and also education.

[00:41:11] As far as the prison system, that is one of the biggest. And I say that my father was just released last year after serving 27 years, and they do not give them the tools. Now, luckily, I have my own business,

so I was able to employ my father and give him the support that he needed to do the things that he dreamt of doing when he got out.

[00:41:31] He wanted to be a truck driver, but they told him he had to work a part-time job. So how are you going to work a job and try to go to school to get your CDL? So the support, like they don't have it. There's no way you're going to have these kids locked up at a young age because my dad was locked up in his 20s.

[00:41:51] So lock these kids up at a young age. They can't do much when they get out. Sometimes they get their GED in there. Sometimes they don't. But, again, that leads back to education, even in the school system. When you have kids still being told in this county that they can't do things because of the color of their skin, yeah, they start to lose their self-worth.

[00:42:14] Like, they don't believe that they can do those things. Yeah, they see other people do it, but they're constantly being talked down to in their own schools. So that's definitely something that we need to work on, but also education starts at home. So again, like you said, between your ears, it's our jobs to educate our kids at home, regardless of your race, of everything.

[00:42:37] And with any other holiday or anything that happened in the past, people always bend and shape things to their own narratives. So there's always something out there that's going to be conflicting with what we really know or what really happened.

[00:42:54] So thank you. - Questions, yes ma'am.

[00:43:11] - Good evening. With education, I was raised in real in D.C. That's one thing D.C. did. They taught us black history. If they didn't teach us nothing else, the schools I was in taught me black history. In fact, I lived my two blocks from Douglas Douglas home.

[00:43:30] As a kid, I used to have to clean his house 'cause my girlfriend's grandmother was a caretaker and we couldn't go out and play until we helped her dust the house. So also, when I moved down here, I live in D.C., I moved down here with my grandchildren, and we started talking about black history.

[00:43:52] Well, a lot of things they didn't know. I'm like, now, wait a minute, what's going on here? They went to school, most of it down here. They only went to school in D.C. for elementary school. And once they got down here, they kind of lost the black history.

[00:44:10] So like she said, it started at home. So I had plenty of books, still got, and I used to take them downtown, going to Metro and visit all the places downtown. They carry their little snacks on the back, 'cause I wouldn't buy nothing downtown. But we went to all the museums.

[00:44:27] We went to Frederick Douglass. We had a car with the Eater. We went up on New Street so they could see these things. So what the young lady said is, we do have to start at home. We can't give everything to the public and to the teachers. As parents, we have to start educating our children at home so that when they do go to school, they know things.

[00:44:49] But you can't depend upon the Board of Education to do everything. I just want to piggyback on that. You know, at our time, we grew up in public schools. Lincoln freed the slaves in 1863.

[00:45:05] That's all we were taught. Lincoln freed the slaves. We never talked about what slaves did. We never talked about the economic system. We never talked about anything. Lincoln freed the slaves. And by the way, there was this little war between the states. And, you know, it was about power and all that.

[00:45:22] So my mother taught us all that. My mother hammered us. Hammered us on our history. Hammered us on our knowledge. hammered us on what happened to her people. And again, I think in our community, we've lost that. You know, we lost those stories and we lost those messages and we lost, you know, kids sitting down.

[00:45:42] We've got a different world and everybody goes through it. Our kids don't, you know, they want to do this and they don't want to listen to what we say or at least our oral history. So I piggyback on what she said. You got to teach the history at home, number one, but you also have to have a community in schools that will understand that everybody's not getting this at home and they need to have some of this taught in the schools.

[00:46:07] Yes, ma'am. I just want my comment, what I'm concerned about today is that there is so much to erase our history.

[00:46:26] At least that's what I'm reading. So I'm really concerned that the government, way the way it is today is is not um promoting the education um that everyone is talking about i would say um yes that is the case um a lot of the time what we're seeing um i won't say a race but they're rewriting it in a way that it can be received well and that it is or not received well but received where it makes everybody seem like no one was inherently wrong no one hurt anyone

[00:47:06] but that everyone was able to succeed in some way due to slavery that is just not the case it's not the truth and I am a byproduct of parents who never played about that school work that black during black history month every week a report was due and it wasn't it was a non-negotiable if I wanted to have a life it was required um I worked alongside Pastor Michelle in restoring and And the African-American burial ground at Belmont, Coton, Sicklin, writing those projects, watching her advocate that, no, this is history that needs to be established, recovered, protected, and shared.

