

6/19/2021 Juneteenth Presentation: Sun City Democratic Club by Rae Gill

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, as the nation approached its third year of bloody civil war. The proclamation declared "that all persons held as slaves" within the rebellious or Confederate states "are, and henceforward shall be free." It didn't apply to the border states of Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky and Missouri - Lincoln promised them that they could maintain slavery if they remained loyal to the union. Juneteenth (short for "June Nineteenth") marks the day when federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas in 1865 to take control of the state and ensure that all enslaved people be freed.

"The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired labor. The freedmen are advised to remain quietly at their present homes and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts and that **they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.**" [*General Orders, Number 3; Headquarters District of Texas, Galveston, June 19, 1865*](#)

By the time Gen. Gordon Granger assumed command of the Department of Texas, the Confederate capital in Richmond had fallen; the "Executive" to whom he referred, President Lincoln, was dead; and the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery was well on its way to ratification. But Granger wasn't just a few months late. The Emancipation Proclamation itself, ending slavery in the Confederacy (at least on paper), had taken effect two-and-a-half years before. Since the capture of New Orleans in 1862, slave owners in Mississippi, Louisiana and other points east had been migrating to Texas to escape the Union Army's reach. More than 150,000 enslaved people had made the trek west '

Historians have recounted that when Texas fell and Granger dispatched his now famous order No. 3, it wasn't exactly instant magic for most of the Lone Star State's 250,000 enslaved people. Plantation owners had to decide when and how to announce the news — or wait for a government agent to arrive — and it was not uncommon for them to delay until after the harvest. Even in Galveston city, the ex-Confederate mayor flouted the Army by forcing the freed people back to work. Those who acted on the news did so at their peril.

The next major milestones came with the end of the Civil War in April 1865 and the December 1865 ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, which banned slavery from any place "within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction." But Juneteenth did not mean immediate freedom for everyone. Enslaved people in Native American territories had to wait another year for freedom. Native American nations existed as autonomous political entities, which gave them the right to their own self-government. Neither the Emancipation Proclamation nor the Thirteenth Amendment applied to their territories. It wasn't until the spring and summer of 1866 that the five tribes: (Cherokee, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Creek, Seminole) agreed to the final terms of their respective treaties with the United States, officially ending slavery in Native American territories.

Yes Native Americans also enslaved Black people. These five specific tribes began assimilating into European-American culture in the late 1700s, including owning enslaved people as a way to accumulate wealth.

And despite the legal end of slavery, white Southerners swiftly enacted racist laws, called "Black Codes," that restricted Black people's freedom for decades to come.

So what happened to these newly freed and formerly enslaved people - there was singing, celebration, praises and thanks to God - but without land, housing, materials to farm, work tools, animals and money - SHARECROPPING was the only remedy for basic survival. White supremacy served to justify continued sub-servience of Black people as a rule of natural law.

Southern states instituted a series of oppressive laws, called "Black Codes," that restricted Black people's freedom of movement and gave white Southerners the legal justification to continue wringing forced labor out of Black people.

The Black Codes varied across Southern states. African Americans had to sign annual labor contracts with white landowners. An 1865 Mississippi statute gave the courts the power to imprison any Black adult who did not have "lawful employment" by the second Monday in January of each year.

Other Southern states, like South Carolina, mandated that all Black employees were designated "servants" and employers were designated "masters." One Louisiana parish passed a Black Code that required "every Negro ... to be in the regular service of some white person, or former owner, who shall be held responsible for the conduct of said Negro."

Petty crime, or none at all, resulted in Black people being imprisoned and white farmers were benefited by a "convict leasing system", that provided free labor to them to help boost the post-slavery Southern economy.

There was a whole series of laws designed to create a separate laboring cast in the South, despite the fact that slavery was over,

In 1979 Texas became the first state to make Juneteenth an official holiday. Before the announcement this week that Juneteenth had been declared a national holiday, Texas, D.C. and every other state except North and South Dakota had recognized Juneteenth as a state holiday or holiday observance.

Some people thought that Juneteenth was just an illusion of liberation of Black People - I believe it is an opportunity to keep the need for reparation, civil rights and civil liberties at the forefront so that Black people can rise to the level that they would have achieved were it not for the restrictions and lack of opportunity that caused us to remain as second-class citizens since 1619 when we first arrived as an enslaved people.

Ref. Leon Litwack in his book *Been in the Storm So Long: The Aftermath of Slavery.*; *Lone Star Past: Memory and History in Texas.*; *Black Slaves, Indian Masters: Slavery, Emancipation, and Citizenship in the Native American South*, by Barbara Krauthamer (2013) ; Nadra Kareem Nittle: *How the Black Codes limited African American Progress After the Civil War*