

JUNETEENTH

A DAY OF FREEDOM



HAGGADAH AND SEDER

June 2022 | Sivan 5782

Introduction

We offer this Juneteenth Haggadah as the start of a conversation. Over the past few years, many of our Jewish communities have been grappling with the existence of inequities within our own communal spaces and have desired to listen to and embrace those within our walls that we may not have always seen in the beauty of all of their intertwined identities. As we unpack what it means to be created B'tzelem Elohim, we are taking on a commitment to live in the promise of our freedom. We are not truly free as a people, until all of us are free.

Much of the Exodus story is part of the fabric of Black Americans whether they identify as American Descendants of Slavery or not. Enslaved people held the story of Moses and aspired for the Exodus to be their origin story as well. These themes are present in Black churches and have been passed down in negro spirituals for generations. Those of us who hold the identities of being both Black and Jewish have often felt that we cannot separate the history of our ancestors as enslaved people from the Passover story.

You may ask yourself, 'but how is this Jewish?' and 'why should we mark this day as a Jewish people?' Though it is a dark part of our Jewish history, it is part of the American Jewish story that, according to data presented in *Struggles in the Promised Land*, approximately 5000 Jews out of an estimated 150,000 American Jews owned slaves on this soil. While that may have accounted for a mere 1.25% of the slave owning population in America, it was not 0. We laud the accomplishments of Judah P. Benjamin as the first Jewish American politician and his rise through the political ranks to become Secretary of State, but we minimize the slave owning part of his story and that he was a vocal pro-slavery advocate. Most of us are unaware that at a synagogue in Manhattan, NY in 1861 Rabbi Raphall gave a sermon where he used the Torah to defend the institution of slavery. Bible View of Slavery was so popular that it was delivered to a packed house of ticket holders a second time and printed and distributed across the country and held up as the American Jewish position on slavery. We don't tell the story of how when Rabbi Einhorn spoke out against this position and argued that slavery was against Jewish values, a riot broke out and the crowd sought to tar and feather him. On the actions of a few during the Civil Rights movement, we hold onto the idea that standing up for racial justice is in our Jewish DNA but do not talk about the Sol Teppers who fought to uphold segregation. To mark Juneteenth in our Jewish spaces is to recognize that we, too, have been part of the "smog." It is also to recognize that our collective liberation is bound together. In Hebrew we say **אחד בלב אחד עם אחד** [am echad b'lev echad] and we are, indeed, one people with one heart.

This Juneteenth Seder practice and Haggadah are living documents. As the marking of Juneteenth grows as a value in our communities (in the same ways that many of us have embraced Pride Shabbat), our guide will become enriched. We have called on our ancestors to create this Juneteenth Haggadah. We hope that you will use this as a guide in your communities to deepen the work you're engaged in and to expand the conversations around your Shabbat and Kiddush tables.

Acknowledgments

As you're preparing your seder tables, use the items listed on **Festive Meal** (p24) to help you choose the Red Foods, BBQ Foods and Foods of Prosperity that you will feature.

Though this Haggadah is reminiscent of the Passover Seder that calls on us to envision ourselves in the celebratory moment when we were freed from bondage in Egypt, for those marking Juneteenth, the ancestral memory is much more recent. For those descended from chattel slavery, this holiday evokes deep reflection more akin to Yom Hashoah.

Thank you to Heather Miller, Gulienne Rollins-Rishon, Sasha King and USCJ for bringing this project to life.

Dedicated to JR E Lee, the Juneteenth educator who helped found the Urban League, FAMU, and the National Colored Teachers Association and his parents John and Mary (Mayes) Lee who were liberated on Juneteenth.

Heather also wanted to add a special dedication to her ancestor Marthie, whose body was used against her will by two generations of enslavers. Without her and the atrocities she endured, at least one of her children would not have been able to escape and she would not exist.

Selah.

