



**Juneteenth
Resource Base**

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Table of Contents

People.....	4
History.....	9
Milestones & Facts	13
Quotes	17

Instructions

Choose the items you'd like to include on your document from the Resource Base. Copy and paste desired items into the blank templates located on DEOMI's Special Observances tab, under Observance Products. You can also paste facts into emails and other social media. Be creative and share your ideas!

Note: DEOMI will not, necessarily, update this every year. It is important that the EO practitioner modify these to fit the current time/situation/environment.

Juneteenth

Milestones



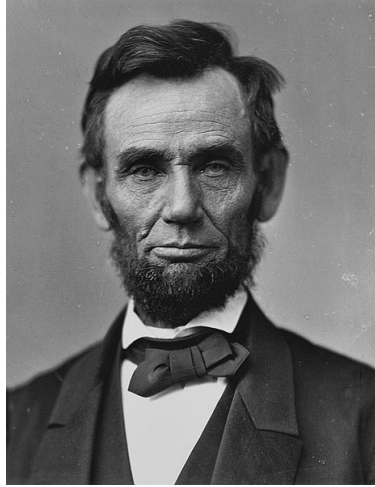
Illustration of the Emancipation Proclamation, 1863, originally printed in Harper's Weekly. Public Domain.

Juneteenth Origin: Gordon Granger delivers Emancipation to Texas (1865)

Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas announcing and enforcing the end of slavery in the United States on June 19, 1865, marking the first Juneteenth. He marched his troops to Galveston, Texas to announce General Order No. 3, which informed the people of Texas of the enforcement of the Emancipation Proclamation. Until Juneteenth, slavery remained relatively unaffected in Texas, even after the Civil War's conclusion. This is because Texas never had major Civil War battles and there weren't Union soldiers there to enforce emancipation.

Major General Granger, born in November 1822, was an important leader in the Union's fight during the Civil War, rising to prominence after leading several brigades in the Army of the Ohio in 1862. While serving as major general, he took part in the Siege of Knoxville, Battles of Chickamauga and Chattanooga, and the capture of Mobile, Alabama.

Conner, R. C. (2022, February 15). General Gordon Granger: The Savior of Chickamauga and the Man Behind "Juneteenth" (Leadership in Action). Casemate.



*Portrait of Abraham Lincoln, 1863, created by Alexander Gardner.
Public Domain.*

Abraham Lincoln changes the course of the United States (1861-1865)

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, declaring those enslaved in the Confederate State were forever free.

Abraham Lincoln was born in 1809, in Hardin County, Kentucky. He worked on a farm and kept a store in New Salem, Illinois. Lincoln served as a captain in the Black Hawk War of 1832. He spent 8 years in the Illinois legislature and spent many years as a lawyer. He won the Republican nomination for president in 1860, and then became the first Republican president in American history. He became the 16th president of the United States on March 4, 1861.

The Civil War began as a conflict to maintain the union of all the states, after the Confederacy broke off from the rest of the United States. As the war progressed, it became increasingly about abolishing the institution of slavery. Once the Emancipation Proclamation was made, Frederick Douglass called it, “The nation’s apocalyptic regeneration.”

Abraham Lincoln led the Union to victory over the Confederacy in restoring the United States. On April 14, 1865, Lincoln was killed at Ford’s Theatre in Washington by John Wilkes Booth, a Confederacy sympathizer. Andrew Johnson, Lincoln’s vice president, assumed office upon his predecessor’s assassination. Johnson, as president, pardoned many Confederacy leaders, vetoed civil rights bills, and did little to prevent aggressive southern laws limiting the freedom of African Americans.

<https://www.pvamu.edu/tiphc/research-projects/juneteenth-the-emancipation-proclamation-freedom-realized-and-delayed/>

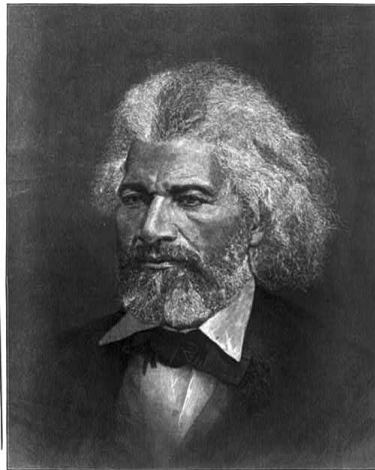
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/abraham-lincoln/>

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/about-the-white-house/presidents/andrew-johnson/>

Civil War: Sergeant Carney became first Black Medal of Honor recipient

The first Black Medal of Honor recipient was Sergeant William Carney of New Bedford, MA. Born into slavery in Virginia, he secretly attended school, eventually escaping to freedom. During the Civil War, Carney was awarded for “most distinguished gallantry in action” during the assault on Fort Wagner, SC, on July 18, 1863. After he was shot in the thigh, he continued to lead his troops uphill on his knees, while carrying the fallen flag bearer’s flag. He survived the war, returned to Massachusetts, became a postman, and played an active role in Black veterans’ organizations.

