

Voices: The importance of Juneteenth

June 19, 2019

Juneteenth, also known as “Juneteenth Independence Day” or “Freedom Day,” is an American holiday commemorating the June 19, 1865 announcement of the abolition of slavery in the United States—in particular in the state of Texas—and more generally the emancipation of enslaved African Americans throughout the former Confederate States of America.

It was June 19, 1865, when [Major General Gordon Granger landed at Galveston, Texas](#), with the news that the Civil War had ended. The irony of the announcement was the fact that President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation a full two and a half years earlier, which had become official Jan. 1, 1863, but had little effect in Texas until Granger’s arrival.

The Juneteenth holiday is thought to be the oldest holiday commemorating the liberation of African slaves in the South. Today, many other states have come to recognize the date as a special day marking the end of a tragic tale in the annals of American history.

Many African American churches in Texas celebrate the holiday by hosting special commemorative services culminating in large gatherings in local parks.

Why Juneteenth matters

The significance of the holiday can be found in the need for all Americans to be reminded that the fabric and, in many cases, the foundation of the United States was built on the institution of “chattel slavery.” In this

system, people were bought, sold and moved as property, and their children were born into slavery rather than being born free.

As has been stated on many occasions by many academicians and lovers of history, “The failure to study history will oft times allow for the repeat of past immoral acts.” Therefore, all Americans—especially African Americans—are challenged to be reminded of the cost of freedom.

It is important that Juneteenth—“Freedom Day”—remain a holiday reminding all Americans to cherish the freedoms that more than 300 million citizens enjoy.

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