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## IN THE NEWS

# Celebrating Juneteenth

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On June 19, 1865, Union Army General Gordon Granger announced to the people of Texas that all slaves were freed. A portion of his statement reads:

“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 rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired laborer.”

This statement made in Galveston, Texas marked the last known report of the Emancipation Proclamation. Unfortunately, this last report was made more than two years after President Lincoln actually issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, ordering that all enslaved individuals throughout the Confederacy be freed. As a result, while President Lincoln’s declaration is commonly known as the moment in which the United States ended slavery as a formal, lawful, policy, June 19, 1865 is commonly celebrated as the end of the legal mechanism of slavery in the U.S. The late announcement by General Granger freed an estimated 250,000 enslaved people in Texas. Even with that declaration, sadly, abuses of former slaves in the United States did not end.

For an analysis of the interplay between the Emancipation Proclamation (which technically only freed slaves in the Confederate States), the Hampton Roads conference where Confederate representatives attempted to stifle the end of slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment that formally abolished slavery throughout the Union (ratified on December 6, 1865), [click here](#).

Historically, “The Juneteenth celebration was a time for reassuring each other, for praying and for gathering remaining family members. Juneteenth continued to be highly revered in Texas decades later, with many former slaves and descendants making an annual pilgrimage back to Galveston on this date.” (Juneteenth.com) Today 47 States recognize Juneteenth as a state holiday, including Texas, and celebrations take on an array of characteristics. In 2021, a unanimous Senate and nearly unanimous House passed legislation to make Juneteenth the first new federal holiday since the 1983 enactment of Martin Luther King Jr. Day. On June 17, 2021, President Biden signed the bill into law, making Juneteenth the 11th national holiday.

Last year, Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors unanimously approved Juneteenth as a paid holiday for County employees – becoming the first county in California to do so. As part of the local commemoration of Juneteenth, this week, the African American Community Service Agency is hosting a number of events, and ending the celebration with Juneteenth in the Park Festival in San Jose on June 19<sup>th</sup>. [A complete list of Juneteenth celebrations across seven of the Bay Area counties can be found here](#). The City of Galveston also produces [a free webinar](#) from local historians and organizations to preserve and safeguard the history, events, stories, and memories of Juneteenth.



## Resources & Bibliography:

[Juneteenth.com | History](https://www.juneteenth.com/history)

[Britannica.com | Juneteenth](https://www.britannica.com/topic/juneteenth)

[Vox.com | Black-ish: Juneteenth Episode, Season 3 Premiere Recap](https://www.vox.com/2020/6/18/21311114/black-ish-juneteenth-episode-season-3-premiere-recap)

[History.com | Thirteenth Amendment](https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/thirteenth-amendment)

[History.com | Abolition of Slavery Announced in Texas on Juneteenth](https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/abolition-of-slavery-announced-in-texas-on-juneteenth)

[PBS.org | Juneteenth is now a national holiday. How did it come to pass?](https://www.pbs.org/news/juneteenth-is-now-a-national-holiday-how-did-it-come-to-pass/)

[NYTimes.com | Juneteenth: The History of a New Holiday](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/18/us/politics/juneteenth-history-new-holiday.html)

[Congressional Research Service | Juneteenth National Independence Day: A New Federal Holiday](https://www.congress.gov/resources/library/publications/2020/juneteenth-national-independence-day-a-new-federal-holiday)

[VisitGalveston.com | Juneteenth Webinar](https://www.visitgalveston.com/juneteenth-webinar)

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