



PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, our shared human history of the four-centuries-long human trafficking known as the Transatlantic “slave trade,” and of the heroism of those who tirelessly fought for its Abolition, is just such a common bond, for nations on both sides of the ocean with social, economic, and political ramifications far beyond that place and time; and

WHEREAS, the UNESCO “Routes of Enslaved Peoples Project,” which was established in 1994 in recognition of this critical chapter of history, to ensure that it is widely known, never to be forgotten, and to be prevented in the future, has declared that August 23rd of each year, anniversary of the start of the successful Haitian Revolution, shall be an International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition, an occasion for all member nations to engage their population in this vital mission; and

WHEREAS, this heritage includes the iconic landmark of the Key West African Cemetery, with its rare distinction of being one of very few global locations where Africans were buried who survived the ocean crossing but were rescued, brought to a safe haven, and welcomed with generosity instead of being sold into slavery; and

WHEREAS, the rescue of the 295 Africans buried there and of their 1,127 companions from three captured American slave ships bound for Cuba in 1860 was due to the little-recognized heroism of the United States Navy, who’s presence in Key West has long been prominent; and

WHEREAS, Key West notably remained an anti-slavery bastion throughout the Civil War, in spite of Florida’s secession, even becoming a recruitment point for United States Colored Troops, and, evidence suggests, held the first Emancipation celebration in the nation only weeks after the Proclamation took effect in January 1863, led by domestic-slave-trade survivor Sandy Cornish, one of the city’s most prosperous and prominent citizens; and

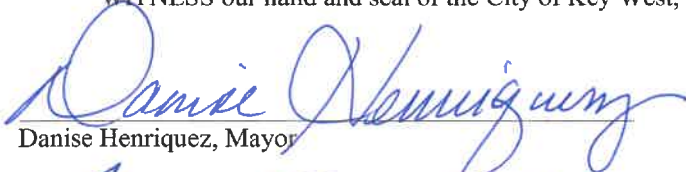
WHEREAS, Key West’s role as an epicenter has been convincingly established by the presence of the Mel Fisher Maritime Museum as a repository of compelling artifacts from slave shipwrecks with its two captivating permanent exhibitions and numerous fruitful partnerships, and as the very appropriate home to the Florida State Educational Center digital database.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Danise Henriquez, MAYOR of the City of Key West, along with the entire Key West City Commission do hereby proclaim Sunday, August 23, 2026, as

UNESCO International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition

in the “Southernmost City of the Continental United States,” and urge all citizens, residents, and visitors of our Southernmost City to participate fittingly in recognizing their importance to Key West and the Florida Keys.

WITNESS our hand and seal of the City of Key West, Florida, this 6th day of August 2026.


Danise Henriquez, Mayor


Aaron Castillo, Commissioner

