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# A Juneteenth Celebration

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FESTIVE DAY People take part in a Juneteenth celebration in New York City in 2020.  
STEPHEN FERRY—VIEWPRESS/CORBIS/GETTY IMAGES

On June 19, people across the United States celebrate Juneteenth. The holiday **commemorates** the ending of slavery in the U.S., in 1865.

Juneteenth is short for “June 19th.” It was on that day, in June 1865, that 250,000 people in Galveston, Texas, found out they had been freed from slavery.

## A Look at History

In 1860 and 1861, several Southern states declared their **independence** from the United States. This started the Civil War. The Southern Confederacy wanted to maintain slavery, while the Northern Union wanted to stop slavery from spreading to new **territories**.

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. It declared freedom for **enslaved** people in the **Confederacy**. White slave owners kept the news a secret. Many enslaved people would not find out they had been freed until more than two years later.

In April 1865, the Confederacy surrendered to the Union. The war was over. On June 19, Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, to **enforce** the president's order. When they told the crowds that the state's 250,000 enslaved people were free, **celebrations** broke out.

## **Making a Holiday**

Over the years, Black people from Galveston moved to different cities, and the celebration spread. It is also called Emancipation Day, or Freedom Day.

In the 1960s, the civil rights movement brought a wider **awareness** of Juneteenth. On June 19, 1968, two months after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., a **Solidarity** Day rally was held on June 19 in Washington, D.C. The event drew 50,000 people.

Texas made Juneteenth a state holiday in 1980. Following international **protests** sparked by the May 2020 killing of George Floyd, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Juneteenth has gained even wider **recognition**. Juneteenth celebrations include religious services, **cookouts**, parades, and festivals featuring music and dancing. Now, 48 out of 50 states, plus Washington, D.C., recognize Juneteenth as a state holiday.