

WHAT IS JUNETEENTH?

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HISTORY OF JUNETEENTH

On June 19th, 1865, news arrived in Galveston, Texas, that the Civil War had ended and the enslaved were now free.

This news came a full two and a half years after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. This long delay remains unexplained, but many speculate that the news was deliberately withheld by the enslavers to maintain their labor force.

Although many Americans consider July 4th, 1776 to be "Independence Day," independence did not come for Black Americans until almost a century later. This is why June 19th, 1865, or "Juneteenth," is often referred to as "Black Independence Day."

HOW IS JUNETEENTH CELEBRATED?

The celebration of Freedom Day became an annual one, and it grew in popularity over the years with new generations. The day was celebrated by bringing families back together for prayer and reflection. Many families even made a pilgrimage back to Galveston.

Today, many Black American families celebrate by coming together and sharing meals. In some cities, mostly in the South, there are larger events like parades, festivals, and potlucks.

Juneteenth is on its way to being recognized as a National Holiday. 45 states currently recognize it. This year, some large corporations are designating it as a paid holiday. There are many petitions circulating, calling on congress to make the change.

WHY HAS JUNETEENTH GAINED MORE RECOGNITION THIS YEAR?

With the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, the holiday is especially impactful this year. Many Black Americans feel this is the first time that they have been heard and recognized all across the U.S.

This year, Juneteenth may feel more like an opportunity for Black folks to catch their breath. To celebrate the radical shift that has happened over the last month. To take a day for healing and community.

HOW CAN WE CELEBRATE JUNETEENTH AS NON-BLACK AMERICANS?

Recognize that this is not your day. This is not your experience. Take a step back and make space for Black folks.

Support only Black-owned businesses.

Sign the petition to make Juneteenth a nationally recognized holiday. <http://chng.it/J6sWJbgZjZ>

Contact your state representatives and demand recognition.

Within your workplace, advocate for PTO for Black employees.

Spread awareness of Juneteenth and its significance.

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