



**JUNETEENTH**

**Celebrate Freedom**

**JUNE 19**

President Abraham Lincoln issued the **Emancipation Proclamation** on January 1, 1863, as the nation approached its third **year** of bloody civil war.



The **proclamation** declared "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious states "are, and henceforward shall be free." Yet the war raged on for two and a half more years, and although freedom was promised, it was not uniformly granted in all states to all enslaved people.

In April 1865, Confederate commander Robert E. Lee surrendered his army to Federal forces at Appomattox Court House in Virginia. With that surrender, the rebellion was over. News of Lee's surrender spread within days through the former slave states east of the Mississippi River. With that news came the realization by both former slaves and former slaveowners that freedom would now be the permanent status for African Americans.

Texas, however, was another matter. Isolated from both Union and Confederate forces during the Civil War and thus spared horrific battles on its soil, Texas had become a place of refuge for slaveholders who sought to deny this information from its enslaved people. Through April, May, and part of June 1865, Black Texans did not even know they in fact had been emancipated.

Finally on June 19, 1865, freedom officially arrived in Texas. On the previous day, Union General Gordon Granger and 2,000 federal troops landed on the beach at Galveston to take control of the last unoccupied Confederate state. The following day, on June 19, Granger read the contents of General Order No. 3, proclaiming from the balcony of Ashton Villa in Galveston that:

**"The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free..."**

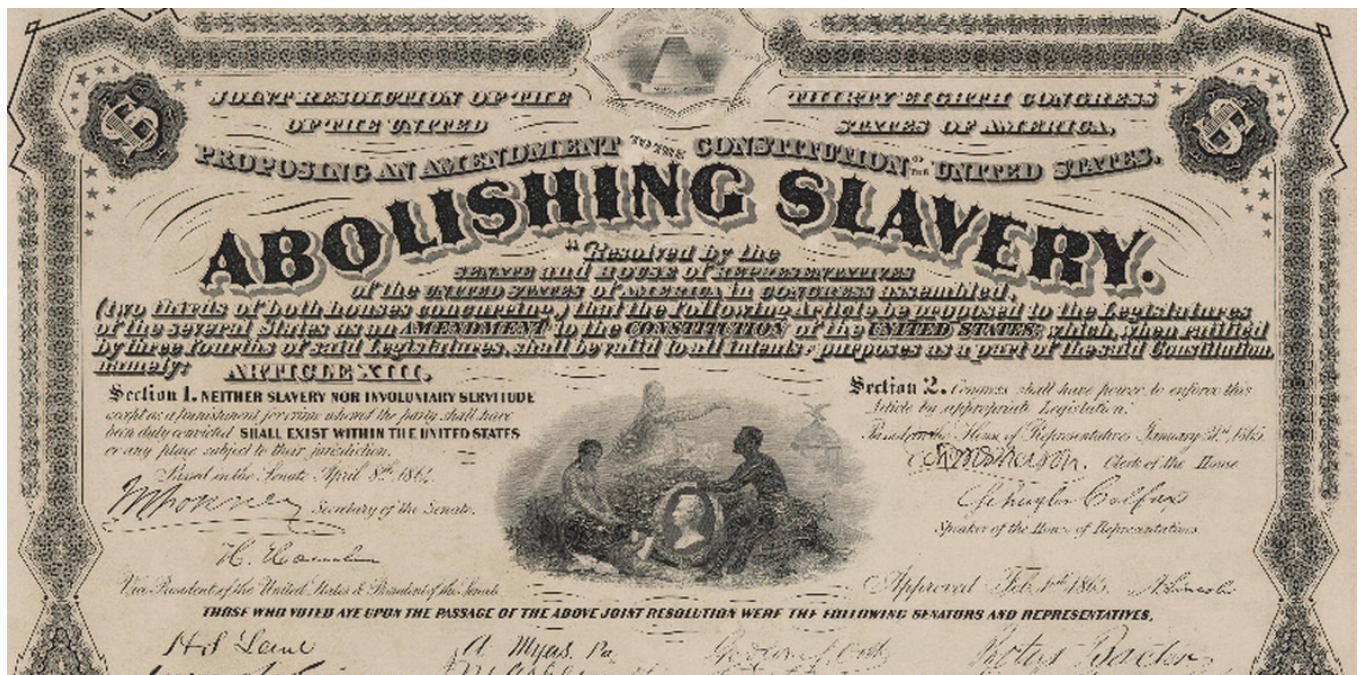
—excerpt from General Orders, Number 3;  
Headquarters District of Texas, Galveston,  
June 19, 1865

SOURCE: PBS.ORG



News of emancipation came at different times during that Texas summer and autumn 1865, and local Blacks came to a consensus and chose June 19 (Juneteenth) as their day of celebration. African Americans were formally liberated when the Georgia legislature ratified the 13th Amendment on December 6, 1865, guaranteeing its addition to the U.S. Constitution.

