

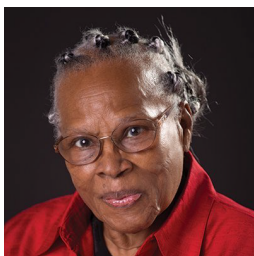
## A DAY OF REFLECTION, RECOGNITION AND RESTORATION

On June 19, 1865 – more than two years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation – enslaved African Americans in Texas were finally granted their freedom. The date became an annual celebration for formerly enslaved people in that state, and in 1980, Texas made Juneteenth a state holiday. Since then, all states except South Dakota have passed similar legislation. Last year, in the wake of civil unrest caused by the murder of George Floyd, Congress created a federal holiday called Juneteenth National Independence Day. It has also been known as Jubilee Day, Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, and Black Independence Day.

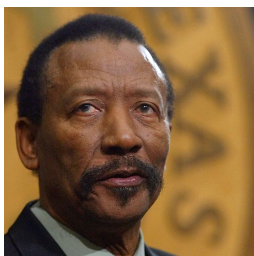
### Equity Heroes of Juneteenth



**The Rev. Dr. Ronald V. Myers** is credited with spearheading the modern-day Juneteenth movement. He founded the original National Juneteenth Observance Foundation. According to activists, the Rev. Dr. Myers traveled to Washington, D.C., for 25 years, lobbying lawmakers and hosting events like a flag-raising ceremony at Howard University advocating for Juneteenth to be recognized nationwide.



**Opal Lee** is an activist who began advocating for Juneteenth to become a national holiday by walking from Fort Worth, Texas, to Washington, D.C., in 2016, at the age of 89. She continues to commemorate Juneteenth by participating in a 2.5 mile walk each year, signifying the two and a half years it took for enslaved people in Texas to be freed after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation.



**Texas State Rep. Al Edwards**, also known as "Mr. Juneteenth," introduced House Bill 1016 as a freshman state legislator. His efforts paved the way for Texas to become the first state to declare Juneteenth a state holiday in 1980. He died in 2020.



Illinois State Sen. Kimberly Lightford and Rep. Carol Ammons successfully sponsored an education omnibus bill that required the Illinois State Board of Education to update the Illinois Learning Standards for social science and created the Inclusive American History Commission. Updates to the standards, enacted in June 2021, ensure students have opportunities to learn about different perspectives and will prepare them to thrive in a diverse and global society.

**Ben Haith and Lisa Jeanne Graf created the first Juneteenth flag in 1997.**  
The flag was **flown for the first time** in 2000.



The star represents Texas, the Lone Star State, and freedom for Black Americans in all 50 states. The bursting outline around the star is inspired by a nova, representing a new beginning for Black Americans. The arc represents a new horizon, with new opportunities. The colors represent the American flag, a reminder that the enslaved people and their descendants were and are Americans.

### **Keep the spirit of Juneteenth alive by:**

✓ Attending Juneteenth events   ✓ Learning more about the history of Juneteenth   ✓ Committing to fight anti-Black racism   ✓ Supporting Black-owned businesses   ✓ Participating in the **Juneteenth Yard Sign Campaign**

### **Bringing Juneteenth into the Classrooms**

✓ **17 Ways to Celebrate Juneteenth with Kids**   ✓ **Teaching Juneteenth**   ✓ **Resources for Reflecting on Juneteenth**

### **Literature for Young Readers**

✓ **What is Juneteenth** by Kirsti Jewel   ✓ **Juneteenth for Mazie** by Floyd Cooper   ✓ **The Juneteenth Story: Celebrating the end of Slavery in the United States** by Alliah L. Agostini

### **Resources**

✓ **The National Museum of African American History and Culture**   ✓ **The Met: Emancipation of the Negroes**  
✓ **Juneteenth.com**

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**If you have a suggestion for an Equity Hero theme, please email [equity@isbe.net](mailto:equity@isbe.net).**

### **Photos**

Rev. Ronald V. Myers: Wikipedia | Opal Lee: Fort Worth Magazine | Texas State Rep. Al Edwards: Houston Chronicle | Juneteenth Flag: Wikipedia