



Surfers form a circle during a Liberation paddle-out in 2021. Credit: Kevin Painchaud / Lookout Santa Cruz

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Black Surf Santa Cruz to hold annual Liberation Paddle-Out to

commemorate Juneteenth



by **Tania Ortiz**
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Quick Take

Black Surf Santa Cruz is hosting its sixth annual Liberation Paddle-Out to commemorate the Juneteenth holiday. The paddle-out is scheduled at 3 p.m. Friday, with the festivities beginning at noon at Cowell Beach in Santa Cruz.

In honor of Juneteenth, Black Surf Santa Cruz returns with its annual Liberation Paddle-Out, which centers on Black, Indigenous and other people of color and their experiences in the local surf community.

The organization is scheduled to paddle out from Cowell Beach in Santa Cruz at 3 p.m. Friday, and will also have activities such as

creating flower adornments and decorating a community surfboard. There will be food and music from local vendors throughout the day, beginning at noon.

The Liberation Paddle-Out began in 2020 by BSSC founder Esebella Bonner following the murder of George Floyd, with the goal of providing a safe space for the Black community and other marginalized communities through surfing.

“While rooted in centering our Black community, the event remains open to all, encouraging relationship-building and deeper public awareness,” the organization said on [its website](#).

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Black Surf Santa Cruz also provides equipment, like surfboards and wetsuits, for those who need them, and teaches surf lessons to the BIPOC community.



Participants are all smiles as they enjoy the fourth annual Liberation Paddle-Out hosted by Black Surf Santa Cruz on June 22, 2024. Credit: [Sue-Jean Sung @suejayvision](#)

Friday's paddle-out follows last weekend's Juneteenth festival in downtown Santa Cruz, which included a lively parade that started at city hall and ended at London Nelson Community Center.

Juneteenth (June 19) commemorates the day in 1865 when enslaved people in Texas were freed by federal troops nearly 2½ after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation, which had declared all enslaved people in the United States free from slavery. The holiday has long been celebrated by the African American community, but became a federal holiday in 2021.

Paddle-out participants are encouraged to [RSVP on the Black Surf Santa Cruz website](#).

