

Juneteenth: Context, Sources

Juneteenth, or June 19th, has become the most popular annual celebration of the end of enslavement in the United States. It harkens back to June 19, 1865, when the Union Army, at the end of the Civil War (1861-1865), asserted its authority over Galveston, Texas, thus applying President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation to the people enslaved in that state. Nevertheless, not all enslavers (sometimes called "masters") heeded the proclamation and it wasn't until December 1865 that enough states ratified the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, officially ending enslavement nationally.

Most of the sources listed below are linked or available at JCCC's Billington Library (library.jccc.edu). For all other sources, you can request access through inter-library loan at Billington Library (<https://library.jccc.edu/home/ill>).

Where to Start

- To start learning about Juneteenth, read Henry Louis Gates, "What is Juneteenth?" pbs.org, <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/african-americans-many-rivers-to-cross/history/what-is-juneteenth/>, accessed June 2, 2021.

Sources on Juneteenth

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 - Available at JCCC's Billington Library
- Robert C. Conner, [*General Gordon Granger: The Savior of Chickamauga and the Man Behind "Juneteenth"*](#) (Casemate, 2013).
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 - Available at JCCC's Billington Library
- William H. Wiggins, Jr., *O freedom!: Afro-American Emancipation Celebrations* (University of Tennessee Press, 1987).
- Ashley Luthern, "Why Juneteenth Celebrates the New Birth of Freedom," *Smithsonian.com*, June 19, 2009, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smithsonian-institution/juneteenth-a-new-birth-of-freedom-9572263/>, accessed June 2, 2021.
- Kenneth C. Davis, "Juneteenth: Our Other Independence Day," *Smithsonian.com*, June 15, 2011, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/juneteenth-our-other-independence-day-16340952/#prIFy7p7QIWlQWFy.99>, accessed June 2, 2021.

- Quintard Taylor, "Juneteenth: The Growth of an African American Holiday (1865-)," *BLACKPAST*, June 17, 2011, <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/juneteenth-birth-african-american-holiday-2/#sthash.n7z5Raeg.dpuf>, accessed June 2, 2021.
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Historical Context

Juneteenth exists in the historical context of the U.S. Civil War (1861-1865) and its aftermath. The Emancipation Proclamation, akin to a presidential executive order today, was issued by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 and went into effect on January 1, 1863. This proclamation declared enslaved peoples free in states and parts of states that were, at the time, part of the Confederate States of America (those that had seceded from the U.S. to form a separate nation), which Lincoln viewed as states "in rebellion against the United States." It also directed the U.S. military and navy to "recognize and maintain the freedom" of enslaved peoples in these specific states and it allowed formerly enslaved people to serve in the U.S. military. Enslaved people had been resisting their enslavement for centuries, but this proclamation gave their self-liberation movement additional momentum. All of this was politically controversial at the time, and Lincoln faced backlash as a result. Of course, politicians, leaders, and enslavers in the Confederate States where the Proclamation applied did not view Lincoln as their president, and thus they disregarded the Emancipation Proclamation. However, enslaved people took the Emancipation Proclamation literally and many fled to Union Army protection when it was in proximity for them to do so and approximately 179,000 Black men served in the U.S. military. The Emancipation Proclamation also did not apply to states that had not seceded (and thus remained part of the U.S.) where enslavement was legal, such as Missouri. Only an amendment to the U.S. Constitution could ensure nationwide emancipation, which was achieved when the 13th Amendment was ratified in December 1865. Nevertheless, this amendment included a loophole, allowing enslavement "as punishment for crime". As legendary Black scholar W.E.B. Du Bois wrote: "The slave went free; stood a brief moment in the sun; then moved back again toward slavery."

The following sources provide historical context on this period and these topics.

- Frederick Douglass, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?" (1852), <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/aia/part4/4h2927t.html>, accessed June 2, 2021.
 - Douglass, a formerly enslaved person and prominent abolitionist, gave this speech at an Independence Day celebration commemorating the signing of the Declaration of Independence (which created the U.S.) in Rochester, New York in 1852.
- "The Emancipation Proclamation" (1863), <https://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured-documents/emancipation-proclamation/transcript.html>, accessed June 2, 2021.
- Eric Foner, *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery* (W.W. Norton, 2010).
 - Context on President Lincoln and the Emancipation Proclamation (among other things).
 - Available at JCCC's Billington Library.
- Harold Holzer, Edna Greene Medford, and Frank J. Williams, *The Emancipation Proclamation: Three Views (Social, Political, and Iconographic)* (Louisiana State University Press, 2006).
 - Available at JCCC's Billington Library
- Jennifer L. Weber, *Copperheads: The Rise and Fall of Lincoln's Opponents in the North* (Oxford University Press, 2006).