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/william-h-carney.htm>



*Illustrated portrait of Frederick Douglass, 1883, printed in Harper's Weekly.
Public Domain.*

Frederick Douglass: one of the most important abolitionists in U.S. history (1818-1895)

Douglass was born into slavery in 1818 in Maryland. He taught himself to read and write, educated other enslaved people, and tirelessly rebelled against slaveowners. He escaped slavery on September 3, 1838, after disguising himself as a sailor and boarded a train to New York City. He settled in New Bedford, Massachusetts with his wife, Anna. There, he became an orator and an agent for the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society.

Douglass bought and ran a successful newspaper, *The North Star*, and published two autobiographies. He advocated for equal treatment and the end of slavery to Abraham Lincoln. He served under 5 presidents as the U.S. Marshal for D.C., Recorder of Deeds for D.C., and Minister Resident and Consul General to Haiti until his death in 1895.

<https://www.nps.gov/frdo/learn/historyculture/frederickdouglass.htm>

Al Edwards authored the bill to make Juneteenth a statewide paid holiday

Al Edwards is known as the “father of the Juneteenth holiday.” Edwards was a Texas state representative from Houston. Because of him, Texas became the first to recognize Juneteenth as a holiday in 1979. Over the course of his life, he helped 30 other states implement Juneteenth holiday recognition laws.

<https://www.oppl.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Al-Edwards-Juneteenth-Statement.pdf>

<https://www.juneteenthusa.org/>



*President Joe Biden with Opal Lee, 2021, after signing the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act Bill.
The White House, Public Domain.*

Opal Lee played a large part in making Juneteenth a federal holiday

On June 19, 1939, at the age of 12, Opal Lee and her family were displaced by 500 white rioters in the town of Marshall, Texas. Her home was then burned and destroyed. As she grew up, she became a teacher and an activist. She helped establish the Tarrant County Black Historical & Genealogical Society, Citizens Concerned with Human Dignity organization, and the Fort Worth Juneteenth Museum.

In 2016, at the age of 89, she organized a march from Fort Worth to Washington D.C. to make Juneteenth a federal holiday. Every year since, she’s organized two-and-a-half mile walks in Galveston to symbolize the two-and-a-half years it took for the Emancipation Proclamation to reach Texas, bringing an end to American slavery. In 2022, she was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize. Her nomination was signed by 33 members of Congress.

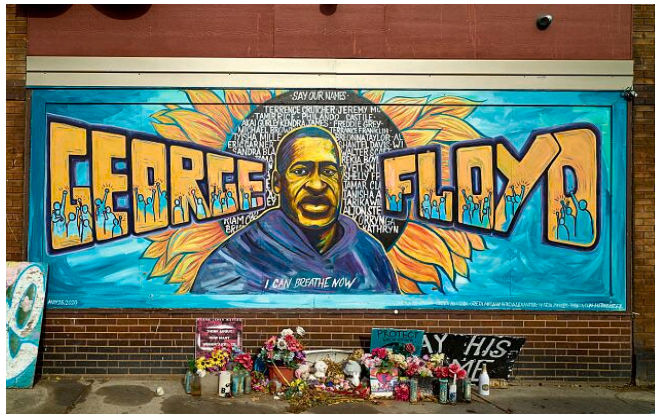
<https://www.star-telegram.com/news/local/crossroads-lab/article257896338.html>

<https://abc7.com/opal-lee-juneteenth-2021-who-is-our-america-black-freedom/10761761/>

Author Ralph Ellison Wrote *Juneteenth* to Discuss Contemporary Racial Issues

Ralph Ellison was a writer known for his novels, *Invisible Man* and *Juneteenth*. The latter was published after his death in 1994, in which he, after serving as a U.S. Merchant Marine, began his writing career. He is known for his reflections and analysis of being a Black man in America.

<https://www.read.gov/fiction/ellison.html>



Mural of George Floyd, 2021, in Minneapolis. Created by Xena Goldman, Cadex Herrera, and Greta McClain. Library of Congress.

