

Juneteenth (June 19, 2022)



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Peace. June 19th or “Juneteenth” is a very important day in African-American history. Juneteenth, or “Freedom Day” is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States.

This holiday is considered the “longest-running African-American holiday” and has been called “America’s second Independence Day.” It was on June 19, 1865 that Union soldiers, led by Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger, landed in Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that all slaves were free.

Please note that this was 2 ½ years after President Lincoln signed the

Emancipation Proclamation, which became official on January 1, 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation had little impact on Texans for several reasons. First, there was a minimal number of Union troops available to enforce the new executive order in Texas and there were large crops that needed labor to harvest them. When General Lee surrendered in April 1865, and the general's regiment arrived where the forces were strong enough to influence and overcome the resistance of white slave owners. Just think – took 2 ½ years after the Emancipation Proclamation for ALL slaves to finally be free! That was cause for celebration and jubilation!

Realizing that they were finally free, many African-Americans went north to “true freedom” while others desired to connect with their family members in neighboring states like Louisiana, Arkansas and Oklahoma to settle down. The celebration of June 19th was coined “Juneteenth” and grew with more participation from descendants.

The Juneteenth celebration was a time for reassuring each other, praying, and for gathering remaining family members together. Juneteenth continued to be highly revered in Texas decades later, with many former slaves and descendants making an annual pilgrimage back to Galveston on this date.

President Joe Biden signed legislation June 17, 2021 establishing a new federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery, saying he believes it will go down as one of the greatest honors he has as president.

“Making Juneteenth a federal holiday is a major step forward to recognize the wrongs of the past,” Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., said in a statement, “but we must continue to work to ensure equal justice and fulfill the promise of the Emancipation Proclamation and our Constitution.”

In the early years, little interest existed outside the African American community in participation in the celebrations. In some cases, there was outward resistance by barring the use of public property for the festivities.

Since African-Americans were often prohibited from using public facilities for their celebrations, they often held their annual celebrations at their churches or out in rural areas around rivers and creeks that could provide for additional activities such as fishing, horseback riding, and barbecues.

“Eventually, as African-Americans became landowners, land was donated and dedicated for these festivities.

One of the earliest documented land purchases in the name of Juneteenth was organized by Rev. Jack Yates. This fund-raising effort yielded \$1,000 and the purchase of Emancipation Park in Houston. In Mexico, the local Juneteenth organization purchased Booker T. Washington Park, which had become the Juneteenth celebration site in 1898.

There are accounts of Juneteenth activities being interrupted and halted by white landowners demanding that their laborers return to work. However, it seems most allowed their workers the day off and some even made donations of food and money. For decades these annual celebrations flourished, growing continuously with each passing year. In Booker T. Washington Park, as many as 20,000 African-Americans once flowed through during a week, making the celebration one of the state's largest."

On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official state holiday in Texas through the efforts of Al Edwards, an African-American state legislator. The successful passage of this bill marked Juneteenth as the first emancipation celebration granted official state recognition. Edwards has since actively sought to spread the observance of Juneteenth all across America."

In 1996 the first legislation to recognize "Juneteenth Independence Day" was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives, H.J. Res. 195, sponsored by Barbara-Rose Collins (D-MI). In 1997, Congress recognized the day through Senate Joint Resolution 11 and House Joint Resolution 56. In 2013 the U.S. Senate passed Senate Resolution 175, acknowledging Lula Briggs Galloway (late president of the National Association of Juneteenth Lineage) who "successfully worked to bring national recognition to Juneteenth Independence Day," and the continued leadership of the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation.

By 2002, eight states officially recognized Juneteenth and by 2006, 15 states recognized Juneteenth as a holiday. By 2008, nearly half of U.S. states observed the holiday as a ceremonial observance. In total, 47 of the 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia recognize Juneteenth as either a state holiday or ceremonial holiday, a day of observance. The three states that do not recognize Juneteenth are Hawaii, North Dakota and South Dakota.

"In 2016, at the age of 89, former teacher and lifelong activist Opal Lee walked 1,400 miles from her home in Fort Worth, Texas, to Washington, D.C., in an effort to get Juneteenth recognized as a national holiday.

Two years later, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution recognizing the holiday, which originated in Galveston, Texas, and honors the June 19 anniversary of the announcement by Union Army General Gordon Granger proclaiming freedom from slavery in Texas.

Though the day is now celebrated annually throughout the United States, Ms. Opal does not consider her work complete: “We have simply got to make people aware that none of us are free until we’re all free, and we aren’t free yet,” she told the New York Times.”

