Juneteenth

Monday, June 19, 1865 in Galveston, Texas must have started like any other Monday. Probably, it was hot and humid; the first day of another six-day work week. Another week in a country that had been at war for over four years.

But for those who were enslaved, held and treated as chattel (property), today was going to be a day unlike any other. Today they would learn they were FREE! Because on January 1, 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation went into effect. Announced on September 22, 1862, it emancipated all slaves in states then engaged in rebellion against the Union.

The war ended on May 9, 1865, but it took over a month for federal troops to arrive in Galveston, Texas, take control of the state, and enforce the emancipation of the 250,000 Texans held in bondage. Not all enslavers allowed their slaves to leave until the end of the harvest season, effectively continuing the barbaric practice of chattel slavery for several more months. Slavery was finally at an end and would be formally abolished in the country with the adoption of the thirteenth amendment to the Constitution in December 1865.

The former slaves immediately began a spontaneous celebration upon receiving the life-changing news, and in the days after began planning for a celebration for June 19, 1866. This date continued to be celebrated each year and grew from a Texas celebration to a state holiday and on June 17, 2021 became a federal holiday.

This holiday is a celebration of freedom for the Blacks who were enslaved, their descendants, and now the wider Black community. For those of us who are not part of this community, Juneteenth is a time for us to reflect on this part of our nation's history and a time to educate ourselves about the damage inflicted on our Black fellow citizens and nation.

Please visit our website N4DR.org/Juneteenth to learn more about Juneteenth and the Network for Dismantling Racism.

THE SYMBOLS OF THE
JUNETEENTH FLAG

THE STAR represents Texas and the freedom of all 50 states in the US

THE ARC represents a new horizon for the African Americans

THE BURST represents new beginnings