

# Celebrating Juneteenth: Our Continued Awakening

Today marks Juneteenth, a day to recognize the liberation of the last group of enslaved Black Americans by Union troops in 1865. In 2021, Juneteenth became a nationally recognized holiday, an exciting moment for the African American community and those advocating for social justice. Due to the ongoing awakening of our nation, spurred by the unconscionable murder of George Floyd in 2020, it's essential to recognize this important day. In honor of Juneteenth, let's take a closer look at why this day is significant and how we can continue to support the journey towards a "more perfect union."



Many have called Juneteenth America's actual Independence Day. Although July 4th, 1776 marked the Declaration of Independence for some Americans, not all were free. It wasn't until the summer of 1865 when Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, that more than 250,000 Black and African Americans were finally freed from slavery. While President Lincoln signed the executive order ending slavery in the Confederacy in 1863, slave owners still sought to evade the order by moving enslaved people to westward of slaveholding states.

Juneteenth represents America's struggle for true independence and freedom for all, not just some. It's a day to honor those who fought for abolition and those who were finally freed. While this moment represents a step forward, it's important to remember that the journey towards a "more perfect union" continues and we all can play a role.

What can we do to support this journey? We can support initiatives and programs that aim to promote diversity and equity. We can educate ourselves and learn more about Black history and the ongoing struggle for racial equality. We can support Black-owned businesses and donate to organizations committed to advocating for social justice.

For those over 65, be an active ally in support of younger generations in their advocacy for a more equitable society. Older adults are a treasure trove of knowledge and wisdom from which young people can learn much. We invite you to offer your support. Share your lived experiences with your

children and grandchildren or participate in discussions about social justice issues.

Let's remember together that every step forward counts, and also together, we can move towards a more just society. Happy Juneteenth!

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