

History and Significance of Juneteenth

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Many consider Juneteenth as Emancipation Day, others call it Freedom Day, and others refer to it as the Black Independence Day. Though critics view this differently, the day remains an essential part of Black history. The day is marked every June 19 when Union General Gordon Granger declared freedom for all enslaved people in Texas in 1865. It allowed enslaved individuals to develop their lives and build themselves in the process (Crayton, 2021). Whereas many argue that freedom was far from being attained, the day was an incredible step toward providing the American population with the chance to develop a new strategic engagement with the enslaved groups. The history and significance of Juneteenth is a step toward understanding this better and reviewing its role in the present engagement.

Historical Events Leading to Juneteenth

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. The proclamation was issued during the Civil War and declared all enslaved people in the Confederate states free (Crayton, 2021). The major challenge with this proclamation was that the enforcement of the declaration depended on the advancement of the Union troops since it was no easy task.

On June 19, 1865, General Gordon Granger of the Union troops read the order to the people of Texas, proclaiming the freedom of all enslaved individuals. The order arrived two years later due to the limited presence of Union troops in the state to ensure its enforcement (Crayton, 2021). After this proclamation, the beginning of the Reconstruction era saw a time for rebuilding and integrating Southern states into the Union, providing room to address the rights of the freed African Americans.

Rozwadowski (2022) noted that the day marked a change for African Americans, but the problems they faced hereafter were another major concern. While the day served as a reminder of their past, it was not until 2021 that the sitting US president, Joe Biden, made it an official national holiday. For the most part, the day was a holiday in various states. Therefore, the recognition of the impact this day had on the lives of the different groups was a step toward deliberating on the intentionality of the justice system to deliberate on the best means of improving their presence in the community.

Significance of Juneteenth

The first vital role of this day is the celebration of freedom. The day serves as a powerful reminder of the end of slavery and the freedom of enslaved African Americans. It denotes a time when they were humanized rather than treated as individuals in bondage (Green, 2022). It is a chance to deliberate on the best ways for the victims to integrate into the social strata.

The day has become a celebration of African American culture and heritage. The gains from the freedoms attained provide a platform for many to acknowledge their past. People mark the day with speeches and celebrations to highlight their past while looking forward to a better future (Green, 2022). Juneteenth is a celebration that shows their concerns regarding their present turmoil and lack of property and wealth, balanced with a hope that future generations will enjoy the fruits borne from their role as free citizens. They honor their history, reflect on their resilience and contributions to American society, and celebrate their culture.

The civil rights movement gave Juneteenth renewed vigor in the 1960s as the activists used the day to draw attention to their ongoing struggle for civil rights. Although not many people knew about the day and its significance, it provided a chance for these movements to highlight their plight years after their emancipation (Crayton, 2021). To date, activists, such as

those from Black Lives Matter movements, use the day to provide more insights into the remaining work that could improve the well-being of Black people in the community.

Overall, Juneteenth is not only a celebration of freedom from slavery but also a day to reflect on the struggles and achievements of African Americans throughout history. It underscores the influence this has on the people when others acknowledge and learn from the past while seeking to build a just and more equitable society. The future of the Black community rests in understanding their past while working toward achieving the intended goals of their present community. Providing this insight can shape how they respond to adversity.

References

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