

Celebrating Juneteenth



educational service center
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History

On June 19 1865, months after the end of the Civil War and years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, Union General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas to inform enslaved Black Americans of their freedom.

Juneteenth comes from the combining of the words June and Nineteenth. It's also referred to as "Jubilee Day," "Emancipation Day" and "Freedom Day!"

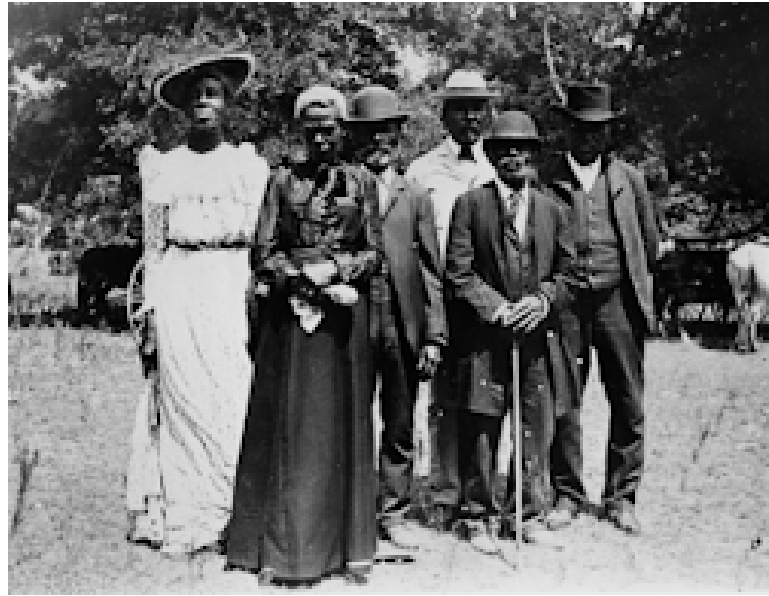
In Texas, Juneteenth became a state holiday in 1979.

Juneteenth became a federal holiday in 2021. It is the first new federal holiday since Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day was signed into law in 1983.

How can you celebrate or recognize Juneteenth?



Juneteenth is celebrated across America among Black families and friends with street fairs, parades, and concerts. The most jubilant celebrations take place in Texas, the holiday's birthplace. Because of its Southern roots, barbecue is a must, and red foods like strawberry soda and red velvet cake are traditionally served as the color is "a symbol of ingenuity and resilience in bondage," according to The New York Times. The National Juneteenth Observance Foundation



president Steve Williams also encourages readings of the Emancipation Proclamation.

For anyone who isn't Black but would like to recognize Juneteenth, June 19 is a great day to honor and embrace Black culture through its art and history. Take the opportunity to learn about major firsts from African Americans, read a book by a Black author or buy from Black-owned companies. Most importantly, remember that all of those things shouldn't just happen on Juneteenth, but every day. Why not celebrate the independence of everyone in our country?

Unity, freedom is what Juneteenth is all about. So I decided that I would walk from Fort Worth to Washington D.C. ... We've carried 1,500,000 signatures to Congress to let them know it's just not one little lady in tennis shoes and her little group called the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation who feel that Juneteenth needs to be a national holiday. Let's celebrate freedom from the 19th of June to the Fourth of July, because we weren't all free in 1776.

– Opal Lee



Juneteenth Celebration in Emancipation Park in Houston, circa 1880. Credit: Wikipedia Commons.

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

– General Order No. 3