Candle Lighting

Both Chanukah and Kwanzaa share the practice of candle lighting. On Chanukah we light candles to acknowledge the miracle of a victory despite insurmountable odds. It signals the perseverance of the Jewish people. On the Pan-African holiday of Kwanzaa, candles are lit on a Kinara to represent the core principles of the Kwaida philosophy that uphold the values of family, community and culture. The colors of the candles represent the people, the blood that unites people with African ancestry and the rich African land. Note that the colors of Juneteenth, however, are red, white and blue because it is an American holiday.

We also welcome Shabbat with candle lighting. We light candles to celebrate the creation of the world and elevate the dignity of our day of rest. As you light candles on this Juneteenth Shabbat, we invite you to embody not only the blessing but also to allow space to create a moment of mindfulness. As you speak the words of the blessing, inhale your vision of the unity of our Jewish people and on your exhale, feel yourself renewed in your ongoing pursuit of racial justice.

Upon lighting this candle we say Shehekiyanu and give thanks for bringing us to this moment. We are grateful that we have been brought to this time in our history where we can stand in solidarity with the Black Jews in our communities and the American Descendants of Slavery within our 'gates.'

Hebrew

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם, שֶׁהַחַיִּינוּ וְקִיַּמְנוּ וְהִגִּיעַנוּ לְזִמְנֵן הַזֶּה.

English

Blessed are You Hashem our God King of the universe, who has granted us life, sustained us, and enabled us to reach this occasion.

Transliterated

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Shehecheyanu Ve'Kiyemanu Ve'Higianu La'Zman Haze

Ma Nishtana for Juneteenth

How is this seder different from our other Seders?

We usually celebrate national holidays with the American flag? Why do we have another flag on this holiday?

Why do we call this holiday Juneteenth when it used to be called Jubilee?

On this night we eat foods of prosperity.

Why is this holiday celebrated on June 19?

The QR Code below links to an audio-visual "Ma Nishtana", in the form of a pre-recorded panel discussion asking and answering questions about Juneteenth from an academic, anecdotal, and Jewish perspective



Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*

by Wallace Wills

Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home
Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home

I looked over Jordan, and what did I
see

Coming for to carry me home
A band of angels coming after me
Coming for to carry me home

(Chorus)

If you get there before I do
Coming for to carry me home
Tell all my friends I'm coming, too
Coming for to carry me home

(Chorus)

I'm sometimes up and sometimes
down
Coming for to carry me home
But still my soul feels heavenly bound
Coming for to carry me home

Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home
Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home
The brightest day that I can say
Coming for to carry me home
When [G-d] washed my sins away
Coming for to carry me home
Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home
Swing low, sweet chariot
Coming for to carry me home

If I get there before you do
Coming for to carry me home
I'll cut a hole and pull you through
Coming for to carry me home



Link to recording

***This song is one that is traditionally sung by ADOS communities on Juneteenth. For communities using this Haggadah outside of the ADOS and Black community, we ask that you listen to the linked recording and hold discussions about the imagery in the lyrics and refrain from singing so that this does not become an appropriative practice for your community.**

Maggid: The Story of Juneteenth

Juneteenth is the oldest known celebration commemorating the complete ending of legal slavery in the United States. Dating back to 1865, it was on June 19th that the Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger, landed at Galveston, Texas with news that the war had ended and that the enslaved were now free. Note that this was two and a half years after President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation - which had become official January 1, 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation had little impact on the Texans due to the minimal number of Union troops to enforce the new Executive order. However, with the surrender of General Lee in April of 1865, and the arrival of General Granger's regiment, the forces were finally strong enough to influence and overcome the resistance.

Later attempts to explain this two and a half year delay in the receipt of this important news have yielded several versions that have been handed down through the years. Often told is the story of a messenger who was murdered on his way to Texas with the news of freedom. Another, is that the news was deliberately withheld by the enslavers to maintain the labor force on the plantations. And still another, is that federal troops actually waited for the slave owners to reap the benefits of one last cotton harvest before going to Texas to enforce the Emancipation Proclamation. All or none of them could be true. For whatever the reason, conditions in Texas remained status quo well beyond what was statutory.

