

Happy Juneteenth !!!

Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration honoring the end of slavery in the United States. The origins of this celebration remain as a symbol of hope and a reminder that truth and justice will eventually, always prevail. Juneteenth is a celebration of Blackness and survival and an acknowledgment of the long tragic history of the African-American journey to freedom.

The Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln on January 1, 1863, established that all enslaved people in Confederate states in rebellion against the Union “shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.” In reality, however, the freedom promised by the Emancipation Proclamation was a long way away for many slaves in the Confederate South.

On June 19th 1865, *a full two and a half years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation*, General Gordon Granger and his troops traveled to Galveston, Texas to announce “General Orders No. 3” which stated: “The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free.

That December, with the last bastion of slavery in the South finally vanquished, slavery in America was formally abolished with the adoption of the 13th Amendment.

In 1980 “Emancipation Day in Texas” became a legal state holiday in recognition of Juneteenth. Elsewhere, the holiday is also referred to as Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, and Black Independence Day. Today, some 47 states recognize Juneteenth as a state holiday, in one form or another, while efforts to make it a national holiday have so far stalled in Congress.

Unfortunately, many Americans are still today, unaware about the history and significance of this date. Despite its historical significance, Juneteenth is still not taught in most public schools.

This Juneteenth, let us take a moment to acknowledge that the freedom, equality and basic human rights that are promised to all, are still denied to many people of color in our society. Ignorance, apathy and complacency allow many of us to continue to exist (whether as master or slave) in a deleterious state of mental slavery—manifested by systemic institutional bias and individual unconscious bias.

Today, let us all be General Granger. Today, Juneteenth 2020, let us all join together in a universal proclamation of freedom. Freedom from being stepped on, choked on, kneeled on and shot. Freedom from being overlooked and undercounted. Freedom from being looked at as being less than. Freedom from the presumption of guilt. Freedom from being feared, because of how we were born. Today, Juneteenth 2020, let us proclaim that we are all free...to breathe.