[00:47:46] And part of the issue, I think, is that where we are today, to Ms. Thompson's point, phones are everything. I hate to say it, especially as a Gen Z who I do like a phone break myself, but phones are everything. But one thing, at least in my case, because I have two younger sisters that are turning 14 and 15 this year, I find ways to tap into them through what they like to do.

[00:48:09] So if they like to be on that phone, I'm going to send you a video on YouTube that you can play in the background. If you don't want to read a book, there's a Kindle. If you don't want to do it, I think part of our disconnect in education is that with other areas of education, we're fine to, what's the word?

[00:48:27] We're fine to allow it to become more, to modernize it. That's what I was looking for. But with black history, we refuse to find ways to teach it in the setting that we're in. But I think with black history, especially, if we take the time to write the curriculum and put it in a manner that you see us on Chromebooks for every single class.

[00:48:48] Everything you do is on a Chromebook. We don't have to, everything doesn't have to stay how it once was. Progress is necessary for history to be maintained. So it's also in the it's in making sure students have access to it, not just through a book.

[00:49:05] But OK, let's put that book digitally so that way we can make sure these students have it. You don't want to go to the library. Well, here it is right in front of you. So you can't avoid learning about it or try and say it's too hard to get to. I think that's one thing in my experience. I just want to say one thing, Pastor. This is going to be a project for for this committee and maybe the schools.

[00:49:25] Do you guys even know what land this was? Do you know what plantation it was under? Or do you know how many slaves worked this land? Where you sit right now, and it needs to be a project where they figure out what was this piece of property right here?

[00:49:42] More than likely it was a plantation and more than likely it was worked by African Americans as enslaved people. And so as we sit here, you're sitting on top of history that we don't even know about. pastor's been uncovering it, Robin's been uncovering it, Peyton's been uncovering it over time, you know, in different locations, but right here, what is this, what is this area right here, and who was here, and what, what were they doing? That should be a project that, that the school, schools should look into, to even know where their, where their own schools sit. You

[00:50:17] mentioned as far as the current, I'll call a historical crisis, as far as wanting to undo history, change history, erase history, whatever phrase we want to use. And it's 100% accurate. And it tags a little bit with what Peyton was saying. And it might be because certain individuals are rejecting the ancestral contribution to the harm that was back then. And what we have to look at is this. We have to own it. Historically, bad things have happened. Doesn't mean you are a bad person because you've come from that lineage, but you have some responsibility and ownership

[00:50:56] to say, okay, how do we do the following, which is as we build community, make sure we have unity, right? Don't come from a place of scarcity. We all do better when we all do better. I mean, I don't want to be trite about it, but that's really what it is. I can't worry about your success as it is impinging upon me. No, I'm old school. I'm going to come to the field. I'm going to come to the sporting event and I'm going to play my best game. And today I might win and tomorrow you might win. But it doesn't mean I try less because you are in a position to compete

[00:51:35] against me. Because competition works, but it's opening the door and giving somebody the opportunity to come through that door and do what they can do for the best. But we do have to watch what's happening to the history. Because we can't let anybody in any direction undo it. Because, and again, all these trite phrases, I am getting old, god darn it. You know, if we don't understand history we run the risk of repeating it right if we don't follow it we're going to repeat it and there's certain things that happened in our history collectively we don't want to repeat

[00:52:10] that's a great point to be made just a final comment when we talk about juneteenth we're talking about um in texas it took two years for those enslaved people to understand the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863. I think there's also a lot of misunderstanding that every African-American was enslaved until 1863. I know from my family history, especially on my father's side, that as an African-American, the last enslaved person on my father's side

[00:52:50] was freed in 1792. So for three generations before the Emancipation Proclamation, they were living and doing as freed people. So I think that that is a huge, when I mentioned that in a history class, I think there was a lot of assumptions that every African American in the nation was enslaved until 1863. Not true. So there's a huge level of education that really needs to happen, especially in Loudoun County Public Schools in Virginia. So the family that

[00:53:28] I'm speaking of were residing in Virginia, two hours from where I live right now. Crazy, right? So I pass over to Pastor Michelle. Question. Have you ever seen this game? Do you own this game?

[00:53:51] Anybody own this game? No? No? Anybody ever seen this game? If you've seen this game, please raise your hand. Yeah? Seen it? Why didn't you buy it? I'm sorry. Huh? The Leesburgopoly?

[00:54:18] This is made by the town of Leesburg. Leesburgopoly is made in the Virginia shop? All right. Would you like to see what's in Leesburgopoly? All right. Just like Monopoly has your game.

[00:54:46] Anybody know what this is? The instructions. Everybody know bootleg way of playing Monopoly. If you ever read these instructions, it would really blow your mind. I didn't know I was playing it wrong. But this board piqued my interest.

[00:55:08] I went around the board. I purchased the game. I couldn't wait. Leesburgopoly. This is going to be a history lesson in Leesburg. And I bought it. And I was outdone. Dina, there is no mention of African-American history in the entire game.

[00:55:30] in the entire game there's no i went through all the deeds no mention of african-american history i went through the chance and community treasure no mention of african-american history whatsoever what was my alternative why would you think that why would you think it because you know me

[00:56:06] because you know me but what what would you think the alternative i'm telling you i was hurt i'm not gonna, you know, I just felt left out. I felt like this is advertising for Leesburg. This is advertising for Loudon. This is a way to get the Leesburg story told, the history told. And we have done so much work in the community that we were past something like this. I thought, I think that's

[00:56:38] where my hurt came from. So what do you think I did? I built my own game. I built a game called Freedomopoly that will share the African-American experience and give the history, codifying it so it can never be lost again. Here's the board. Let's go through the board. Can you guys see the board?

[00:57:10] There should be one on your table. No, it's right there. Here's the board right here. The towel. I'm do you see the board if you want to get closer you can every single thing on this game is dedicated to african-american history this is what the box cover looks like on juneteenth you will see these hopefully in stores got a lot of work to do if not you can meet me at the back of

[00:57:42] my trunk but it's just the cover of the board is kind of self-explanatory what do you see when you look at this board. Because you should never start educating when you open the box. Education starts on the outside of the wrapper. What do you see Dina? Barrier

[00:58:18] Ground. That's the first thing that you saw. What do you see Arvin? I see Settledeen Cabin. Settledeen Cabin. Settledeen Cabin is South Rydon. South Rydon's original historic name was Conklin. What do you see? Journey to Freedom Mero, that's right outside of the

[00:58:43] The Loudon Museum, it tells the history of people escaping enslavement and using what we know as Riverside and River Creek to make that escape down the Potomac onto Maryland and eventually Pennsylvania.

[00:59:14] What do you say? The courthouse. The courthouse where members, African-Americans, were actually hung and quartered on suspicions of murder or other frivolous, they stole something, they thought, no due process, no justice, anything. What do you say? Oh, there you go. It's subtle, but if you know, you know.

[00:59:40] So, you see the map of Loudoun County. It's subtle, but if you're a teacher, so you know. You see the Douglas School. So, you're learning right from the top.

[00:59:58] And then you have instructions that some people read and some people do not. But you have this game. And in the game, it goes around the entire board telling the history, telling the history of Loudoun County.

[01:00:15] It starts off, and it goes to the Willard community. Anybody knows what the Willard community is or was? What's Willard? What's Willard?

[01:00:33] Dulles Airport. The good news is if you get the game, in parentheses, it's going to say Dulles Airport. Right? Good. It goes from Willard, and then it goes to Arcola.

[01:00:49] So what area is that? Prosperity Baptist Church, Settle Deans Cabin. now we're over in the south riding all right then you leave that area you go to waterford what's in waterford what black history is in waterford second street school what else the john wesley anything else the segregated the segregated still segregated cemetery do you see how this is

[01:01:23] working and people are learning fast they have deeds that tell all the history would you like to to hear a D.

