



What is Juneteenth?

Also known as **Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Liberation Day** and **Emancipation Day**, **Juneteenth is a holiday celebrating the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in the United States.** Although Confederate General Robert E. Lee surrendered on April 9, 1865, the Army of the Trans-Mississippi in the west did not surrender until June 2. On **June 19**, weeks after the official conclusion of the Civil War on May 9, Union Army General Gordon Granger landed in Galveston, Texas, announcing the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free. His arrival was more than two and a half years after President Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. This overdue announcement ultimately freed more than 250,000 slaves across the state.

Celebrating Juneteenth

Now, 150-plus 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, many organizations honor and acknowledge Juneteenth by sharing facts about Black history, inviting guest speakers to discuss historical events and paying respect to the ongoing fight for civil rights and equality.** Some companies even 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. In recent years, the celebration has begun to take on added meaning following the widespread protests across the U.S. caused by tragic events, including the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and countless others. As these deaths show, systemic racism is still a major issue, and freedom and equality remain a concern for Black Americans — more than a century and a half later after the Emancipation Proclamation. Celebrating the end of slavery in 1865 should not just occur for one day. **It includes continuing to educate yourself and others around you.**