

# Commonwealth of Virginia

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## CA DESCANO STATEMENT ON JUNETEENTH

FAIRFAX COUNTY, VA – Fairfax County Commonwealth's Attorney Steve Descano released the following statement regarding Juneteenth:

"Today is Juneteenth. We recognize this day so that all Americans know to celebrate it as what it is—a second Independence Day. This marks the anniversary of when enslaved African Americans in Galveston, Texas were finally informed of their freedom nearly two and a half years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. It may come as a shock to some today that it would have taken that long for freedom from enslavement to reach all corners of our country then. However, it pales in comparison to the fact that we are still yearning for freedom from the remnant effects of that very oppressive system today. As a nation, we're still suffering with the echoes of bigotry manifested in well-hidden systemic racism that we unwittingly participate in and, at times, unconsciously perpetuate.

As Commonwealth's Attorney, I focus on being a thoughtful, reflective practitioner in all aspects of my job. It's an honor to serve my constituents and be entrusted with imparting our shared values into our justice system. That's why today serves as an inspiration to me to continue to seek, discuss, and address systemic racism whenever and wherever I see it.

Racism—especially racism that is institutionalized and painted over—does not simply melt away on its own. We must strip away its disguise, tear it out by the root, and do so in an open and deliberative way for all to see. We must be diligent and very critical of our self-analysis. We must be as intentional with our actions as those who propagated racism for centuries were with theirs. And we must produce results that leave no doubt about our commitment to end the subjection of our own people. Only then can we truly honor Juneteenth."

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