General Order Number 3

One of General Granger's first orders of business was to read to the people of Texas, General Order Number 3 which began most significantly with:

"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 rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and free laborer."

The reactions to this profound news ranged from pure shock to immediate jubilation. While many lingered to learn of this new employer to employee relationship, many left before these offers were completely off the lips of their former 'masters' - attesting to the varying conditions on the plantations and the realization of freedom. Even with nowhere to go, many felt that leaving the plantation would be their first grasp of freedom. North was a logical destination and for many it represented true freedom, while the desire to reach family members in neighboring states drove the some into Louisiana, Arkansas

and Oklahoma. Settling into these new areas as free men and women brought on new realities and the challenges of establishing a heretofore non-existent status for black people in America. Recounting the memories of that great day in June of 1865 and its festivities would serve as motivation as well as a release from the growing pressures encountered in their new territory. The celebration of June 19th was coined "Juneteenth" and grew with more participation from descendants. The Juneteenth celebration was a time for reassuring each other, for praying and for gathering remaining family members.

Juneteenth continued to be highly revered in Texas decades later, with many former slaves and descendants making an annual pilgrimage back to Galveston on this date.

Juneteenth Festivities and Food

A range of activities were provided to entertain the masses, many of which continue in tradition today. Rodeos, fishing, barbecuing and baseball are just a few of the typical Juneteenth activities you may witness today. Juneteenth almost always focused on education and self improvement. Thus often guest speakers are brought in and the elders are called upon to recount the events of the past. Prayer services were also a major part of these celebrations.

Certain foods became popular and subsequently synonymous with Juneteenth celebrations such as strawberry soda-pop. More traditional and just as popular was the barbecuing, through which Juneteenth participants could share in the spirit and aromas that their ancestors - the newly emancipated African Americans, would have experienced during their ceremonies. Hence, the barbecue pit is often established as the center of attention at Juneteenth celebrations.

Food was abundant because everyone prepared a special dish. Meats such as lamb, pork and beef which not available everyday were brought on this special occasion. A true Juneteenth celebrations left visitors well satisfied and with enough conversation to last until the next.

Dress was also an important element in early Juneteenth customs and is often still taken seriously, particularly by the direct descendants who can make the connection to this tradition's roots. During slavery there were laws on the books in many areas that prohibited or limited the dressing of the enslaved. During the initial days of the emancipation celebrations, there are accounts of former slaves tossing their ragged garments into the creeks and rivers to adorn clothing taken from the plantations belonging to their former 'masters'.

Juneteenth and Society

In the early years, little interest existed outside the African American community in participation in the celebrations. In some cases, there was outwardly exhibited resistance by barring the use of public property for the festivities. Most of the festivities found themselves out in rural areas around rivers and creeks that could provide for additional activities such as fishing, horseback riding and barbecues. Often the church grounds was the site for such activities. Eventually, as African Americans became land owners, land was donated and dedicated for these festivities. One of the earliest documented land purchases in the name of Juneteenth was organized by Rev. Jack Yates.

This fund-raising effort yielded \$1000 and the purchase of Emancipation Park in Houston, Texas. In Mexia, the local Juneteenth organization purchased Booker T. Washington Park, which had become the Juneteenth celebration site in 1898. There are accounts of Juneteenth activities being interrupted and halted by white landowners demanding that their laborers return to work.

However, it seems most allowed their workers the day off and some even made donations of food and money. For decades these annual celebrations flourished, growing continuously with each passing year. In Booker T. Washington Park, as many as 20,000 African Americans once flowed through during the course of a week, making the celebration one of the state's largest.

Juneteenth Celebrations Decline

Economic and cultural forces provided for a decline in Juneteenth activities and participants beginning in the early 1900's. Classroom and textbook education in lieu of traditional home and family-taught practices stifled the interest of the youth due to less emphasis and detail on the activities of former slaves. Classroom text books proclaimed Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of January 1, 1863 as the date signaling the ending of slavery - and little or nothing on the impact of General Granger's arrival on June 19th.