The amendment officially put an end to slavery in the United States, 246 years after the first slaves arrived on the shores of Virginia in 1619.



Beginning in 1866 African Americans held parades, picnics, barbecues, and gave speeches in remembrance of their liberation. By 1900, the festivities had grown to include baseball games, horse races, street fairs, rodeos, railroad excursions, and formal balls.

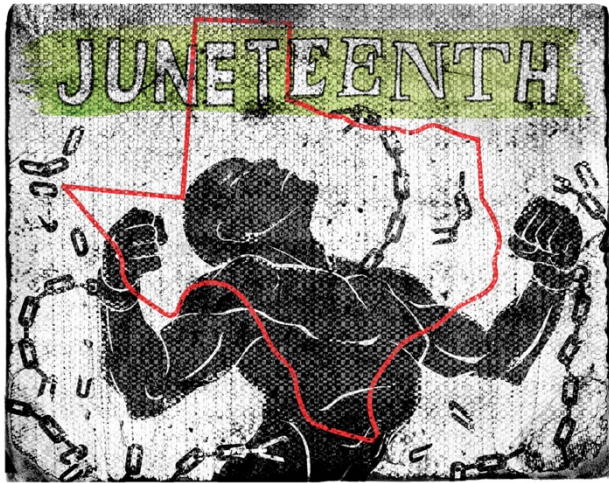




By 1900, Juneteenth had unofficially become Texas Emancipation Day and was sponsored by black churches and civic organizations. Around the turn of the century, Juneteenth surpassed the Fourth of July as the biggest holiday of the year for African Americans in Texas as crowds of 5,000 or more gathered in Houston and Dallas for Juneteenth celebrations. Thousands of people would also gather in other larger U.S. cities like Richmond, Virginia (below) for celebrations.

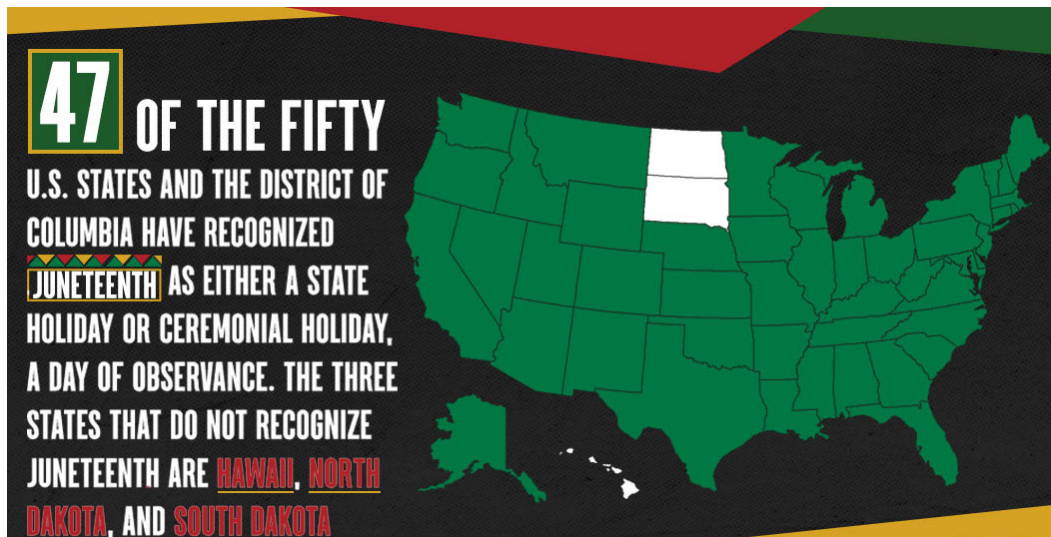


By the 1980's a number of local community activists rediscovered Juneteenth and persuaded public officials to embrace the holiday. Not surprisingly, Texas, in 1980, became the first state to declare Juneteenth an official state holiday.



ON JANUARY 1, 1980 **JUNETEENTH** BECAME AN OFFICIAL STATE HOLIDAY IN TEXAS. THE SUCCESSFUL PASSAGE OF THIS BILL MARKED JUNETEENTH AS THE FIRST EMANCIPATION CELEBRATION GRANTED OFFICIAL STATE RECOGNITION.

Other states began to recognize the holiday as well. In 1994 the “Modern Juneteenth Movement” was born and advocates from across the country gathered in New Orleans where they pledged to work for national recognition of the holiday. The National Association of Juneteenth Lineage (NAJL), the National Juneteenth Celebration Organization (NJCA), and the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation (NJOFF) have been created since the mid-90’s to help promote the holiday throughout the nation. In 1997 the U.S. Congress passed a resolution officially recognizing June 19 as Juneteenth Independence Day in the United States. Three years later the first annual Washington Juneteenth National Holiday Observance took place in the nation’s capital. By June 2020, 47 states and the District of Columbia had established either full or partial recognition of the holiday.



