

“Juneteenth is the longest running African American holiday and marks the day enslaved Africans in Galveston Texas first learned they were free. That day was June 19th, 1865, almost two and a half years after Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

Similar to America’s July 4th Independence Day, Juneteenth is also referred to as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, Emancipation Day, and Liberation Day, in commemoration of the end of almost 300 years of chattel slavery in America. On this day in 1865 former slaves celebrated with prayer, feasting, song and dance.

As much as this holiday represents our freedom, it also represents our delayed emancipation, due to consistent oppression and resistance to equality that is deep rooted in white supremacy. After all, what is freedom when you are still treated and seen as less than human? From the Emancipation Proclamation to present day, Black people in America have endured a continuous fight for equality and a different kind of freedom. Juneteenth symbolizes our continued fight towards racial equality, justice and liberation through grass roots community organizations and legislative action against systemic racism. Juneteenth serves as a poignant reminder to honor the strength and fight of our enslaved ancestors as we continue to push for the emancipation of all people.

Today Juneteenth is recognized around the world and is a collective celebration with food, dance and community. Traditionally red colored food and drinks are an important part of Juneteenth celebrations, with red symbolizing resilience. But most importantly, it’s an opportunity to give back through service to our communities, and the people on the ground who fight tirelessly day in and day out to push change forward. In my family, we each select one organization fighting for racial justice to donate to.

This year, I have selected two organizations. The People’s Breakfast Oakland, which serves the houseless population, and Know Your Rights Camp, whose “mission is to advance the liberation and well-being of Black and Brown communities through education, self-empowerment, mass-mobilization and the creation of new systems that elevate the next generation of change leaders.”



– Amber P., We Care Child and Family Therapist