

Rep. Hebl: Juneteenth

Posted on Wednesday, Jun 15, 2022

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June 19, referred to as Juneteenth, is the anniversary of the emancipation of the last remaining enslaved people in Texas and the former Confederacy on June 19th 1865. Though it has been celebrated in parts of the country for over 150 years, it was finally made a federal holiday in 2021.

Students are often taught that President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed all enslaved people in the rebelling states. However, in practice, chattel slavery continued for more than two years after Lincoln's Proclamation. It only truly ended on June 19, 1865, in Galveston, Texas when a Union general read a federal order declaring all enslaved people in the state of Texas to be free.

It is especially important to educate ourselves on the history of Black America. Too often it is overlooked when recounting the history of America. Students are usually taught basic outlines of Black History, such as the Emancipation Proclamation, *Brown v Board of Education*, Jackie Robinson, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Rarely do they learn about other important figures and events in Black History such as the Black Wall Street massacre, the end of Reconstruction, Claudette Colvin, and the Tuskegee Experiment. These things are difficult to have conversations about, because they deal with heavy topics. However, they are important when trying to understand how our country has arrived to where we are now. Black history is American history, and Juneteenth is a significant moment in the American timeline.

On Juneteenth we celebrate the day the last of the enslaved people were freed from bondage, starting Black America on a long road to securing equal footing in the United States- a quest that continues to this very day. There is a lot of work that we have left to do to address issues that disproportionately affect black Americans, such as infant mortality rates, child poverty rates, lack of quality education, and unequal treatment in the American criminal justice system. We have to do better for

our fellow Americans.