

THE HISTORICAL LEGACY OF JUNETEENTH

ORIGIN OF JUNETEENTH

On January 1, 1863, enslaved and free African Americans gathered in churches and private homes all across the country awaiting news that the Emancipation Proclamation had taken effect. At the stroke of midnight prayers were answered as all enslaved people in the Confederate States were declared legally free. But not everyone in Confederate territory would immediately be free. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation was made effective in 1863, it could not be implemented in places still under Confederate control. As a result in the westernmost Confederate state of Texas enslaved people would not be free until much later. Freedom finally came on June 19th, 1865, when some 2,000 Union troops arrived in Galveston Bay, Texas. The army announced that the more than 250,000 enslaved black people in the state, were free by executive decree. This day came to be known as "Juneteenth" by the newly freed people in Texas.

IMPORTANCE OF JUNETEENTH



The post emancipation period known as Reconstruction marked an era of great hope, uncertainty, and struggle for the nation as a whole. Formerly enslaved people immediately sought to reunify families, establish schools, run for political office, push radical legislation and even sue slaveholders for compensation. Given the 200+ years of enslavement, such changes were nothing short of amazing. Not even a generation out of slavery, African Americans were inspired and empowered to transform their lives and their country. Juneteenth marks our country's second independence day. Although it has long celebrated in the African American community, this monumental event remains largely unknown to most Americans. The historical legacy of Juneteenth shows the value of never giving up hope in uncertain times.

HOW CAN I CONTRIBUTE TO JUNETEENTH'S CELEBRATIONS?



- **Learn the history of Juneteenth**
- **Support Black-owned businesses in your area.**
- **Talk to your children about race.**
- **Access free educational resources on American slavery.**
- **Share photos of past or present Juneteenth celebrations.**
- **Make a donation to an organization that supports Black lives and the fight for equality**