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HONORING JUNETEENTH

HISTORY OF JUNETEENTH

January 1, 1863: The Emancipation Proclamation was signed, declaring that people who were enslaved were free.

June 19, 1865: Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas to finally inform enslaved Black people of their freedom. Texas was the last state to receive the news.

June 19, 1866: People celebrate the first Juneteenth in Galveston and Houston. Over the years, more people began recognizing Juneteenth.

1900: NAACP leader James Weldon Johnson wrote the poem “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” with music composed by his brother John Rosamond Johnson. This song became a hopeful appeal for the liberty of Black Americans, later used as a rallying cry during the Civil Rights Movement.

June 19, 1980: Texas becomes the first state to recognize Juneteenth as a state holiday.

2016: Opal Lee, known as the grandmother of Juneteenth, began a walking campaign with a mission to make Juneteenth a federal holiday. In her 90s, she hosted her events in cities from her hometown of Fort Worth, Texas to Washington, D.C. Her campaign became an annual event until Juneteenth was named a federal holiday.

2021: Juneteenth was established as a federal holiday.

LEARN MORE AND CELEBRATE

Discover more about the history of Juneteenth, access a reading list, and more from the National Museum of African American History & Culture. Visit nmaahc.si.edu/juneteenth.



Listen to the song
Lift Every Voice and Sing.
Closed captions available.