The Depression forced many people off the farms and into the cities to find work. In these urban environments, employers were less eager to grant leaves to celebrate this date. Thus, unless June 19th fell on a weekend or holiday, there were very few participants available. July 4th was the already established Independence holiday and a rise in patriotism steered more toward this celebration.

Resurgence

The Civil Rights movement of the 50's and 60's yielded both positive and negative results for the Juneteenth celebrations. While it pulled many of the African American youth away and into the struggle for racial equality, many linked these struggles to the historical struggles of their ancestors. This was evidenced by student demonstrators involved in the Atlanta civil rights campaign in the early 1960's, whom wore Juneteenth freedom buttons. Again in 1968, Juneteenth received another strong resurgence through Poor Peoples March to Washington D.C..

Rev. Ralph Abernathy's call for people of all races, creeds, economic levels and professions to come to Washington to show support for the poor. Many of these attendees returned home and initiated Juneteenth celebrations in areas previously absent of such activity. In fact, two of the largest Juneteenth celebrations founded after this March are now held in Milwaukee and Minneapolis.

Texas Blazes the Trail

On January 1, 1980, Juneteenth became an official state holiday through the efforts of Al Edwards, an African American state legislator. The successful passage of this bill marked Juneteenth as the first emancipation celebration granted official state recognition. Representative Edwards has since actively sought to spread the observance of Juneteenth all across America.

Juneteenth In Modern Times

Throughout the 80's and 90's Juneteenth has continued to enjoy a growing and healthy interest from communities and organizations throughout the country. Institutions such as the Smithsonian, the Henry Ford Museum and others have begun sponsoring Juneteenth-centered activities. In recent years, a number of National Juneteenth Organizations have arisen to take their place along side older organizations - all with the mission to promote and cultivate knowledge and appreciation of African American history and culture.

Juneteenth today, celebrates African American freedom while encouraging self-development and respect for all cultures. As it takes on a more national and even global perspective, the events of 1865 in Texas are not forgotten, for all of the roots tie back to this fertile soil from which a national day of pride is growing. The future of Juneteenth looks bright as the number of cities and states come on board and form local committees and organizations to coordinate the activities. Communication and

networking is vital. A sharing of lessons learned throughout all organizations will help expedite this growth while minimizing waste and risks. Thus, it is important to communicate its existence to one and all.

History of Juneteenth ©Juneteenth.com 1996-2005

Emancipation Proclamation

January 1, 1863

A Transcription

By the President of the United States of America:

A Proclamation.

Whereas, on the twenty-second day of September, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-two, a proclamation was issued by the President of the United States, containing, among other things, the following, to wit:

"That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom.

"That the Executive will, on the first day of January aforesaid, by proclamation, designate the States and parts of States, if any, in which the people thereof, respectively, shall then be in rebellion against the United States; and the fact that any State, or the people thereof, shall on that day be, in good faith, represented in the Congress of the United States by members chosen thereto at elections wherein a majority of the qualified voters of such State shall have participated, shall, in the absence of strong countervailing testimony, be deemed conclusive evidence that such State, and the people thereof, are not then in rebellion against the United States."

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States, the following, to wit:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans)

Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth[]), and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued.

And by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons.

And I hereby enjoin upon the people so declared to be free to abstain from all violence, unless in necessary self-defence; and I recommend to them that, in all cases when allowed, they labor faithfully for reasonable wages.

And I further declare and make known, that such persons of suitable condition, will be received into the armed service of the United States to garrison forts, positions, stations, and other places, and to man vessels of all sorts in said service.

And upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution, upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind, and the gracious favor of Almighty God.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

Done at the City of Washington, this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the eighty-seventh.

By the President: ABRAHAM LINCOLN

WILLIAM H. SEWARD, Secretary of State.

Beyond Juneteenth

Emancipation Days refer to the days formerly enslaved people were liberated. Juneteenth is the most well known of the American emancipatory holidays. After the Civil War, various Freedman populations developed different traditions surrounding their liberation days.

