

WHAT IS JUNETEENTH?



June 19th, or Juneteenth for short, is the holiday that commemorates the end of slavery in the U.S., in 1865.

On January 1, 1863, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. It declared freedom for all enslaved people in the Confederacy. However, slave owners kept this news a secret and it wasn't until after the war was over in 1865 that news reached the enslaved people of Texas. On June 19, 1865, General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, to announce the news that all enslaved people were free.

People in the African American community in Galveston and other parts of Texas, commemorated this joyous day every year with picnics and celebrations. As people moved to different parts of the country, they took the tradition of celebration with them. Not everyone joined in the festivities though, and outside of the African American community this day of remembrance was often met with little interest and sometimes outward resistance.

During the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s, there was renewed interest in celebrating Juneteenth, as young people were pulled into the struggle for racial equality. People organized to broaden the reach of recognizing the importance of Juneteenth.

On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official state holiday in Texas, thanks to the efforts of Al Edwards, African American state legislator. Beginning in 2007, other states began to follow suit. Finally in June 2021, after the tireless efforts of activists like Opal Lee (known as the "grandmother of Juneteenth"), President Biden established June 19th as a federal holiday commemorating the end of slavery by marking the day enslaved people in Texas learned they were free.

CHECK YOUR READING

Word Bank

Opal Lee

Lincoln

Biden

Galveston

June

picnics

celebrations

holiday

19th

Complete the sentences using the words above.

1. Juneteenth is a combination of the words _____ and _____.
2. The Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1863 by President _____.
3. People in _____, Texas, did not find out they were free until 1865.
4. People commemorate Juneteenth by having _____ and _____.
5. _____ is known as the "grandmother of Juneteenth."
6. President _____ signed a bill making Juneteenth a federal _____ in June 2021.

FREEDOM DAY

Juneteenth is also called Freedom Day. Write an acrostic poem using the letters below.

F

R

E

E

D

O

M