2020 racial justice protests played a part in Juneteenth becoming a federal holiday

On May 25, 2020, George Floyd, was killed after being handcuffed and pinned to the ground by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The video of Floyd’s death spread online, causing racial justice protests and riots throughout the United States. The officers involved in the death were fired and later charged with crimes. The officer responsible for kneeling on Floyd’s neck for nine minutes was charged with second-degree murder, third-degree murder, and second-degree manslaughter.

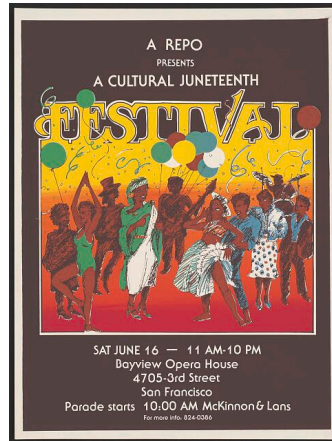
Floyd’s death, and the nation-wide protests that followed, sparked a renewed push for protections for African Americans, the largest since the civil rights protests of the 1960s. Police brutality is a hot-button issue in the United States, particularly how it relates to African Americans. This cultural moment helped bring attention to the annual Juneteenth holiday for many Americans.

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd.html>

<https://www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/juneteenth-minneapolis-george-floyd/>

Juneteenth

History



*Juneteenth Celebration Poster by Jos Sances, 1988.
Library of Congress.*

The Emancipation Proclamation didn't immediately free all African Americans

Despite the January 1, 1863, Emancipation Proclamation promised freedom for enslaved African Americans, it took a few years before all Black people were free. The Emancipation Proclamation announced that all people held as slaves in rebellious states shall be free. Because of the specific wording, enslaved African Americans in Union slave states, like Maryland, West Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, and Delaware, were not freed by the decree.

In places under Confederate control, Black people in bondage sometimes didn't get the news right away. The news was kept from them, or slavers defied the decree for as long as they could. The Proclamation was important because it galvanized Union soldiers and encouraged free Black people to join the fight.

Texas, which was the westernmost Confederate state at the time, was the final state to free the over 250,000 enslaved Black people living there. This happened on June 19, 1865, which became the date we now celebrate as Juneteenth. The period of American history after this is known as Reconstruction (1865-1877).

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/historical-legacy-juneteenth>

<https://www.history.com/news/what-is-juneteenth>



*Celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation in Massachusetts, 1863.
Burns Archive.*

Juneteenth wasn't the only day considered to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation

There were several other days considered to celebrate the Emancipation, like September 22, the date Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, or January 1, the day it officially took effect. The January 1 was celebrated by Northern Black leaders, like Fredrick Douglass, with midnight jubilees.

July 4 was another contender as well. However, this option was controversial for many African Americans because the date coincides with the Founding Father's compromise to allow slavery in their new nation. Fredrick Douglass pointed this out in his famous 1852 speech, "What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July?" in Rochester, New York.

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/what-is-juneteenth/>

Juneteenth was once a holiday almost exclusively celebrated in Texas

Because of The Great Migration, which saw the movement of approximately 6 million Black people move from Southern states to other parts of the country, the celebration spread.

During the First Great Migration, from 1910-1940, many African Americans moved to cities like New York, Chicago, Detroit, and Pittsburgh. This movement occurred to escape racial discrimination, including Jim Crow laws, and pursue more economic and educational opportunities.

<https://www.archives.gov/research/african-americans/migrations/great-migration>



*Juneteenth Parade, 2020, in front of the White House in Washington, D.C.
Library of Congress.*

Traditional and Modern Juneteenth Celebrations

Juneteenth was originally known as “Jubilee Day.” Early on, white Texans outlawed these celebrations in public spaces, which led to fundraising and organizing efforts by Black Americans to purchase celebration sites, like Emancipation Park in Houston and Booker T. Washington Park in Mexia.

The earliest celebrations were occasions in which African Americans did a variety of activities:

- Gathered lost family members and traveled.
- Reflected on progress and instilled rising generations with values of racial pride and self-improvement.
- Participated in religious sermons and readings of the Emancipation Proclamation.
- Celebrated with cookouts, large barbeques, and games like baseball or rodeos.

As the Juneteenth grew, the celebrations expanded to include:

- Juneteenth parades and dances with a variety of music.
- Jubilee pageants and community events that incorporated traditional African American cuisine.
- Theater performances, some of which included reenactments of important events in African American history.
- Gatherings and celebrations comparable to Thanksgiving and Independence Day.

