

Carl B. Stokes Day – Executive Summary

Carl B. Stokes Day, observed **annually on June 30** is a powerful way to close out the month in which Juneteenth is recognized—a time dedicated to honoring Black freedom, resilience, and progress. This day gives the City of Cleveland a meaningful opportunity to celebrate the life, leadership, and lasting legacy of one of our most influential public figures.

Elected in 1967, Carl B. Stokes made history as the first Black mayor of a major United States city. His leadership redefined public service with a bold commitment to equity, justice, and community-centered governance. Mayor Stokes challenged long-standing racial injustices in housing, education, employment, and public safety, and brought the voices of historically underrepresented communities to the center of civic decision-making.

He was also a pioneer in the fight for environmental justice, raising national awareness about the harmful effects of urban pollution on low-income and Black communities. He understood that environmental quality and social equity must go hand in hand. That legacy continues to shape Cleveland's current work, including the City's updated Climate Action Plan, which centers health, justice, and sustainability for all residents.

Carl B. Stokes also believed deeply in the power of economic opportunity. His commitment to inclusion helped establish the foundation for the City's ongoing efforts to support minority-owned businesses and ensure fair access to jobs and public contracts. These values remain central to the work of the Office of Equal Opportunity and reflect the vision of a city that works for everyone.

Commemorating Carl B. Stokes Day is not only a tribute to a historic figure, it is a reaffirmation of Cleveland's dedication to the principles of equity, empowerment, and progress. As we reflect on Juneteenth and move forward in building a more just and inclusive future, we do so with gratitude for leaders like Carl B. Stokes, whose example continues to guide and inspire.