

# Political Grab Bag

**By Steve Bagby, Sr., Political Action Committee Chair**

**HAPPY FATHER’S DAY on June 19, 2022.** We give honor and recognition to all of the wonderful men of Second Baptist Church who have given of their time and talents for so many years to continue the work of the Church. Our Pastor, Dr. William S. Epps, and so many others, have continued their efforts to lead us, guide us, develop our witness and keep the church going during these pandemic times, as well as through the Church repair. We thank all of you for your dedicated leadership and commitment. You have given us so much for which to be proud! You are role models extraordinaire and we thank you for your steadfastness and determination in continuing to lead us and keep us spiritually uplifted, as well as motivated through these difficult times. Thank you to all of the men of Second Baptist Church. **Happy Father’s Day to all!**

## **JUNETEENTH - EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION - 13<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT - EMMETT TILL ANTILYNCHING ACT OF 2022 -**

On June 19<sup>th</sup>, we also celebrate **Juneteenth**, which generally celebrates the end of slavery. While the day has been celebrated for years by African Americans in various states, it is now recognized as a national holiday, as on June 17, 2021, President Biden signed the “**Juneteenth National Independence Day Act**” into law. Per various historical accounts, Juneteenth is the day that federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas in 1865 to take control of the state and to ensure that all enslaved people were freed. The troops arrived a full two and 1/2 years after President Lincoln issued the **Emancipation Proclamation** on January 1, 1863, which declared that “all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and [naval](#) authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.” The **Emancipation Proclamation** only applied to certain Confederate states then at war against the Union, and only to the

portion of those states not already under Union control. In order to make emancipation permanent, a constitutional amendment abolishing the institution of slavery itself was required. ([history.com/topics/black-history/thirteenth-amendment](https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/thirteenth-amendment)). In December 1865, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was ratified, which abolished slavery in the United States. The 13th Amendment states: “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”

It is interesting to note that it has taken over a century from the issuance of the **Emancipation Proclamation** and the **13<sup>th</sup> Amendment** for a federal anti-lynching law to be passed. Thus, while African Americans may have been “technically freed from slavery,” we were still victimized, brutalized, beaten and killed by the hands of those who the law mandated to free us. It wasn’t until this year on March 29, 2022, that the “**Emmett Till Antilynching Act of 2022**” was signed by President Biden, after passing the House of Representatives on February 28<sup>th</sup> and the Senate on March 7<sup>th</sup>, respectively. Per a March 29, 2022 article by the **Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)**, a non-profit organization that challenges poverty and racial injustice, and provides research and recommendations to assist policymakers in the work of criminal justice reform, “[f]or nearly a century following the Civil War, mob violence, terrorism and lynching cast a shadow over this nation. Millions were terrorized by thousands of lynchings that forced nearly six million Black Americans to flee the Deep South during the 20th century. Other disfavored communities were often lawlessly killed by mobs and no one was held accountable. Lynching and racial terror undermined enforcement of [the intent of the Thirteenth Amendment as well as] the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, reinforcing disenfranchisement, Jim Crow laws, and racial hierarchy.” Per **EJI** director, Bryan Stevenson Esq., whose research President Biden cited in his remarks at the bill signing, the passage of the “**Emmett Till Antilynching Act of 2022**” “. . . marks a new day in our country’s continuing struggle to provide equal justice to all citizens.” “This Act is an overdue correction to tragic failures of the past. It is a promise that our nation must never allow bigotry and violence to undermine the fundamental rights of every American to be secure and protected by our government when threatened with lawlessness.” While these words are accurate and beautifully stated, the reality of the political dynamics at play make us realize that on one hand “they giveth” and by another hand “they taketh away” by acts to disenfranchise us, failure to strengthen gun laws, failure to

follow established legal precedent, etc., and, thus, we have to remain steadfast and vigilant in our actions to continue to assert ourselves to secure/maintain basic fundamental rights, values and principles.

### **CALIFORNIA TASK FORCE ON REPARATIONS –**

The “**California Task Force to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African Americans**,” which was created in 2020, released its first report on June 1, 2022, detailing the “innumerable” harms of slavery in the state that “have snowballed over generations.” CNN online news article dated June 1, 2022, by Nicole Chavez and Laura Studley; ([cnn.com/2022/06/01/us/california-reparations-task-force-report/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/2022/06/01/us/california-reparations-task-force-report/index.html))

Per the news article, “in a 500-page interim report, the California Reparations Task Force detailed California’s involvement in slavery and how it continues to negatively impact Black Americans.” The report referenced that “an estimated 1,500 enslaved African Americans lived in California in 1852.” The nine-member panel “is the first of its kind in any state. Advocates have been pushing lawmakers to replicate it at the federal level.” Our own church member, Assemblyman Reginald Jones-Sawyer, is a member of the task force, along with another legislator with whom we are well acquainted, Senator Steven Bradford.