- Context on how unpopular Lincoln and the war had become during the 1864 presidential election, including the political controversy surrounding the Emancipation Proclamation.
- Leon Litwack, *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery* (Vintage Books, 1979).
- "13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution" (1865), <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false&doc=40&page=transcript>, accessed June 2, 2021.
- "Juneteenth and the Emancipation Proclamation," *JSTOR Daily*, June 18, 2020, <https://daily.jstor.org/juneteenth-and-the-emancipation-proclamation/>, accessed June 2, 2021.
- W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: an essay toward a history of the part which black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880* (Russell and Russell, reprint 1962).
 - Available at JCCC's Billington Library
- "Slavery By Another Name" (PBS documentary, 2012)
 - Chronicles Black life after the 13th Amendment was added to the U.S. Constitution and how its allowance for enslavement "as punishment for crime" was used to institute "slavery by another name."
 - Available through Billington Library as [DVD checkout](#) or streaming through "[Films on Demand](#)" Database
- Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration* (Random House, 2010).
 - Available at JCCC's Billington Library

Contemporary Sources

- "Juneteenth: Fact Sheet," Congressional Research Service, June 3, 2020, <https://fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/R44865.pdf>, accessed June 20, 2021.
 - Includes state and federal legislation as well as Congressional and Presidential speeches, remarks, etc. related to Juneteenth.
- "Embracing Freedom: Juneteenth Celebrations," *Tell Me More* (NPR), June 19, 2007, <https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=11182637>, accessed June 2, 2021.
- Jamelle Bouie, "The Black American Holiday Everyone Should Celebrate but Doesn't," *Slate*, June 19, 2014, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2015/06/juneteenth-the-black-american-holiday-history.html>, accessed June 2, 2021.
- Eliana Dockterman, "Here's How America Observes Juneteenth," *Time*, June 19, 2014, <https://time.com/2903414/how-america-observes-juneteenth/>, accessed June 2, 2021.
- Judson L. Jeffries, "[Juneteenth, Black Texans and the Case of Reparations](#)," *Negro Educational Review* 55, no. 2–3 (Apr–July, 2004): 107–115.
 - Available JCCC's Billington Library
- "Juneteenth in the Alternative Press," *JSTOR Daily*, June 18, 2020, <https://daily.jstor.org/juneteenth-in-the-alternative-press/>, accessed June 2, 2021.
- "Texas Remembers Juneteenth 2020," Texas State Library and Archives Commission, June 19, 2020, https://www.tsl.texas.gov/ref/abouttx/juneteenth.html?fbclid=IwAR3ByiMsTO25L6vAkvOm3Fg768aS6L6Oq049EPvlgc9Y8CRqXP_oxxhH3k4, accessed June 2, 2021.

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- Fred Cantu, "Juneteenth reveals Austin's shrinking African-American population (video)," *CBS Austin*, June 17, 2016, <https://cbsaustin.com/news/local/juneteenth-reveals-austins-shrinking-african-american-population>, accessed June 2, 2021.
- "Juneteenth and Emancipation Day in Florida," Florida Memory: State Library and Archives of Florida, <https://www.floridamemory.com/items/show/333282>, accessed June 2, 2021.
- Michael Tortorello, "The Seeds of Survival," *New York Times*, June 13, 2012, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/14/garden/juneteenth-gardens-planting-the-seeds-of-survival.html>, accessed June 2, 2021.
- Ellen McGirt, "How a Chef is Exposing the Hidden Racism in 'Southern' Kitchens," *Fortune.com*, June 17, 2016, https://www.yahoo.com/news/chef-exposing-hidden-racism-southern-110055605.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLnNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAL7Xb5SSDEkPw833H-kU_EdENGaBilefrN1ExitrCtnGVI5xzm-mnJSDNX69QhZLM6xmclvrK350HT6VdyKYmEW2I_L-AxJoaQEJ5avNbY16AfjHth8jJ8_ctUFUDtsE19egFiyTBZNWV2RO63Pli_6lJOoAWNpNZ8HO_ABKzD_NY&guccounter=2, accessed June 2, 2021.

For Children

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 - "Teacher's Guide for *Juneteenth Jamboree*," https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2417/teachers_guide, accessed June 2, 2021.
- Vaunda Micheaux Nelson and Drew Nelson, *Juneteenth* (Millbrook Press/Lerner, 2006), <https://lernerbooks.com/shop/show/10677>, accessed June 2, 2021.

Kansas City

- JuneteenthKC, <https://www.juneteenth-kc.com/>
 - Hosts an annual heritage celebration, commemorating the emancipation of enslaved Africans in America, and pays tribute to the founders of the local community.
- Black Archives of Mid-America, <https://blackarchives.org/>
 - Works to collect, preserve and make available to the public materials documenting the social, economic, political and cultural histories of persons of African American descent in the central United States, with particular emphasis in the Kansas City, Missouri region.

This source guide was made by Tai S. Edwards, history professor at Johnson County Community College and is also available as a module in Canvas Commons.