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The Importance of Juneteenth: Then and Now.

Juneteenth, also called “Freedom Day” has long been a day of remembrance and affirmation for Black Americans. Today, there’s a growing nationwide movement for observance as the celebration resonates in new ways.

1865

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. From its Galveston, Texas origin in 1865, June 19th is observed as the day of emancipation. It is when enslaved Black Americans learned of their freedom at the end of the Civil War two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed.

Traditions surrounding the Juneteenth celebration in the Black community emphasize family, education, achievement, reflection and rejoicing.

2020

Global protests against racial injustice have brought Juneteenth to the forefront of our collective attention. Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, people of all ethnicities have been taking to the streets advocating for sweeping reforms that will protect Black citizens. Now, 155 years later, Juneteenth is a celebration of hope.

Set in Motion

It’s been a long road since 1865. Change is rarely linear or quick. While the events of the past few months are devastating, there has been accelerated momentum. This Juneteenth is an opportunity for people to catch their breath after what has been groundbreaking shifts in perception, understanding, and actions over the last few months. Hopefully, this momentum will carry through to a very different Juneteenth 2021, one that reflects a positive turning point in American history.

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