

Juneteenth Day, which is observed on the third Saturday of every June, is a historical commemoration of June 19, 1865, the day that slavery was truly abolished on United States soil. It is symbolic of equality among all races, not just toward African Americans, and is an annual reminder of the trials faced by many people in order to reach the status our country is at today. Juneteenth Day, which originated in Texas, is now formally recognized in seventeen states and much effort is placed on increasing the event's popularity in the U.S.

In order to fully grasp the impact of Juneteenth Day today, one must fathom how slavery affected the United States. During the Civil War, which lasted from 1861-1865, slavery was a highly controversial issue in the United States. After all, the country viewed slavery with discrepancies depending on geography – the industrious North detested slavery, while the agriculturally-reliant South was exceedingly dependent upon it in order to succeed economically. During Abraham Lincoln's presidency, he incorporated the Emancipation Proclamation in hopes of alleviating slavery's firm hold on Southern ways. The Emancipation Proclamation, which went into effect on January 1, 1863, was aimed to free all enslaved African Americans in the Confederacy. This addition was partially successful in that many slaves did gain freedom. A number of them joined the Union army. Though African American recruits were not as copiously paid as the Caucasian soldiers, they were still grateful for what they could receive. However, the Emancipation Proclamation did not achieve its full intentions; many African Americans continued to endure difficult labor and conditions despite it.

As the war progressed, both adversaries in the war needed more soldiers. By the conclusion of 1863, the Southern army had lost close to forty percent of its army. Since 1862, the Confederacy had required capable men between eighteen and forty-five to join the army. Under certain conditions, one could escape being recruited; some debate over how the war was becoming a "rich man's war but a

poor man's fight" resulted because indigent people could not pay their way out of fighting, while the affluent could. The North also passed draft laws, and similarly to the South, offered draftees to employ substitutes instead. On the other hand, the North also gave three-hundred dollar bounties to men who served on their own volition. As a result, many men in the Union army volunteered and were paid.

President Abraham Lincoln was exasperated with many generals, whom were unable to defeat General Robert E. Lee of the Confederate army. However, Lee, who'd hoped that a Confederate victory on Northern soil would threaten the Northerners enough to offer calls of peace, narrowly won the Battle of Gettysburg, where 28,000 of his soldiers – more than the Union – were injured or killed. At that point, his goal seemed impossible. The North received great news the day after the Battle of Gettysburg, July 4, 1863, that Confederate troops in Vicksburg had surrendered to General Ulysses S. Grant after a siege. Eight months later, President Lincoln named Grant as the commander of all the North's armies. Subsequently, General Grant contrived a plan to beat the South. General William Tecumseh Sherman, who led the Union in their quest to finally thwart General Lee, went to Atlanta and the Atlantic Coast, where their troops wreaked havoc. The North's success was encouraging, and General Sherman continued southward along with Grant, leading their troops through gory battles against Confederate fighters. At last in April 2, 1864, after a ten-month siege in Petersburg, Virginia, Lee was unable to continue. On April 9, 1865 in Appomattox Court House in Virginia, General Grant and General Lee delineated the terms of the latter's surrender. The Civil War was finally coming to a close.

A few months later on June 19, 1865, in Galveston, Texas, General Gordon Granger arrived with his troops and read "General Order No. 3," which enforced the freedom of slaves once and for all. Slavery had finally been abolished in the

United States. People combined "June" and "nineteenth" to make "Juneteenth" the name that would describe this great event.

There are a high range of festivities to commemorate the memory of slavery's end. Barbecues are popular, with foods such as lamb, pork and beef, which used to be semi-rare dishes. There is also a tradition for serving strawberry-flavored soda. Any food in general was abundant because Juneteenth was recognized as a time when everyone participated and brought a special dish. In addition, current celebrations can include fishing, rodeos, and baseball games. Guest speakers are often called upon, elders recount the past, and sometimes prayer services are held as well.

Juneteenth Day impacts all of us in so many ways. Because of the elimination of slavery in the U.S., there is generally more respect directed toward African Americans. In addition, Americans have become increasingly tolerant of all ethnicities. Juneteenth is an example of how much the United States has matured as a nation (since the Civil War) and the progress we've made to venerate all cultures and backgrounds. Because of Juneteenth, people of all races aren't as widely discriminated against and have innumerable opportunities like they have always deserved.

However, as an unfortunate fact, racism still thrives within the United States. Many folks are judged superficially and prematurely based on petty characteristics such as the color of their skin, and it isn't right. Even today, hateful crimes and words continue to exist. Sadly, not everyone has become open-minded towards those who are different from themselves. In reality, there is much we can learn from those who offer a new perspective upon things. Juneteenth Day also serves as an indicator of what we must accomplish in the future.

In conclusion, Juneteenth Day is a historical occasion that provides an excellent opportunity to reflect on the past and how we as a society have grown to prevail against the issues of slavery, as well as racism, discrimination, and so much more. We cannot go back and correct the immoral things we have said and done. But by learning about the past and striving to correct what we can now, we can avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

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