Other Famous Liberation Days

Emancipation Day | Virginia: April 3

This liberation day was courtesy of the United States Colored Troops who not only bravely helped defeat the Confederacy in it's capital of Richmond, Virginia. They also delegated groups of troops to let their peers know of their liberation from slavery.

Emancipation Day | Celebrated on nearest weekday of April 16 District of Columbia

Abraham Lincoln signed the District of Columbia Compensated Emancipation Act on April 16th, 1862. This liberated 3,000 enslaved people in the district.

Eight o' May Emancipation Day | Mississippi: May 8

In Mississippi, the local celebrations commemorates the date in 1865 when African Americans in eastern Mississippi learned of their freedom

[Mississippi was the last state to ratify the 13th Amendment that ended slavery on February 7, 2013]

Emancipation Day | Florida: May 20

Emancipation was proclaimed in Tallahassee on May 20, 1865. Like their enslaved peers in Texas, they didn't learn of their freedom until 11 days after the end of the Civil War, and two years after the Proclamation first issued by President Abraham Lincoln freed those enslaved in Southern states.

Emancipation Day | Georgia Weekend of May 29

One of the earliest recoded Emancipation Days, this festival is held every weekend of May 29th to commemorate when enslaved people in Thomaston, Georgia learned and celebrated their freedom.

Emancipation Day | Kentucky: August 8

Emancipation Day is celebrated on August 8 in western Kentucky as slaves in those counties learned of their freedom. President Andrew Johnson recognized this holiday for Eastern Kentucky.

Emancipation Day | Maryland: November 1

This is one of the latest Emancipation Days. This wasn't signed into state law until 2013. Slavery was abolished in Maryland just six months before the end of the Civil War. Maryland's slavery abolishment also was approved two months before the U.S. Constitution's 13th Amendment was passed by Congress, and a full year before the 13th Amendment was ratified.

Many states, commemorate their emancipation days on January 1 as that day relates to the way enslaved people were sold as well as being the day the Emancipation Proclamation was delivered. Historically, enslaved people were sold on New Year's Day and were expected to separate from their families on January 2nd. Lincoln's declaration of the proclamation was a repudiation of that practice and an opportunity for freed slaves to take the trauma of slavery and celebrate their newly found freedom.

Emancipation Day | January 1

- Arkansas
- South Carolina
- North Carolina
- Louisiana

Sources

[US Emancipation Day](#) [Link]

[Explore our Emancipation Days: Florida](#) [Link]

[Emancipation Day Wiki](#) [Link]

[New Year's Day Emancipation Days](#) [Link]

Blessing over Red Drink

On Juneteenth we drink red beverages. On this day, red symbolizes the blood shed during enslavement and on the journey to freedom. The color red also symbolizes the perseverance of the American Descendants of Slavery in America.

We invite you to consider the labor that went into the creation of your beverage, from planting the seed to farming the land to harvesting the crop to extracting your juice. Reflect on the manufacturing, and how the bottle you poured moved across boundaries so that you could select it from a store shelf. As you say the following blessing, be intentional about the one you choose: vine fruit or tree fruit and the different types of labor involved in each.

Traditional Blessing:

Hebrew

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם שֶׁהַכֹּל נִהְיָה בְּדִבְרוֹ.

English

Blessed are You Hashem our G-d King of the universe, Everything was created through His words.

Transliterated

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Shehakol Nihyah Bidvaro.

Optional Blessing:

Blessed are you G-d, protector of the universe, shield us with your mercy and grant rest to those who made this meal possible. May we take on their burdens this day as we remember that we were once slaves in the land of Egypt and that through your miracles, you set us free. Through our actions, may we help others be set free.

