



Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States.

From its Galveston, Texas origin in 1865, the observance of June 19th as the African American Emancipation Day is a federal holiday.

Photo: Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

### Did You Know?

**People living under confederate control after the Emancipation Proclamation were still slaves?**

It took two and a half years for slaves in Galveston, TX to be freed by General Order No. 3 which read, “The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor.”

Texas became the first state to make Juneteenth a state holiday in 1980.

Juneteenth became a federal holiday on June 17, 2021.

Celebrating Juneteenth has become more popular over the last several years. It is marked with parades, parties and commemorations.

Juneteenth is also an opportunity to reflect on the inequities, disparities and gaps in education, healthcare, housing and jobs that exist for People of Color.

*Each year when my family celebrates Juneteenth, our flyers boldly request that each guest bring something "Red." We then add examples, like red soda pop, watermelon, apples, or even red beans. Folks bring these items without much thinking about their origin. In fact, the roots of the symbolic efficacy of the color red can be traced to West Africa, where it has been associated with strength, spirituality, life, and death. Furthermore, culinary historians, trace the color to certain foods that traveled to the Americas along with the Africans during the trans-Atlantic slave trade, such as hibiscus and the kola nut.*

*So, this year at Juneteenth, as you take a long swallow from a cool drink of hibiscus iced tea, or red punch, remember the ancestors who sacrificed, remember the blood shed in the struggle, remember the collective strength of people of the African diaspora, and finally remember the spirituality and transcendent joy that enabled us to overcome.*

~ Kelly Navies, museum specialist and oral historian at the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture