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/what-is-juneteenth/>

Jr., W. W. H. (1990, November 8). O Freedom: Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations (1st Printing). University Tennessee Press.



*President Obama and others sing “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”
Public Domain.*

“Lift Every Voice and Sing” became the Black National Anthem

The song, “Lift Every Voice and Sing” is a hymn written by James Weldon Johnson in 1900. It is often referred to as “The Black National Anthem.” It was first performed in Jacksonville, Florida to celebrate Abraham Lincoln’s birthday. The song was prominently used during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

<https://naacp.org/find-resources/history-explained/lift-every-voice-and-sing>

Juneteenth

Milestones & Facts



Illustration of the USCT, 1865. Originally created for the Supervisory Committee For Recruiting Colored Regiments. Public Domain.

Civil War: African Americans Joined the Fight for their Liberation

“The United States Colored Troops (USCT)” were regiments of the United States military during the Civil War, fighting for the side of the Union.

Before this, there was a long-standing 1792 law forbidding African Americans from serving in the military, though they had fought in the American Revolution and War of 1812. While uncertain of the decision in the early days of the war, President Lincoln and Congress passed the Second Confiscation and Militia Act on July 17, 1862, which freed enslaved African Americans who served Confederate rebels. This culminated just two days later with the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared all slaves free in Confederate States. Afterwards, Black service members began fighting on the side of the Union.

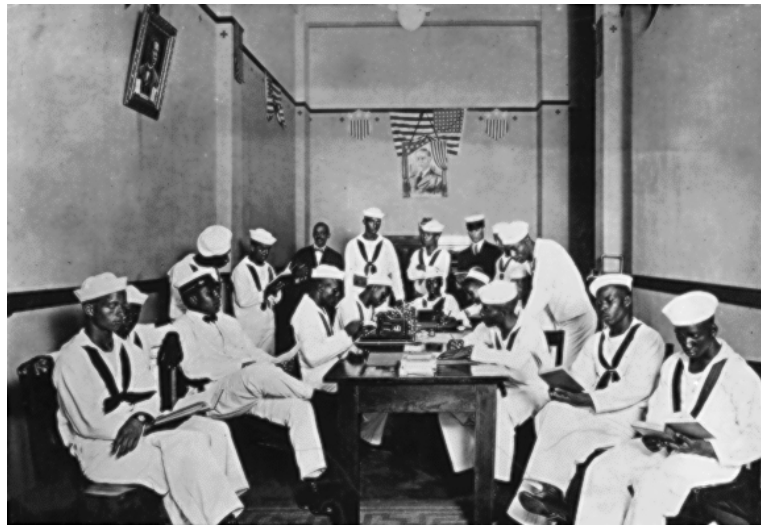
Enlistment accelerated after Fredrick Douglass encouraged African Americans to become soldiers. Roughly 179,000 Black men served in the Army and 19,000 in the Navy by the conclusion of the war. Sixteen Black service members were awarded Medals of Honor. Despite this, segregation persisted in the military during the war. African American soldiers were paid less than white soldiers in the Civil War until Congress granted equal pay in 1864.

<https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/blacks-civil-war>

Reconstruction: 13th Amendment Ends Slavery

After the end of the Civil War, the 13th Amendment passed through Congress. In January 1865, this amendment officially ended slavery in the United States. It states, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their justification.”

<https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/13th-amendment>



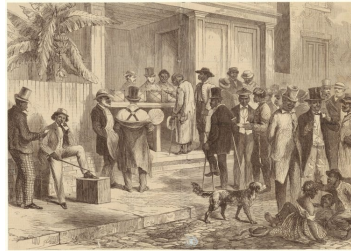
*Segregated room for African American Service members during WWI, 1917-1919.
National Archives and Records Administration.*

Reconstruction: The 14th Amendment Granted Full Citizenship to Former Slaves

Ratified July 9, 1868, the 14th Amendment granted citizenship to “all persons born or naturalized in the United States,” including formerly enslaved people. It also eliminated the ability for any state to “deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

Despite this advancement, loopholes in the Amendment created the conditions for unfair treatment moving forward. For instance, in *Plessy v Ferguson*, the Supreme Court established the “Separate but Equal Doctrine,” which created harsh segregation throughout the country.

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/fourteenth-amendment>



*Illustration of Freedmen Voting in New Orleans, 1867.
Public Domain.*

Reconstruction: 15th Amendment Gives All Men the Right to Vote

The final Amendment created in the wake of the Civil War was the 15th Amendment, which granted African American men the right to vote. It was ratified on February 3, 1870.

Throughout the 1880s, Black men exercised their right to vote and even held office throughout the south. Hiram Rhodes Revels of Mississippi became the first African American member of the U.S. Congress, followed by a dozen other men. More than 600 Black men served in state and local offices.

<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/fifteenth-amendment>

Reconstruction: New Challenges Emerged after the New Amendments

In the Southern States, these Amendments were effectively nullified because Jim Crow laws beginning around 1865. White lawmakers created strict codes that detailed where, when, and how African Americans could work and how much they could be paid. Because of segregation, many public and private places forbade African Americans to enter. Segregated Black schools were of far worse quality, and even had different textbooks.

With a legal system mostly occupied by former Confederate soldiers, it was difficult to win court cases when civil rights were violated. When these laws were broken, Black people often faced much harsher sentences. In prisons, many African Americans were once again subject to involuntary, forced labor, which exploited a loophole in the 13th Amendment.

All of this was exacerbated by strict voting laws, which could require literacy tests or “grandfather clauses,” which excluded former enslaved people who couldn’t read or didn’t have relatives who voted in the 1860s. While these conditions existed primarily in the south, racist laws existed all over the country. Jim Crow laws were enforced until the 1950s and 1960s Civil Rights Movements forced change. The impacts of these unequal laws are still felt today.

<https://www.history.com/topics/early-20th-century-us/jim-crow-laws>



*Joe Biden signs legislation making Juneteenth a federal holiday, 2021.
The White House, Public Domain.*

Juneteenth Becomes a Federal Holiday

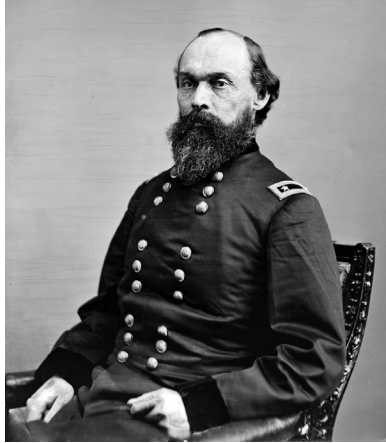
On June 17, 2022, President Biden released “A Proclamation On Juneteenth Day Of Observance,” which officially recognized Juneteenth as a federal holiday. June 19 was officially established as a day to celebrate freedom, reflect on heinous legacy of slavery, and recommit to rooting out systemic racism. Juneteenth is the newest federal holiday since Martin Luther King Day in 1983.

<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/06/17/remarks-by-president-biden-at-signing-of-the-juneteenth-national-independence-day-act/>

<https://www.juneteenth.com/whitehouse/>

Juneteenth

Quotes



*Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger, taken between 1860-1865.
Library of Congress.*

“The people 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, become that between employer and hired labor. The freed are advised to remain at their present homes, and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts; and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.”

Union Maj. General Gordon Granger in Galveston, Texas, reading General Order No. 3.

<https://www.battlefields.org/learn/primary-sources/general-order-no-3>

“Every year we must remind successive generations that this event triggered a series of events that one by one defines the challenges and responsibilities of successive generations. That’s why we need this holiday.”

Al Edwards, the “father of the Juneteenth holiday.”

<https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/05/us/juneteenth-fast-facts/index.html>

“What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity.”

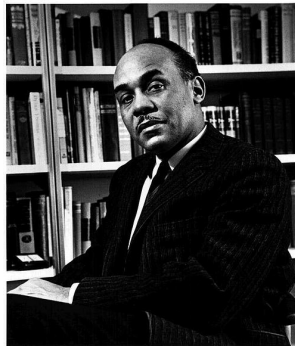
Frederick Douglass

<https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/what-is-juneteenth/>

“What I love about Juneteenth is that even in that extended wait, we still find something to celebrate. Even though the story has never been tidy, and Black folks have had to march and fight for every inch of our freedom, our story is nonetheless one of progress.”

Michelle Obama

<https://twitter.com/MichelleObama/status/1274041285901529094>



Ralph Ellison, 1961. Library of Congress.

“But what a feeling can come over a man just from seeing the things he believes in and hopes for symbolized in the concrete form of a man. In something that gives a focus to all the other things he knows to be real. Something that makes unseen things manifest and allows him to come to his hopes and dreams through his outer eye and through the touch and feel of his natural hand.”

Ralph Ellison in *Juneteenth*.

Ellison, R., & Johnson, C. (2021, May 18). Juneteenth (Revised) (Vintage International) (Revised). Vintage.

Updated October 2022