

Juneteenth: Children Should Learn about this Day in School

By Shawnta S. Barnes - June 20, 2018



What good is freedom if you don't know you are free? For slaves in Galveston, Texas, they were free but didn't know it because they were not informed about the Emancipation Proclamation, an executive order by the 16th United States President Abraham Lincoln that freed enslaved people. On June 19, 1865, two years after slaves were declared free, General Gordon Granger informed slaves in Galveston about their freedom.

According to Juneteenth.com:

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. From its Galveston, Texas origin in 1865, the observance of June 19th as the African American Emancipation Day has spread across the United States and beyond. Today, Juneteenth commemorates African American freedom and emphasizes education and achievement.

Unfortunately, I did not learn about this important day in African American history in school; I learned about it as an adult. The more I learn about history as an adult, the more I wonder about what children are NOT being taught about in school. Slavery was one of many horrible atrocities in the United States and school history books should let children know that some slaves did not know they were free for years. This is a huge fact to omit.

As I continue to learn more history, I share with other adults, students I teach, and my children. If you are a parent, you should be asking questions about how history is being taught at your child's school. When I think about how Juneteenth celebrations today put an emphasis on education and achievement, I want to ensure when education covers history in school, it doesn't leave out important details.