[01:01:45] You actually can buy as a property an old location for poll tax. What's poll tax? Voting station. And what was the poll tax? It was a tax that was applied if you wanted to vote.

[01:02:06] Many times a tax, oh, a tax that was applied if you wanted to vote. Many times a tax that you could not afford. So if you could not pay this poll tax, you were not given a ballot and could not vote. Only African Americans were subjected to the poll tax. This is the deed for the poll tax. It actually has an example of what a poll tax looked like. And then if you buy the property, just like Monopoly, you can commercialize it. You can sell it. You can upgrade it. That sort of

[01:02:45] thing. But the history is on the back of the D. This is the really, I think, crux of the game, that the history will remain intact. Let's read what the history says on poll tax. Under the 15th Amendment, African Americans were guaranteed the right to vote. White Southern politicians looked for ways to prevent African Americans from voting in their states. A popular technique required an advance payment of a poll tax, making it difficult and too expensive for poor African Americans and many whites to register to vote. As a result, many blacks were legally

[01:03:25] disenfranchised because they could not afford to pay the tax. Do you think that's good information? While we're talking about Juneteenth, someone would say, well, what does this have to do with Juneteenth? The reason why people don't know what to do with Juneteenth is because they don't know the history of Juneteenth. As soon as people realize the history of Juneteenth, they wouldn't have a problem celebrating freedom because when one is free, all is free. And we're not all free

[01:03:59] until everyone has that opportunity for freedom. On this game, one of the spots that you can land on is the Leesburg Volunteer Swimming Pool. Our history is so important. It's not just Juneteenth that people don't know about.

[01:04:20] Most people don't know the history of Loudoun County and Leesburg and this game and other games like it and digital content and digital ways of communicating. That's gonna be the new way for people to become interested in history again or languages again.

[01:04:37] You have to make it applicable. If you stopped on the Leesburg Volunteer Fire Station, what do you think you'll learn? What do you think you'll learn?

[01:04:56] Okay, let's read it. On June 23, 1965, four African-American children went to Leesburg Swimming Pool operated by the Leesburg Volunteer Fire Department and were refused entry.

[01:05:18] A suit was filed on their behalf, and in May 1966, the court ruled in their favor. But the pool remained closed, and the firemen filled it with rock and cement rather than integrate. Leesburg did not have a public swimming pool until 1990. I want to add one thing to that. I was four years old when that happened so that it wasn't it wasn't it wasn't wasn't ancient history because I'm not ancient. You know but I was four years old when that happened so that tells you what the

[01:05:54] thought process was even you know not too not too long ago did you have a comment a question any questions or comments? I'm just going to take one more. I think this history is really important. This is a first edition. I would imagine we would just go all throughout Northern Virginia just trying to codify the history to give people a chance to record it. But what you

[01:06:29] guys must know is that this is not done in a vacuum. It's done in partnership with students. So students are helping to create the game, they're helping to proofread, they're helping to research. We created this game in conjunction with the African-American History class at Freedom High School over a period of three years.

[01:06:50] It's been three years since kids have been working on this game and it's just now ready to be published. I'm going to go over the last one. It's the Daily Cabin. Have you ever seen a part of the Underground Railroad in Loudoun County? Do you believe?

[01:07:06] that there is some sort of relic or you could see a part of the Underground Railroad in Loudoun County. Do you believe that? Have you ever seen it? Never? You haven't seen it?

[01:07:23] All right. Have you ever been to the Potomac Rehab in Sterling? The Potomac Rehab in Sterling is across the street from the Nova Virginia campus, yeah?

[01:07:40] It's the Sterling Rehab. You don't want to be there. If you're there, you're sick. You pass it on 7 on the right-hand side going down, right east. All right, so unfortunately, my father had a stroke, and I had been trying to find the Underground Railroad in Leesburg.

[01:08:00] I mean, I'm sorry, in Sterling. I heard about it. I knew it was there, and I had entered the property several times and never been able to locate this. And my father had a stroke, and he was being rehabbed at this Potomac.

