

# JUNETEENTH

## *Freedom Day*

JUNE 19<sup>TH</sup>

Juneteenth (June 19) holds great significance in American history. This date symbolizes the liberation of over 250,000 enslaved individuals and became a pivotal event for African Americans and their supporters nationwide. While Juneteenth celebrations were not widely known outside of African American communities, the holiday experienced a resurgence during the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s and again in 2020 during the Black Lives Matter Movement. <sup>1</sup>

On the eve of January 1, 1863, both enslaved and free African Americans throughout the nation gathered, anxiously awaiting news on the enactment of the Emancipation Proclamation. At the stroke of midnight, the proclamation officially declared all enslaved individuals in the Confederate States to be legally emancipated. Union soldiers, including Black soldiers, disseminated copies of the proclamation across plantations and cities in the South, ensuring widespread knowledge of newfound freedom.

Even after the Emancipation Proclamation was enacted, enforcement in regions under Confederate control was difficult. On June 19, 1865, liberation reached the westernmost Confederate state of Texas. The arrival of approximately 2,000 Union troops to Galveston Bay, Texas, brought the executive decree by U.S. Major General Gordon Granger, General Order No. 3, that emancipated over 250,000 enslaved Black individuals. <sup>2</sup> This date became “Juneteenth” a name derived from the combination of “June” and “nineteenth.”

Juneteenth serves as a commemoration of the hardships endured by African Americans in their pursuit of freedom. People celebrate Juneteenth in many ways, including church services, parades, storytelling, song, and communal gatherings. These celebrations reaffirm the progress made toward equality for all.

Juneteenth became a federal holiday in 2021. All fifty states and the District of Columbia acknowledge it as a holiday or observance. During the 2023 Negotiations, the UAW and Ford agreed to recognize Juneteenth as an annual paid holiday.

“Let us rejoice in celebrating Juneteenth by ensuring that all Americans have a seat at the table. Let’s remember the joyful significance of Juneteenth and why we need to celebrate this historic day, now more than ever.” — Anthony Daniels, Alabama State Representative (District 53) <sup>3</sup>

UAW-FORD DIVERSITY DIGEST  
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