



**building
momentum**

June 16, 2021

Juneteenth 2021

"Everyone in the BU community is encouraged to consider the meaning of the University's newest holiday and to learn more about all of the events that have brought us to this important moment in the history of the nation."

- **ANDREA L. TAYLOR**

This Friday, Boston University will commemorate an event that's taken 156 years to be officially recognized as a defining moment in US history. Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day or Jubilee Day, memorializes Thursday, June 19, 1865, the day that Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas, to inform enslaved Black people that slavery had formally been abolished by President Abraham Lincoln's signing of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Two and a half years after the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, Blacks in Galveston toiled under the horrors of slavery until Union soldiers came to enforce the President's order. Thousands more suffered under the evils of enslavement in Texas and in other states that permitted slavery but had not seceded from the Union like Kentucky and Delaware until passage of the Thirteenth Amendment of the US Constitution on December 18, 1865. Even after the Thirteenth Amendment, enslavement merely shifted into other forms such as sharecropping and later a brutal system of Jim Crow.

Demands for racial equality and justice during the summer 2020 protests sparked a resurgence of calls for Juneteenth to become a federal holiday, among other hopes and desires, like a truth and reconciliation process in our nation. It's not mere coincidence that this year broke the silence on the 100-year-old Tulsa race massacre, where an enraged mob of white people descended on Greenwood, Oklahoma, killing as many as 300 African Americans and destroying more than 1,250 homes. The current, long-overdue interest in these historic events is part of a national reckoning, sparked largely by the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, but also in response to the deaths of countless Black people as a result of centuries of racist policies and structures. We share an important responsibility for teaching and learning about the complete, though sometimes painful, experiences that have shaped our nation.

At Boston University, the Trustees and President Brown responded in the fall of 2020 by renewing the University's longstanding commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and creating change mechanisms that would declare the University's recognition of our full history. [The Antiracism Working Group \(AWG\)](#), a broad cross section of faculty and staff stakeholders, chaired by me, was charged with examining the efficacy of existing policies and procedures and making recommendations for change. The AWG Calendar subcommittee, chaired by Christine W. McGuire, Vice President & Associate Provost for Enrollment & Student Administration, reviewed the Academic Calendar, facilitated a process that included feedback from diverse stakeholders, and culminated in a vote by the University Council and the AWG to make Juneteenth a University holiday, and to rename Columbus Day Indigenous Peoples Day. The Juneteenth commemoration of the end of slavery following the Civil War is now a recognized holiday in Massachusetts, and in almost all US states and the District of Columbia.

Juneteenth traditions include enjoying food such as barbecue and strawberry soda pop and personal expression through fashion. The latter was a response to legal restrictions imposed during slavery that prohibited or limited the dressing of slaves. Juneteenth was an opportunity for newly free people to toss their ragged garments into creeks and rivers and wear clothing taken from plantations belonging to their former masters.

Recent Juneteenth celebrations I've attended in Alabama and Georgia offered creative, engaging, and intergenerational activities designed to appeal to the entire community. Everyone in the BU community is encouraged to consider the meaning of the University's newest holiday and to learn more about all of the events that have brought us to this important moment in the history of the nation.

Andrea L. Taylor
Senior Diversity Officer

At BU, Juneteenth will be recognized with the following events:

Juneteenth

Thursday, June 17, via Zoom
11:30 am-12:30 pm

Education & Celebration hosted by the Faculty & Staff of Color Community Network

Register Here:

https://bostonu.zoom.us/meeting/register/Jlpd-qrrTlrHtlXc_i5Gbn7QNsrXlHnzVsv

Looking Ahead to Juneteenth

Thursday, June 17, via Zoom
1 pm - 2 pm

Centering Black Parents Voices in the Age of COVID-19 and Racial Reckoning

Register Here:

https://fpgcdi.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_r-p4KN7eSnKHZTpv1SK0sQ

Remembering the Past, Celebrating the Future

Thursday, June 17, via Zoom
4:00 pm - 5:15 pm

A panel discussion including Black Alumni Leadership Council members Carmen Fields and Karen Holmes Ward

Register Here:

https://trusted.bu.edu/s/1759/2-bu/19/1col.aspx?sid=1759&gid=2&pgid=10415&content_id=12063



Juneteenth Explained

Andrea Taylor's short video describes the history and significance of the Juneteenth holiday. [Watch Now.](#)

Recommended Reading:

On Juneteenth, a newly published book by Pulitzer Prize-winning author **Annette Gordon-Reed**, a Harvard University faculty member and Texas native, is an excellent reference for additional insight about Juneteenth origins and contemporary relevance, as is a recent [NPR interview with the author](#).