



Juneteenth

History

Juneteenth (a portmanteau of June and nineteenth) – also known as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Liberation Day, and Emancipation Day – is **a holiday celebrating the emancipation of those who had been enslaved in the United States**. Originating in Galveston, Texas, it is now celebrated annually on June 19 in the United States, with varying official recognition with Hawaii recently passing legislation that the Governor is expected to sign and South Dakota as the only State in the union not to officially recognize it.

It is commemorated on the anniversary date of the June 19, 1865 announcement by Union Army general Gordon Granger, proclaiming freedom from slavery in Texas. President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation had officially outlawed slavery in Texas and the other states in rebellion against the Union almost two and a half years earlier.

Enforcement of the Proclamation generally relied on the advance of Union troops. Texas being the most remote of the slave states at the time had a low presence of Union troops as the American Civil War ended; thus, enforcement had been slow and inconsistent before Granger's announcement. Although Juneteenth generally celebrates the end of slavery in the United States, it was still legal and practiced in other states (Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware) until later that year when ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution abolished chattel slavery nationwide in December.

Commemorating the abolition of slavery with the Juneteenth holiday is important because slavery is a huge part of U.S. history, and its horrid impacts still prevents equity, creates disproportionate suffering, and harms Black, Indigenous and other People of Color today. It is a day to continue fighting to end racism in all its forms.

- From 1619 to 1865, **slavery** was legal in the U.S. Slavery became racialized (based on race) as white landowners enslaved Black and Indigenous people. However, black slaves are known to have been brought to the U.S. as early as 1526.

- During the U.S. Civil War in 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed an executive order called the **Emancipation Proclamation** which said that enslaved people were free:
 - “...all persons held as slaves” in states that **rebelled against the Union** of the United States “shall be ... forever free; and the executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authority ... will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons.” (President Lincoln, 1862)
- Two and a half years later, in 1865, **federal troops enforced the Emancipation Proclamation** when Union Army General Gordon Granger and his troops arrived in Galveston, Texas and announced that all enslaved people in the state of Texas were free:
 - “The people of Texas are informed that...all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor....” (General Granger, 1865)
- Honoring Juneteenth is more complicated than just recognizing the emancipation of slaves in the U.S. It is important to remember that the abolition of slavery didn't end the suffering or solve the issues faced by formerly enslaved people. It is however a reminder that we are part of an economy that was built on the exploitation, and built on the free labor of Black, Indigenous and other People of Color.

Timeline

1619-1865	1776 4th of July	1787	1863	June 19th, 1865 <i>Juneteenth</i>	December 1865
<p>Slavery was legal in the U.S.</p> <p>The slaveholder had 100% control over the life of the enslaved person. Every form of physical and psychological violence was used to control enslaved people.</p>	<p>The U.S. declares independence from Great Britain (U.K., British) and says that “all men are created equal...rights...life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”</p> <p>However, this independence was only for <i>white men</i>.</p>	<p>The U.S. Constitution set up the government for <i>white men</i>. It did not stop slavery. In fact, enslaved people who escaped a slave state and went to a free state, would be returned to slavery. (The Fugitive Slave Clause <i>Article IV, Sec. II, Clause II</i>)</p>	<p>U.S. President Lincoln signs The Emancipation Proclamation to free all enslaved people in southern slave states that rebelled against the U.S. government.</p>	<p>Federal troops enforce the Emancipation Proclamation in Texas, which was the last of the slave holding States.</p>	<p>Slavery is abolished by law in the 13th Amendment of the United States Constitution.</p>

Washington State Recognition of Juneteenth

The Washington state Legislature has passed a measure that makes Juneteenth a legal state holiday. [House Bill 1016](#) making June 19 a state paid holiday passed the Democratic-led Senate on a bipartisan 47-1 vote and is now State Law. The House passed the measure in February, 2021 on an 89-9 vote.

"Recognizing Juneteenth as a legal state holiday is a down payment towards racial reconciliation and healing," said bill sponsor, Rep. Melanie Morgan, D-Pierce County. "This is just a continuation of dismantling racism, just as when in 2020 the legislature passed the State Office of Equity to bring parity to communities of color. There is more work to be done and I am excited to bring more civil rights legislation to our legislature."

Apr 20, 2021: Delivered to Governor. ([View Bill as Passed Legislature](#))

May 13, 2021: Governor Inslee signed. Chapter 295, 2021 Laws. ([View Session Law](#))

July 25, 2021: Effective date

Honoring Juneteenth at Lake Washington Institute of Technology

In our ongoing efforts to address and dismantle systemic racism we also recognize the importance of broadening our understanding of historical events that shape and impact the important work under way.

The official legislation is in full effect 2022 and **we have made the decision as an Institution to honor the spirit of the newly signed law in 2021**. LWTech will close on Friday June 18th as a paid holiday to honor Juneteenth and our acknowledgment of its significance.

We are recommending to the Board of Trustees to approve Juneteenth as a college holiday in 2021.

Sources/Additional Readings:

- [What Is Juneteenth?](#) by Henry Louis Gates, Jr., PBS.org
- [The Historical Legacy of Juneteenth](#), National Museum of African American History & Culture (Smithsonian)
- [Washington Legislature approves Juneteenth as state holiday](#) by The Associated Press, SeattleTimes.com
- [What is Juneteenth, Facts, History, and Meaning](#) by Jessica Sager, parade.com
- [What is Juneteenth?](#) By AL.com, YouTube
- [Emancipation Proclamation](#), Wikipedia
- [U.S. Constitution - Thirteenth Amendment](#), Library of Congress, Congress.gov
- [Washington State Legislature House Bill 1016 - 2021-22, Making Juneteenth a legal holiday](#), app.leg.wa.gov