

# *What's the big deal about Juneteenth?*

## **A Juneteenth Litany**

**July 4, 1776**

**The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America**

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.”

But the *Declaration of Independence* did not free all people.

The slaves were still not free!

**January 1, 1863**

**By the President of the United States of America: A PROCLAMATION**

“Whereas on the 22nd day of September, A.D. 1862, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:  
“That on the 1st day of January, A.D. 1863, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free . . . .”

But the *Emancipation Proclamation* only freed slaves in states that were in rebellion against the United States of America.

All slaves were still not free!

**December 18, 1865**

**Amendment 13 of the United States Constitution**

“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”

But the *13<sup>th</sup> Amendment* did not free everyone – only those who knew about it. The slaves in Texas did not know they were no longer slaves.

All slaves were still not free!

Despite the Declaration of Independence, Despite the Emancipation Proclamation, even despite the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the Constitution, all men, all women, all children in the United States of America WERE STILL NOT FREE!

And then, Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger landed in Galveston, Texas, where the last group of slaves were still in bondage.

**June 19, 1865**

**General Order Number 3: A Proclamation by Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger**

"The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer."

The people celebrated. The people clapped, and cheered, and cried. The people leapt for joy.

And finally,

all people in these great United States of America,  
ALL PEOPLE in these great United States of America,  
**all people were free!**

Thus was born the "second Independence Day," the one which completes the "Cycle of Freedom" that began on July 4, 1776. The "19th of June, 1865", Juneteenth Independence Day, is the oldest African-American holiday observance.

That's the big deal, that's why we celebrate Juneteenth . . . the day

*WE WERE ALL SET FREE!*

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