

# JUNETEENTH

FREEDOM DAY | JUNE 19TH



Children's Law Center  
of California  
*Excellence In Advocacy*

## CLC CELEBRATES JUNETEENTH

July 4th or Independence Day is a federal holiday set aside to observe the signing of the Declaration of Independence, giving birth to what we know as the United States of America as an independent nation. However, while America was celebrating newfound independence, slaves across the country were still held in bondage. Juneteenth marks our country's second Independence Day.

Juneteenth is the celebration of when many enslaved people in Texas finally received word that they had been freed. It is the oldest known celebration commemorating the ending of slavery in the United States. On June 19, 1865, led by Major General Gordon Granger, Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and slaves were now free.

Notably, this was two and half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation—which became official on January 1, 1863. From the Union's perspective, the 250,000 enslaved people in Texas were already free—but none of them were aware of it, and no one was in a rush to inform them.

At its heart, Juneteenth is a day of celebration, often marked with joyful community and family gatherings. The day celebrates African American freedom and achievement, while encouraging continuous self-development and respect for all cultures. Many use this day to reflect, rejoice, self-assess, and plan for the future. As the holiday takes on a more national, symbolic and even global perspective in the wake of recent events, getting involved and supporting Juneteenth celebrations offers opportunities for rebuilding and reconnecting with each other and our surrounding communities.





The founder of the National Juneteenth Celebration Foundation, Ben Haith, created the flag in 1997. It was revised in 2000 by L.J. Graf. The flag was made to be red, white and blue to represent the colors of the American flag and to declare that American slaves, as well as their descendants, are all Americans. The star represents the birthplace of the holiday, Texas. Graf shared that the bursting star that surrounds it symbolizes, *“a new freedom, a new people, a new star.”*

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**47 states and the District of Columbia** have marked Juneteenth as a state holiday or observance. It still isn't an official federal holiday, but activists continue to campaign to make it one.



## JUNETEENTH HISTORY

**JULY 4, 1776**

**DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE**

**DECEMBER 31, 1862**

**"FREEDOM EVE"**

The first Watch Night services took place. Enslaved and free Black people gathered in churches and private homes across the country awaiting news that the Emancipation Proclamation had taken effect.

**JANUARY 1, 1863**

**THE EMANCIPATION PROCLAMATION**

At midnight, all enslaved Black people in the Confederate States were declared legally free. Everyone was not immediately free. Even though the Emancipation Proclamation was made effective in 1863, it could not be implemented in places still under Confederate control.

**JUNE 19, 1865**

**JUNETEENTH**

About 2,000 Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas to deliver the news to more than 250,000 enslaved Black people that they were free by executive decree.



## FREEDOM CALLING

The history of Juneteenth remains largely unknown. **The National Museum of African American History and Culture** has a free interactive online tour with Founding Director Lonnie Bunch III which explores the history of Juneteenth.