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On Thursday, June 17, 2021, following a decade of grassroots activism, the 94-year-old Texas activist Opal Lee listened to Vice President Harris, the first woman, Asian-American and the first Black person to serve as vice president, speak about the significance of Juneteenth in the White House East Room before introducing the President. Following President Joseph R. Biden's remarks, he signed a bill recognizing Juneteenth — the celebration to commemorate the end of chattel slavery in the United States — as a federal holiday. President Biden received the bill to establish June 19 as Juneteenth National Independence Day after it passed the House 415-14 and the Senate unanimously. <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/06/17/remarks-by-president-biden-at-signing-of-the-juneteenth-national-independence-day-act/>

For the millions of Americans who were never taught about Juneteenth in school, Juneteenth is celebrated annually on the 19th of June marking the date when some of the last enslaved people in the Confederacy learned of their freedom following the Civil War. While President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation in 1862 to free enslaved people in the Confederate states, and the war ended in April 1865, many Texas Black people continued in bondage. Texas' remoteness prevented Union soldiers from implementing the memorandum as quickly as in other Confederate States. Approximately thirty months after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, and two months after the conclusion of the Civil War, April 1865, on June 19, 1865 Union Army Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, to announce the end of the war and Union victory. Thereafter, Juneteenth has been referred to as Jubilee Day, Freedom Day, Liberation Day, Emancipation Day, and with President Biden's signature a national holiday to observe the end of slavery in the United States. <https://nmaahc.si.edu/blog-post/historical-legacy-juneteenth>

One former slave, Felix Haywood recalled, "Everybody went wild. We all felt like heroes...just like that we were free. It didn't seem to make the whites mad, either. They went right on giving us food just the same. Right off colored folks started on the move. They seemed to want to get close to freedom ... like it was a place or a city. We knew freedom was on us, but we didn't know what was to come with it."

http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~ewyatt/_borders/Texas%20Slave%20Narratives/Texas%20Index.html

Years later, the former Galveston, Texas slave, Margrett Nillin, was asked if she preferred slavery or freedom. She answered unequivocally, "Well, it is this way, in slavery I owned nothing. In freedom I owned a home and raise my family. Which all causes me to worry and in slavery I has no worries, but I takes freedom." <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/35380/35380-h/35380-h.html#margrett-nillin>

Black people in the United States have celebrated Juneteenth ever since, but because America has a long history of erasing history very few Americans outside of the Black community ever heard of the holiday. Additionally, as this year marked the 100th Anniversary of the Tulsa Race Massacre, and while that particular atrocity received the somber reflection it always deserved,

Tulsa was not an isolated incident. Throughout chattel slavery, Reconstruction, and the Jim Crow years, Black Americans have lived under the constant threat of violence in the form of lynching, race massacres, and unarmed shootings for generations. Hopefully, now with the commemoration of the Tulsa Race Massacre and the establishment of Juneteenth National Independence Day Americans will be open to learning and studying, in depth, these erased United States historical events.

https://www.instagram.com/tv/CQTRGs_HenO/?utm_medium=copy_link

http://www.archives.gov/exhibits/featured_documents/emancipation_proclamation/

<https://www.loc.gov/rr/program/bib/ourdocs/civilwarrecon.html>