President Joe Biden speaks with Opal Lee after he signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, in the East Room of the White House, Thursday, June 17, 2021, in Washington. (AP Photo/Evan Vucci)



Juneteenth not only celebrates the freedom of African-Americans from slavery, but it also is a time when our achievements are noted, and continuous self-development is encouraged. We dress with pride to show our spirit, sometimes in African garments. This day of national pride is celebrated with food, music, games, and other activities to promote cultural awareness and community cohesiveness. Memories have been created and shared for passing down to generations.

This should be a time of celebration for Blacks everywhere. Please, let us keep Juneteenth respected, revered and never forgotten! Our ancestors died for it, were enslaved for an extra 2 ½ years for it and I’m sure they would agree.

We may not be able to have our big celebrations, picnics, barbeques and festivities on Juneteenth (June 19, 2022) because of the pandemic restrictions, but there are some important things that you can do on Juneteenth in the middle of the pandemic:

- Register to vote.
- Contact elected officials to voice your concerns and advocate for change.
- Complete the Census. Federal funding and representation are determined by the census taken every 10 years. Data from the census determines how hundreds of billions of federal dollars, also known as YOUR tax dollars, are dispersed each year to communities, schools, hospitals and roads.
- Share resources.

- Jury duty. While most people deem jury duty as inconvenient and try to get out of their civic responsibility, black and brown jurors are important now more than ever. The United States has a long history of racial discrimination in jury selection. Black jurors influence outcomes. Research shows that having even one black juror changes a trial's outcome and in some cases this is literally the one person to save or change a person's life. Some studies have found that seating just one African American on the jury has reduced the rate of convictions for black defendants by ten percent.
- Buy Black. Large companies have a history of oppressing small and black-owned businesses and putting a heavy burden on low-income communities. By buying black, you are assisting in closing the racial wealth gap which in turn strengthens local economies and has a positive domino effect like the creation of more jobs.
- Inter-generational conversations. Our community is hurting. It's time to build better relationships and communication between younger and older adults. Conversations around what we can do together that we cannot do apart should be mindful, intentional, and strategic. Be sure conversations acknowledge the shared problems but being mindful each of us have lived different experiences. While emotions may run high, the process must be purposeful to not only heal but to define systems of accountability.
- Support those on the front lines. There is power in numbers. While you may not run to your local protest since there is still an active global pandemic, you can still use your voice socially and digitally to help support those on the front lines fighting the good fight.

Doreleena Sammons Hackett, SM

Reference: History of Juneteenth © JUNETEENTH.com

Buffalo Soldiers Juneteenth Flag Raising Ceremony





Last week I had the honor of participating in the Charlotte Juneteenth, "Flag Raising Ceremony" held at Ebenezer Baptist Church. The Charlotte Chapter of the Buffalo Soldiers conducted the ceremony.





Event Organizers from left to right: Dr. Robbie Akhere, Commissioner Pat Cotham, and American Legion Vice Commander-Elect Alesia Bell.

Juneteenth Celebrations Around Charlotte

Juneteenth Celebrations with Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation

Meck County Park and Recreation is presenting several Juneteenth events. On June 18th, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., there will be a Juneteenth Jubilee for the whole family at David Waymer Recreation Center. On June 14th, 16th, and 17th, there will be three special Juneteenth events for seniors age 55+, including a celebration, t-shirt decorating and an educational brunch. [Learn about all four Meck County Park and Rec Juneteenth events.](#)

Juneteenth Festival of the Carolinas is a free, multi-cultural celebration that is in its 25th year. It will take place at House of Africa, 1215 Thomas Avenue, in Plaza Midwood. It takes place from June 16th to June 19th, 2022. 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Juneteenth at Gantt Center

The Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts+Culture presents Juneteenth events every year. Here are two:

Art After Dark: Movement and Freedom on Friday, June 17th, 2022, from 6 to 10 p.m. This is a free event for people ages 21+. Please check back soon to see if there's also a family event for Juneteenth.

Juneteenth Celebration: Elements of Freedom is a free, family-friendly celebration on Sunday, June 19th, 2022 from 12:30 to 5 p.m. It features hands-on art experiences, conversations, and a live performance by Quentin Talley and The Soul Providers.

2022 North Carolina Juneteenth Festival has the theme of "Educating, Empowering, Entertaining." It takes place Saturday, June 18th, 2022, from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m., at Cabarrus Arena & Events Center.

The festival features kids' activities, vendors, giveaways, and more. It's free to attend.

3rd Annual Juneteenth Youth Experience

The 3rd Annual Juneteenth Youth Experience gives the spotlight to kids and teens, with a youth vendor market and youth entertainers. This is a free event that will take place at Romare Bearden Park, 300 S. Church Street, on Sunday, June 19th, 2022, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Queen City Juneteenth Parade

The 1st Annual Queen City Juneteenth Parade takes place Monday, June 20th, 2022, at 10 a.m., at Central Piedmont Community College's Cato Campus, 8120 Grier Road, Charlotte.

Happy Juneteenth Day! PEACE!



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