A popular and long-standing way to celebrate Juneteenth is on a bike, with organizations like **Juneteenth Freedom Rides** honoring milestones and achievements in African American history with multiple bike **rides** and events in cities all over the country.



Many communities in cities and states all over the country continue to host parades commemorating Juneteenth, sustaining the traditions which began more than 155 years ago; celebrating in every corner of our nation, from New York City...



To Philadelphia, PA...



To Austin, Texas...



To Atlanta, Georgia...



To Berkeley, CA...



To Seattle, WA...



**JUNETEENTH  
FREEDOM MARCH  
& CELEBRATION!**

**FRI. JUNE 19TH**  
**Starts at 2pm**

Start at 22nd & Madison → March south on 23rd to Jimi Hendrix Park

**TEACH-IN  
BLACK GRAD  
FOOD FOR THE SOUL  
1,000 BLACK BUSINESSES  
MARCH FOR BLACK LIVES  
MUSICAL PERFORMANCES**

**AFRICA TOWN**  
Central District  
**KINGCOUNTYEQUITYNOW.COM**

JUNETEENTH IS THE REAL INDEPENDENCE DAY 6.19.1865

JUNETEENTH

The poster features a central photograph of a large crowd of people marching down a street. The text is overlaid on this image. The poster is decorated with colorful, abstract patterns on the left and right sides, including a drum and a sun/moon symbol. A small logo on the left side reads 'JUNETEENTH IS THE REAL INDEPENDENCE DAY 6.19.1865'. A small logo on the right side reads 'JUNETEENTH'.

Though holidays, symbols, statues, and flags matter, it will take more than increased recognition of Juneteenth to combat racism. If not followed with substantive change, the relatively recent scramble to acknowledge Juneteenth will just feel like virtue signaling, acts of solidarity that ring hollow. It is extremely important for every single one of us who live in this country to learn about all chapters of American history (many of which are not taught in our schools and are simply omitted from the textbooks) and to acknowledge and embrace that some parts of our country's history are steeped in trauma, pain, injustice, and continual struggle.

For instance, in addition to Juneteenth, which is a call to celebration, the month of June also marks the anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre, one of the single worst incidents of racial violence in American history.



The attack by white citizens, some of whom were informally and hastily deputized for the occasion, was carried out on the ground and from private aircraft and lasted for two days, killing as many as 300 people, mostly Black. The devastation destroyed more than 35 square blocks of the Greenwood District, which was at that time, the wealthiest Black community in the United States, and was known as "Black Wall Street". The link below gives you a 3-D interactive look at the Tulsa Race Massacre and you can learn about what happened, why it happened, and the lasting devastation it has caused for many subsequent generations of African Americans.

Today, 158 years after all enslaved Americans became free, many Black Americans still do not have the same opportunities or access to good education, quality healthcare, the right to live in certain

neighborhoods, or to civil rights that are constitutionally granted to all people in this country. For those of us who are learning about Juneteenth for the first time or who may have heard of it but want to learn more, we have a golden opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate freedom for African Americans today...but let's also look for ways to continue to understand and acknowledge how the history of the United States informs the struggles that persist today; let's listen to the concerns and the needs of those who are demanding justice and change, and let's take action to play a role in helping to enact change, progress, and justice for Black Americans. There are some events that will be happening the weekend of Juneteenth right here in this city. Please consider attending an event to celebrate our country's history...and to learn from it!



### **Events you can attend this Juneteenth 2021 in Seattle:**

#### **The Art of Grace in the Face of History in Honor of Juneteenth--June 17, 2021; 6:00pm**

A poetry/storytelling/music workshop produced by Jaye Ware, local playwright and spoken word artist.

More information on the front page of the [June Advocate](https://www.psara.org/). <https://www.psara.org/>

#### **IT TAKES A VILLAGE — JUNETEENTH FESTIVAL—JUNE 19<sup>TH</sup>, 2021**

<https://www.weouthereSeattle.com/2021-calendar/it-takes-a-village-juneteenth-festival/2021/6/19/it-takes-a-village-juneteenth-festival>

### **Links and Resources to Learn More about African-American History**

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/05/24/us/tulsa-race-massacre.html>

<https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/events-african-american-history/>

<https://www.fs.fed.us/people/aasg/calendar/timeline.html>

## **SOURCES**

New York Times

Britannica

Crosscut

KUOW

King County Equity Now

Juneteenth Freedom Rides

Sankofa Education Services

BlackPast

Galvestonhistory.org

National Museum of African American History and Culture

Library of Congress

PBS

Washington State Labor Council

University of Texas, Arlington