[01:08:16] I sat down to lunch with him and looked out the window, and lo and behold, what do you think I saw? I saw something that was put back together. It really was, you know, what was left. It was the ruins of the Daily Cabin.

[01:08:33] Let's hear the story of the Daily Cabin. The Daily Cabin. The historic Daily Cabin was believed to be part of the Underground Railroad in Loudoun County. The cabin is located in Sterling, Signal Hill, Potomac View area with the key underground railroad features necessary in assisting freedom seekers escape enslavement.

[01:08:56] A ridge runs along the back of the original parcel and ridges were often used by runaway slaves because of the shelter they provided as well as a view of the surrounding area. Imagine right under our

noses.

[01:09:15] If you ever shopped at Burlington, you passed it. If you ever went to the Ford dealership in Sterling, you've passed it. If you ever went to the Cocos, where I shopped sometime at the international market, you've passed it. If you've gone to DC and to Tyson's Corner and took seven, you've passed the Underground Railroad and it's hidden in plain sight.

[01:09:37] No narrative to think of. This is the opportunity that we have before us to be able to tell the untold stories, to be able to celebrate those things in our community that speaks freedom, that is a testament to resilience and brilliance.

[01:09:58] And it's up to you guys and a part of this equity work that you have to bring to bear is products and different offerings that we can give our students that will educate them. So when they are in their 20s and 30s and 50s, They're not going to be saying what we said.

[01:10:19] I didn't know anything about it. I grew up, nobody said anything about it. That they'll be educated and ready to be global citizens. I'm going to leave this time for questions. Yes. I did want to hop in. One thing, again, I'm a LCPS graduate from Woodgrove High School.

[01:10:38] And a lot of people know, if you have a student or, for my educators, you know, seniors have to do a capstone project. So part of the reason why, and I'm so grateful to see it fully in fruition, I was able to, from my capstone, I knew what I was doing. I was working with Pastor Michelle.

[01:10:53] It was without a doubt. So in 2023, when I was getting, I was a couple, about a month or so out from graduation, I said, all right, so what do you want me to do? And funny enough, my entire African-American studies class, because we took a field trip with her a couple months before, was like, so what can we do with you?

[01:11:10] Because we want to work with her. Just from off of a field trip, getting to experience it. So a couple of my friends who I still speak with got to work directly on the game. And I think that's one thing that I wanted to just talk about was also like making sure you when we talk about making sure that my generation and those beyond us don't sit here saying the same things.

[01:11:28] This is one of the ways where it's like partnering with the Loudoun Freedom Center or finding ways to have us involved, because I know all of us speak to that. This is an experience we will never forget having to not only seen and learned and research the history, but to say we had our hands in creating more history.

[01:11:46] Because this game is the first of its kind. It'll be able to be bought and played and experienced for years to come, assuming that additions are made. We all can say that we established a piece of that history. So for us, it's not just another notch on our belt or a dash on our resume, but something that we poured our hearts into.

[01:12:04] So that's just something to think about and consider making sure when we're talking about continuing to share the history that moments like this and organizations like the Loudoun Freedom Center are avenues in which to do that. And it's making sure we jump on those avenues. And I'll just add, since this game was developed in concert with Loudoun County Public Schools students, Loudoun County Public Schools has made a commitment to purchase the game and have that available in many schools.

[01:12:40] Any questions? Any final questions before we end today? Or comments? Was it helpful? Yes, ma'am.

[01:12:57] Yeah, I would say it was very helpful for me. I participated in a meeting at my son's school a couple of days ago. They were talking about he's going to the fourth grade and mentioned that the fourth graders learn Virginia history, and my stomach dropped.

[01:13:14] And I think I'll have to get my countermeasures in place. So it's really exciting to hear that this might be available. Hopefully it'll be available for elementary school students too. But then I also wanted to say I'm growing up in D.C. and feeling like I was exposed to a lot of African-American history.

