

# HISTORY OF JUNETEENTH

## AND ITS TRADITIONS

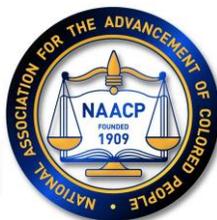
**E**ven though the Emancipation Proclamation was signed in 1862 by President Lincoln, all slaves were not free. There was still the Civil War to be fought; the war that was to test whether this country would uphold the provisions of its Constitution referring to “**Liberty and Justice for All**”. The Final battle of the Civil War was fought in Texas, May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1865. The war was already officially over, yet the political leadership of Texas refused to acknowledge that the South had lost and disregarded the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by the President.

Major General Gordon Granger was sent to Galveston, Texas to enforce the proclamation. General Granger marched into Galveston with 18,000 soldiers and took command of the district of Texas. Jubilation and the promise of hope quickly spread throughout the entire state:

*“The People Are Informed That In Accordance With The Proclamation Issued From The Executive Of The United States, All Slaves Are Free. Which Involves The Absolute Equality Of People Of Personal Rights And Rights Of Property Between Former Masters And Slaves And The Connection Heretofore Existing Between Them Becomes That Between Employer & Hired Labor”*

The Following Year, Texas Blacks remembered June 19<sup>th</sup> as their own personal Emancipation Day and celebrations were organized with parades, bands, speeches, eating & drinking. In other cities and towns, June 19<sup>th</sup> was known as “Freedman’s Day”. The first official Emancipation Day was celebrated in 1869. Entering into the 20<sup>th</sup> century brought the change in name now known as the “Celebrations or Juneteenth”, which is now converted as the African American equivalent of the “4<sup>th</sup> of July”. A family oriented day full of festivities, picnics, games and reunions. However, it is still recognized as an informal holiday.

With the passage of the Civil Rights laws in the 1960’s the day began to lose its significance. However, local groups in Texas kept the tradition alive and with the passage of HOUSE bill 1016, June 19<sup>th</sup> became “Black Heritage Day”, a Texas state holiday. Our celebration is acknowledgment of this part of our history and to reflect on the many positive changes that have come in the last 130 plus years.



# The Emancipation Proclamation

January 1, 1863

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States."

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, North Hampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth[]), and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defense; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN

WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State