Chairperson Kamilah Moore, a California lawyer who received her J.D. degree from Columbia Law School and Master of Laws degree in International Criminal Law from the University of Amsterdam, said “the report is the most extensive issued by the government on the African American community in more than 50 years.” She stated that it was her “hope that people in California and across the United States utilize this report as an educational and organizing tool, as this interim report exceeds expectations in substantiating the claim for reparations for the African American/American Freedmen community on the municipal, state and federal level.”

The news article further indicated how the report outlines how African Americans have been harmed, including by slavery and political disenfranchisement, and in labor, housing, education, the criminal justice system, and arts and culture. The task force included preliminary recommendations for each category, but said a final report will be issued next

year. The task force calls for a state office to process reparations claims and “identify and mitigate the ways that current and previous policies have damaged and destabilized Black families,” to restore historical sites, to support education, and to offer free legal aid and other services.

Other recommendations include updating language in the state’s Constitution, removing racial bias and discriminatory practices in standardized testing, compensating people deprived of profits for their work, investing in and creating free healthcare programs, and apologizing for acts of political disenfranchisement.

Per a May 17, 2022 article in ***The Observer (Sacramento)*** by the **California Black Media**, the California Department of Justices’ (DOJ) Civil Rights Enforcement Section assisted the task force in facilitating consultation with various experts on California history and reparations. The DOJ also provided administrative, technical and legal assistance to the task force, and helped to formulate the report based on hearings, expert testimony and evidence accumulated since the task force first convened on June 1, 2021.

In a June 1, 2022 press release, California Attorney General Rob Bonta, the head of the California DOJ, stated: “Without accountability, there is no justice. For too long, our nation has ignored the harms that have been — and continue to be — inflicted on African Americans in California and across the country.” “California was not a passive actor in perpetuating these harms. We must double down on our efforts to address discrimination in our state and nation and take a hard look at our own history, including at the California Department of Justice. This interim report is a historic step by the State of California to acknowledge the insidious effects of slavery and ongoing systemic discrimination, recognize the state's failings, and move toward rectifying the harm. I commend the Reparations Task Force for their commitment to this effort and for being a model for partners across the nation. I urge every American to read the task force’s report and join with us in recommitting ourselves to justice.” A copy of the report may be accessed at <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/california-reparations-task-force-releases-interim-report-detailing-harms>

## **EXECUTIVE ORDER ON FEDERAL POLICE REFORM ON 2<sup>ND</sup> YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE DEATH OF GEORGE FLOYD –**

Per an online CBS News report (*cbsnews.com*) by Stefan Becket dated May 25, 2022, President Joe Biden signed an executive order to reform federal policing on May 25, 2022, the second anniversary of George Floyd's murder.

Prior to signing the order, Biden spoke about the reform, saying it will promote accountability, raise standards and modernize policing. "This executive order is going to deliver the most significant police reform in decades," said Biden. "It applies directly, under law, to only 100,000 federal enforcement officers ... (but) we expect the order to have a significant impact on state and local law enforcement agencies as well."

As stated in the CBS news report, the executive order directs the Attorney General to create a new National Law Enforcement Accountability Database with all federal law enforcement agencies — such as the FBI, Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Secret Service and Customs and Border Protection — required to participate. The database will include records of officers convicted of crimes, firings and "sustained complaints or records of disciplinary actions for serious misconduct," among other issues, and will be available to state and local agencies. While non-federal entities are not required to report misconduct incidents to the new database, they are "encouraged" to do so, according to the White House.

"This is a call to action based on a basic truth: public trust, as any cop will tell you, is the foundation of public safety. Without trust, the population doesn't contribute, doesn't cooperate," Mr. Biden said. "As we've seen all too often, public trust has frayed and broken, and that undermines public safety."

The order also strengthens federal "patterns and practices" investigations over local agencies, mandates the use of body cameras by federal agents and requires all federal law enforcement agencies to implement new use-of-force policies, consistent with new guidelines issued by the Justice Department. It also bans the use of chokeholds and limits the use of no-knock warrants by federal agents.

