

Celebrating Juneteenth By Matilda Fletcher

On June 19th, 47 states, several companies, and the federal government will celebrate Juneteenth as an official holiday, most for the first time. Juneteenth started in Texas in 1865 when slaves were told they were free. Many slave owners refrained from telling “their” slaves that they were free until they were forced to. Now we honor it in the United States and Mexico to commemorate the outlawing of slavery. Last month, May 25 was the first anniversary of the murder of George Floyd. This is one of the reasons why it is so important to recognize and celebrate Juneteenth this year. Juneteenth symbolizes the hope for true freedom and the work that needs to be done to achieve it.

While Black people are free from slavery in name, systemic racism continues to persist in policing, as well as in the legal system in general, in society, in housing, in education, in workplaces, in medical care, and in technology. Most people who are not Black, do not celebrate or recognize Juneteenth, perhaps this year it’s time for everyone to start celebrating the holiday. On Juneteenth, people eat red foods like red velvet cake and strawberries, as well as soul food, and drink red soda, with the red symbolizing the blood shed by their ancestors to get to this point. They gather with family and friends to celebrate Blackness and community. Not all Black people know about or celebrate Juneteenth; Professor Henry Gates of Harvard University’s African and African American research center has said he did not learn about Juneteenth until college.

Learn more about it with these resources below:

Juneteenth website:

<https://www.juneteenth.com/history.htm>

New York Times article about the history of the Juneteenth:

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/juneteenth-day-celebration.html>

CNN article about the importance of Juneteenth now:

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/11/us/what-is-juneteenth-trnd/index.html>

CNN article about making Juneteenth a national holiday:

<https://www.cnn.com/2021/02/26/us/juneteenth-national-holiday-opal-lee/index.html>

New York Times article about how people celebrate Juneteenth:

<https://www.nytimes.com/article/juneteenth-celebration-history.html>

CNN article about which states recognize Juneteenth:

<https://www.cnn.com/2019/06/19/us/juneteenth-state-holidays-trnd/index.html>