[01:13:30] I was not exposed to Juneteenth, So my first time celebrating that was actually a few years back at the Freedom Center. And that was a really great event. But I think there is a disconnect, which you spoke to also, which is trying to connect if you weren't raised to feel connected to slavery or to feel discomfort with that.

[01:13:51] Shifting the narrative from celebrating, you know, we're not slaves anymore to they survive to the end. And I think that's really powerful to think, because I'm not a fan of that narrative of we're not our ancestors, you know, whatever. I think that does them a disservice.

[01:14:08] But the idea that there was a population that made it through that horror successfully and were able to see what was on the other side of that is definitely worth celebrating. Yes, ma'am.

[01:14:39] Just a question for the panel. Where do you think the balance lies between respecting the journey to freedom while avoiding commercial exploitation with the desire to celebrate Juneteenth? Yeah, but between like avoiding commercial exploitation and versus the celebration. Truth. Authenticity of history.

[01:15:07] There could be no unity. There could be no celebration without acknowledgement. You have to know the history. You have to share the history. He that does not know his history is destined to repeat it. And so the way that you honor the resilience, the way that you honor the bravery and all those things that it takes to make it through such audacity time is to tell that story, to recount that story and acknowledge that this is happening.

[01:15:38] And not only did you survive enslavement, you survived the prolonged institutional enslavement. I mean, that is one thing. Sometimes, you know, people can make it to a point, but that extra two and a half years, what does that do to somebody's psyche?

[01:16:00] What does that do to somebody's psyche? Imagine being held unfairly for an additional two and a half years, assuming that nobody in the community knew. Do you think that's believable?

[01:16:17] In a community where people could read and write that nobody in the whole community knew? It speaks to the fear, the terrorism, the intimidation, and the lack of resources to just get up and leave.

[01:16:35] That you got to wait on freedom and pray that it comes. That's amazing. That's amazing. I don't know if I could have done the extra two and a half. And also when you talk about commercialism, let's go back to the Walmart ice cream.

[01:16:51] All right. It was just Juneteenth ice cream. I probably would have purchased it if the story of Juneteenth was on the back. So I'm a capitalist. Sell your thing. But while you're commercializing, make

sure it's an educational component.

[01:17:09] You know, I've bought a Juneteenth t-shirt. Why? because the date was on it. Information on the back was on it. So as I wear it, it's a commercial item that I purchased, but as I wear it, people are reading and being educated. So I'm not saying don't sell anything with Juneteenth, but be mindful of what you're producing and who will see it and why you're doing it. Freedom is for everyone. Freedom is for everyone. And when you have freedom, The oppressor is free as well.

[01:17:47] The oppressor is free, not just the people that are in bondage, but the oppressor is free as well. Freedom is for everyone. And once we start telling our stories, once we start putting the truth back into the history, then we have also the freedom to heal from it.

[01:18:04] We really can. Pastor, I want to add something to that. All of us sitting here, African-Americans, we learn European history. We learn European history. And I see everyday African Americans get on airplanes and fly to Europe and go, oh, I was in Berlin.

[01:18:19] Oh, I was in Ferris, I was here. We learn your history. You need to be a little bit more open-minded about ours and everybody else's history. You know, that's the crux here. You know, people feel like, oh, I don't have to learn about Juneteenth 'cause that's not me.

[01:18:36] We learn about your history. We learn about, you know, the Magna Carta. We learn about all that stuff. But take some time and learn about ours, the Native Americans that were here. Other people's history, out west, the Chicano-Hispanic culture was big out west before America took over, and even then.

[01:19:01] So learn about other people's history. Have an open mind about it, because if you just sit there and you're negative, not negative, but you're just like, well, that's not us. I don't have to listen. It is you. Just like European history is our history because our country is built on European principles. We have to learn that, and we learned it.

[01:19:18] And so other people should learn other parts of history, too. And that's all we're trying to get across. One thing I'll add to that question is cover-up.

[01:19:34] Is it to cover up or, like, are we here to cover up the history or are we commercializing for education? That's kind of where the balance, at least in my perspective, sits. Are you doing it, and is it commercializing to just put a price tag on it?

