



**United We Stand,
Divided We Fall**
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Juneteenth Holiday Campaign
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Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration commemorating the ending of slavery in the United States. Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19th that the Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free. This was two and a half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation - which had become official January 1, 1863. One of General Granger's first orders of business was to read to the people of Texas, General Order Number 3 which began most significantly with: "The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer."

Even with nowhere to go, many felt that leaving the plantation would be their first grasp of freedom. Former slaves in Galveston rejoiced in the streets with jubilant celebrations. Juneteenth celebrations began in Texas the following year. The celebration of June 19th was coined "Juneteenth" and grew with more participation from descendants. The Juneteenth celebration was a time for reassuring each other, for praying and for gathering remaining family members.

A range of activities were provided to entertain the masses, many of which continue in tradition today. Juneteenth almost always focused on education and self-improvement. Prayer services were also a major part of these celebrations.

Juneteenth today, celebrates African American freedom and achievement, while encouraging continuous self-development and respect for all cultures. As it takes on a more national, symbolic and even global perspective, the events of 1865 in Texas are not forgotten, for all of the roots tie back to this fertile soil from which a national day of pride has grown.

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