What is Juneteenth?

On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger landed in Galveston, Texas and put into effect the Emancipation Proclamation. With his arrival, he announced that the war had ended and the enslaved were now free. This was more than two and a half years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This overdue announcement freed more than 250,000 slaves in Texas.

Celebrating Juneteenth:

Now, 155 years later, people in cities across the U.S. continue to remember Juneteenth with celebrations and conversations. Juneteenth is a time for families and friends to come together, break bread, and honor ancestors. In the workplace, you can acknowledge Juneteenth by sharing facts about Black history, leverage guest speakers to discuss historical events and acknowledge the ongoing fight for civil rights and equality. Some organizations leverage or engage their Black employee resource groups and diversity councils to lead the conversations and celebration.

Emancipation is just the beginning.

Juneteenth is widely celebrated, but still not considered a national holiday. This year’s celebration may resonate in new ways given recent events and widespread protests across the U.S. Tragic events including the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and countless others in the past few decades show that more than a century and a half later, systemic racism is still a major issue and freedom and equality continue to be concerns for Black Americans. Celebrating the end of slavery in 1865 should not just occur for one day. It includes continuing to educate yourself and others around you.