[01:19:50] and make it another thing you successfully sell? Or is it that we want to create a conversation with what we're doing? And I think that's kind of where I fall in that area. It's not wrong, but if you're doing it to get a check, that's pointless, in my opinion.

[01:20:48] So I think that I love, love, love the game so much. And I think that students in Loudoun, I was going to ask if it was going to be distributed in the schools. But my frustration is that the African-American history class, my understanding is it was just vetoed again as a graduation requirement.

[01:21:07] So it was supposed to be a graduation requirement, and it was vetoed by the state as not being.

[01:21:48] I'm so sorry. They wanted to have more options that would give them flexibility in their schedule. So it wasn't to actually be a requirement, but for those people or students who are choosing to take African-American history, we wanted them to get graduation requirements so they could save that slot for history and move it to IT or whatever else that they're interested in.

[01:22:18] But they will have fulfilled their graduation requirements through that social studies class. Okay. Yep. And yes, he did veto it. He absolutely did veto it. And so we know the redress to that is to bring it back. There are sessions every year. We have to wait till next year. It will come back. Well, I just think about what you were saying. And, you know, there's not enough of that information. And the fact that you're a Loudoun County student and you go to Tuskegee, but you actually knew more, it seems like, than a lot of the people around the country.

[01:22:54] So we're not even, you know, and I think we're farther than most countries. But think about how far we have to go everywhere else, too. Well, we're only farther because we fought harder. And this is a recent, right? So if she was, you know, 30 years older, she'll be in the same boat with everybody else.

[01:23:11] But because she graduated a lot and has worked with the Loudon Freedom Center, I mean, she's at the core of this. We're doing this together at night. We're burning the midnight oil together. So in all fairness, she does have a little edge of everybody else.

[01:23:27] But to be honest with you, I've been doing field trips in this county for the last 10 years. I've been doing curriculum rewrites in this county for the last 10 years. Our students, I will tell you, our students are head and shoulders above the rest.

[01:23:44] And it's because of the work that we do and the addition to the capstones and working with LCPS so that the African-American history course is not just a regular course, it's a honors course. So they get a designation, they have a capstone. Elsewhere in the state, they don't have a capstone that go along with that.

[01:24:05] That makes a big difference when students are able to do project-based sort of learning. Yeah? All right. Can I just, I just wanted to say thank you for the presentation today. I've been to the burial ground.

[01:24:22] I brought my kids. Now that I've learned about the Underground Railroad in Sterling, I will be stopping over there as well to take a look. So I appreciate that information. And just a little information. I mean, I grew up in New Jersey.

[01:24:38] I grew up in the north. And I had extensive history. I'm a history person. But when I was growing up, in my history classes, there was extensive. They talked about slavery and the Civil War extensively, but I will tell you they did not mention Juneteenth.

[01:24:59] So I will tell you that I did want to learn more about it, and thank you so much for your presentation today. So I just wanted to put that out there to you. Thank you. Thank you. And if you'd like to learn more, please join us on Thursday, Juneteenth at 10 a.m.

[01:25:20] at the Charles Hamilton Houston Courthouse as you will hear more information, education, food, celebratory event, please come out. As we're kind of wrapping up here, I just wanted to touch on a word that was mentioned earlier, and that is intentionality, because I think that's so important.

[01:25:42] As you mentioned with intentionality and having an informed mindset and an educated mindset around this, because as we've seen throughout history, mindsets and culture are the things that really overcome a lot of our challenges as progressing just as human beings and in society.

[01:26:00] And knowing the history, because as you mentioned, not all slaves were released on that date, some as early as 1792. New Jersey was the last state to actually outlaw slavery. That was after Juneteenth

happened.

[01:26:16] Juneteenth is a great date to celebrate it, but we still had slavery in the United States past that date. And I think it was the Creek Nation that was actually the last place in the United States where it was actually finally, truly abolished. And in the same way that, you know, July 4th is arguably not even the right day to celebrate that either, but Juneteenth is a great day to celebrate it, and so I really appreciate that.

