



# Celebrate Freedom **JUNETEENTH**

On January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. While this edict freed enslaved people living in Confederate states, it did not cover slave-holding border states like Texas. In fact, Texas's 250,000 enslaved people would not see freedom until June 19, 1865, after the war ended. Additionally, slavery was not formally abolished in the United States until the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution was ratified on December 6, 1865.<sup>1</sup>

In 1866, formerly enslaved people living in Texas organized the first annual celebration of "Jubilee Day", now known as Juneteenth. As Black people migrated from Texas to other parts of the country, Juneteenth celebrations spread across the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Texas became the first state to make Juneteenth an official holiday in 1979. National recognition did not occur until June 17, 2021, when President Joseph R. Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act into law, making Juneteenth a federal holiday in the United States.<sup>2</sup>

*In addition to honoring the emancipated, Juneteenth is a day to celebrate African American culture and you may see two color sets displayed:*



Juneteenth Flag – The colors red, white, and blue echo the American flag, symbolizing that slaves and their descendants were and are Americans.<sup>3</sup>



Pan-African Flag - Signifying the African race, the colors red, black, and green represent the blood, soil, and prosperity of Africa and its people.<sup>4</sup>



Believed to be the oldest African American holiday, Juneteenth is traditionally celebrated with a cookout featuring red desserts, and beverages like hibiscus drinks and cola, both carried across the Atlantic from West Africa by enslaved people. Many Juneteenth participants wear red because "Red symbolizes the blood shed by enslaved ancestors due to the transatlantic slave trade".<sup>4</sup> "Even barbecue itself can bring that red connection, especially in tomato-based sauces or the reddish ring around properly smoked meats".<sup>4</sup>

1. What Is Juneteenth? (history.com)  
2. <https://www.nhpr.org/nh-news/2021-06-24/ask-civics-101-why-is-the-holiday-called-juneteenth-and-what-is-the-significance>  
3. Juneteenth flag meaning: Here's what the symbols and colors represent | CNN  
4. <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/holidays/a36687761/juneteenth-colors-meaning/>  
5. Graphics: istock.com, Wikipedia, nmaahc.si.edu, oprahdaily.com, flagcenter.com, bankofhawaii.com