The order reflects a less extensive approach than President Biden originally wanted because Congress was unable to agree on legislation that would have increased oversight of law enforcement. It is the result of months of negotiations among White House officials, civil rights groups and police organizations after

bipartisan talks to pass the **“George Floyd Justice in Policing Act,”** which was introduced by Congresswoman Karen Bass and passed in the House of Representatives, was stalled last year after Senate Republicans blocked its passage.

Although acknowledging the limitations of the executive order, Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey stated: "I think the president's team — using the powers that he has — [has] done an excellent job of advancing the call that I think all Americans feel to do everything you can to improve the policing profession, to empower our officers with both accountability and support." Further, NAACP President and CEO, Derrick Johnson, welcomed the executive order and said there was no better way to honor George Floyd's legacy. "We know full well that an executive order cannot address America's policing crisis the same way Congress has the ability to, but we've got to do everything we can," he said in a statement. Upon signing the executive order President Biden stated, "I know progress can be slow and frustrating and there's a concern that the reckoning on race inspired two years ago is beginning to fade,. . . [b]ut acting today, we're showing what our dear friend, the late John Lewis, Congressman, wrote in his final words after his final march for justice in July 2020 — 'Democracy is not a state. It is an act.'"

Yes, in honor and memory of Congressman Lewis and other civil rights leaders, we must continue advocating and staying focused, and keep making our concerns known to our legislators and other powerbrokers. We are all mindful of the phrase “if you don’t stand for something, you’ll fall for anything.” We must stand firm in our convictions and actions, just as those who preceded us stood firm in their convictions and actions!

### **JUNE 7TH PRIMARY ELECTION –**

There may still be some who have not returned your ballots for the June 7<sup>th</sup> Primary Election. See the May 2022 Political Grab Bag article on the Church’s website ([secondbaptistchurchla.org](http://secondbaptistchurchla.org)), as well as in the mid-month May Newsletter for information related to the various offices on the ballot. I know that we have all been inundated with flyers as well as television ads about the various candidates on the ballot so we have to “work our way through” all of the campaign literature so that we can make an informed decision. There are several newspapers who have set forth their endorsements for various offices that you

can access to assist you with your selections if you so choose, including the Los Angeles Sentinel at [www.lasentinel.net](http://www.lasentinel.net). As for the Judicial offices, I have received information from Jackie McMahon that you may consider helpful in making your decisions about the various Judicial races. Jackie obtained information from an NAACP Candidates' Forum that there are six Judicial candidates on the ballot who are African American. I will include their names, along with the Los Angeles County Bar Association ratings that were included for all the Judges in the May Political Grab Bag for your consideration. They are:

**Superior Court Office No. 3**-- Sherilyn Peace Garnett - Exceptionally Well Qualified. Note: *The U.S. Senate recently confirmed Judge Garnett to a federal judgeship. She remains on the ballot, but if she wins the election, the Governor will appoint her replacement.*)

**Superior Court Office No. 60** -- Sharon Ransom - Well Qualified

**Superior Court Office No. 70** --Holly L. Hancock – Qualified

**Superior Court Office No. 90** -- Melissa Lyons - Well Qualified

**Superior Court Office No. 118** -- Georgia Huerta - Well Qualified

**Superior Court Office No. 151** -- Thomas D. Allison – Qualified

Let us all exercise our “hard fought for” right to vote that is subject to attack in various states. The bottom line is that we must participate in the process, because as has been previously stated in other Political Grab Bag articles, so many African Americans did not vote in the 2016 election when Donald Trump became the President. If we had, the results would have been different. See the table below that has been talked about and circulated which shows the number of African Americans in various states who did not vote in 2016.



The numbers are staggering!! We have a responsibility and obligation to do better. Let us continue to do our part in this election and other elections to come, so that we can elect candidates who will “hear us and respond to us.” All elections are important for our future. Consider this statement made by Mitch McConnell, Senate Republican Leader on January 19, 2022, relating to the push by the Democrats to implement federal voting rights standards: “African American voters are voting in just as high a percentage as Americans.” What? While he may have made that statement as a basis for his argument against the need for



federal voting standards, I am referencing that statement as a reason for us to get out and vote, as I think that it says all we need to know about whom we **should** be voting for.... those who are more mindful about their characterizations of us and who have our best interests at heart! Drop off your ballot at a Drop Box or Vote Center by June 7<sup>th</sup> or vote in person at a Vote Center. Bottom line . . . we all must vote so our voices will be heard!!!

Thank you for reading!

(June 7, 2022)