[01:26:39] But I just wanted to end on this notion of intentionality because I was appreciating the fact that you tied the issue of voting and the criminal justice system together. because I think we have to look for the intentional, not necessarily systems that were intentionally set up in this way, but we have to intentionally look for things like gerrymandering and even smaller things like the location of DMVs throughout not only the Commonwealth of Virginia, but throughout our country that make it difficult for people to get IDs or update IDs in order to vote in those things.

[01:27:14] Those are just some examples. But even for this committee and inside of this group, to look intentionally for the things where we just assume, because they've always been there, we've always done it that way, are we really doing it the right way? Are we doing things unintentionally that are suppressing people, suppressing people's rights, suppressing people's access to things?

[01:27:38] So we can certainly make it, you know, an ongoing job with this committee and for all of us personally as well to intentionally look for those things, intentionally try to move the ball forward.

[01:27:59] My name is Steve Burke, and I've been ancillary around the meetings, and this is great. I want to piggyback on what you're saying, the gentleman right there, about intentional. Anytime we do a meeting, we should always have a call to action, a thing to do. This is a really simple one. The call to action is when you go to these different places, bring a friend.

[01:28:20] Bring somebody else who's not in the room. That's the way we can start change. Be intentional about bringing other people along so they learn as you learn. That's all. Thank you.

[01:28:36] Thank you, panel. Thank you for ending our year on a note of something that I think taught the group something as well as all of us. Yes, yes.

[01:28:52] I learned a lot about Robin's history. Yeah, yeah. So I want to thank you, and I want you to know, I don't want you to think that I'm doing this differently because it's Pastor Michelle, but the other panels that we've had, I did not know ahead of time who the panel members were, how many there were, et cetera.

[01:29:12] So I have a little thank you symbol for each member of the panel today and the check is coming the check is coming and I just want to say that even though this is our last meeting for the year for the academic year we will resume our meetings in August and just stay tuned we may not get it in August

[01:29:52] because there's going to be so much staff development going on we don't know if we're going to get here but you will hear from Helen Helen is consistent assistant. Okay, Linda, what are we doing? So Helen will let you know. And for that, Helen, I am grateful.

[01:30:08] We also want to acknowledge Dr. Mark Bergen, who is here. And we want to thank all of you for coming out this evening. But we want to engage you to come out and help to set a path for the Equity Committee. Be intentional about that. At this point, the Equity Committee was designed by a group that included pastor michelle and miss burke uh as an ad hoc committee they have done their due the

[01:30:45] committee has fulfilled the ad hoc duties so that is the reason that we have sort of been floundering we have to wait for the full board to give us a different designation other than an ad hoc or a select committee. And the board is working on it and we hope to have that done before I roll off the board so I can vote or pinch April next to me to make her vote. Okay so I just want you to know

[01:31:17] that the floundering is not because of any reason other than the fact that policy dictates what we do. And so because of that policy, we have been sort of hand-tied for a few months. But we want to thank the panel. Can I say something for the board? I want to thank the Loudoun School Board.

[01:31:42] I haven't participated as much as in the past because it was a knockdown drag out for about 20 years, trying to get the board to do a whole lot of things that this board just does in their sleep but I want to thank this board for being one of only two in the Commonwealth that stood up to Yunkin and and the president on DEI and so give

[01:32:05] them a hand say to the community for supporting us in it because you know we still got to go to the grocery store and we get some of that feedback at the grocery store or even at Brewster's ice cream shop one day so I just want you to

[01:32:42] know that I am proud to be a part of the of the Loudoun County School Board at this time and I am proud to serve along beside my school board members who are sending the county in a direction that is positive for students and I also want to say that this piece about intentional intentional is something that I want us to do in this county as it relates to parents as well we have a high level of

[01:33:19] parent participation but we need someone to help guide that high level of participation such that it is positive for all students and I say that as an individual not as a board member but as an individual because my dissertation was on parent participation and when I roll off the board I'm gonna pick that up and run with it okay the June 5th meeting do I hear a do I hear a motion

[01:33:51] motion to to uh dismiss second anyone all who are in favor the members aye all who are opposed the June 5th board meeting is open uh committee meeting is over at 7 10 in the evening thank you so much for coming



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