

Juneteenth Day

When you hear Juneteenth Day, what do you think of? When I was young, I used to hear stories of Juneteenth Day. At that time, I really didn't understand what my grandmother meant. Now, after much research and thinking, I finally know what Juneteenth Day truly means.

After the Civil War ended and the Emancipation of Proclamation was signed, African-Americans finally had a chance for a new start, a chance for a new life. Slaves left their owners to have their chance for the same freedom as white Americans. To them, freedom that was once thought of as unattainable was going to come true. Freedom isn't something that can be bought or sold, like plantation owners did with imprisoned African-Americans. Freedom is an inalienable right that everyone is entitled to. It should never have been taken away from them in the first place. For the slaves in Texas, this great news won't reach them until 1865; two and a half years after Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation of Proclamation.

During the Civil War, Texas didn't have to suffer from many invasions from the Union. Each time Union troops were sent to Texas, they were trampled by the Confederate troops. This caused slavery to thrive. When I think of the slaves who were in Texas, I see horrifying images of African-Americans in fields, working until they pass out and being whipped like wild animals. How could people be so cruel? Even economics is no reason for people to be filled with prejudice. Some plantation owners even moved their slaves from the traditional South to Texas to wait and see when the war ended. Since there were many plantation owners in Texas, wanting their way of life to remain status quo, the news of the freedom of slaves didn't travel fast to Texas.

Juneteenth day showed me that Americans have come a long way from the signing of the Declaration of Independence. If the point of our Declaration was to

create equality, why did it take so many years for African-Americans to finally to become free? Are African Americans so different from other Americans?

Juneteenth Day helps people realize what the early African American ancestors had to endure while they waited for their freedom. From the brutal treatment to the atrocious living status, the slaves left a great legacy behind for us to discover.

Today, I value our early African-American ancestors for their great survival.

People of the Union risked their lives in order for thousands of enslaved African-Americans to become free, for all Americans to become free. People of diverse races can work as one to build a better future. Americans have proven it time and time again.

When General Gordon Granger came into Galveston, Texas, and publicly announced the freedom of slaves, there must have been numerous African-Americans jumping and screaming for joy. All of their prayers and hope had finally come true. No more misery and pain. Their doubts and anxieties would disappear. There is a new feeling of pride in me because I now see and sense our American past with new eyes. I hope to spread the idea of freedom to other nations of the world. I don't look at any person from a different ethnic group as a stranger, but as someone with the same hopes and desires as me. Why should someone be considered a savage, stupid or of a lower social standing because of the color of his or her skin? Others should realize that Juneteenth Day marks a turning point in United States history. The entire country needs to remember the day when the United States became one and granted everyone the basic right of freedom.

Danielle Rodriguez
Lexington Park, Maryland