**On Shabbat: Follow this blessing with borei pri hagafen | בּוֹרֵא פְּרֵי הַגָּפֶן over grape juice/wine*

Handwashing

Water is rich with symbolism in our tradition. It is a source of sustenance and purification, it can represent our Torah and in some Kabbalistic circles it can represent mercy and grace. In each book of the Torah we see representations of the power of water from the beautiful separation of the waters to the devastation of the floods. We see Miriam as the connection to water during the Exodus and how there was no more water after she died. We see the use of bitter waters to determine fidelity in Numbers and the rules of ritual cleansing in Leviticus. And during Moses' farewell address, he promises that we will live in a land with flowing streams and abundant pools of water. In *The Water Dancer* by Ta-Nehisi Coates, we see water as a medium for transformative power on the underground railroad.

On Juneteenth, we remember the horrors of the Middle Passage as Africans were kidnapped from their homes and forced onto boats, shackled and beaten as they were carried across oceans to be held in bondage in a foreign land. We remember that not enough people saw the enslaved as people and it took almost 250 years for White Americans to decide that slavery was no longer in its economic best interest and that the enslaved needed to be set free.

As you say the following blessings we invite you to embody the journey across oceans and the work one's hands must do to liberate others. How does your body need to rest in order to be renewed in this charge? In what ways can we use our hands to help us hear the work that needs to be done?

Blessing over handwashing

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ עַל נְטִילַת יָדַיִם

Baruch ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav vitzivanu al n'tilat yadayim.

Blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with Your commandments, and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands.

HaMotzi

When we say HaMotzi, we are thanking G-d for bringing food from the earth to sustain us. On Juneteenth, we add on a layer of awareness that in our time, people are doing the backbreaking labor to create the challah we are blessing.

Traditional blessing

בָּרוּךְ אַתָּה יי, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם הַמוֹצִיא לֶחֶם מִן הָאָרֶץ.

Blessed are You Hashem our God King of the universe, Who brings out bread from the earth.

Baruch Atah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech Haolam, Hamotzi Lechem Min Ha'aretz.

Optional Blessing:

Blessed are you G-d, protector of the universe, we thank you for allowing us to be born into freedom. With our freedom we help others to be free.

Lifting our Voices

Interview with Uncle Billy McCrea, Jasper, Texas, 1940

John A. Lomax: What do you remember about the, when slavery was over?

Uncle Billy McCrea: When slavery was over, let me see if I can't tell you about that.

John A. Lomax: Well you said you, they all kept going, tell be about them coming through here with cannons.

Uncle Billy McCrea: Yes, yes. Now I'll tell you when slavery, way back in slavery time, I was standing at, that's when the Negro was free. I would, we all would go out every day, right here in town, to see the Yankees all going back home. I can recollect just as good. They'd just have, they'd have, uh, six and eight mules to a cannon, going through and bolts on them there, uh, uh cannon, cannon. Then they'd take the wagon, and have bolts all on them wagons. Now, walk, nothing but them mules, nothing but them mules, and one man a-riding, riding two mule, we all use to take a look at them. You understand? All day long be crossing, I remember just as well, and all the Yankees I recollect was blue, was dressed in blue clothes, I can remember it, with ??? blue junk right here, and had a little pin on, on the coat right there. In fact I'm, and course it was up here. You, yeah, I recollect just as well, day they come around, and they, black mules, have uh, maybe, oh I don't know how many black horses. Men they come along in with lot of these old gray mules, on it, hitched to them cannon, cannon. And then they come back with horses, sorrel horses. Horses to [unintelligible]. That way for two days, they was going out through Jasper, two day. And I remember and the Yankees stop here, and the Yankees stop right here on the courthouse square. I was a good size boy then. And then what they call Freedman Bureau, you hear tell of it ain't you? And they prosecuting people you know, what they do, you know, and all like that, and I mean just as hard as they could. I've seen two mens they had they were punishing for what they do. And I see them just take them. I, uh, uh, uh, had [unintelligible] a big tent. We, we boys would go out and see them, and they'd take them, hang them up by his thumb. And just let that-tip- [unintelligible] hang out so many men then let him down. That's the punishment they got. I recollect an old man that they had in town, an old dep, uh, sheriff. His name was Yankee White. And the man, the judge's name, I forgot his name. But anyhow I know you recollect Yankee White. That's when you was young. Well then they come, and my old master, old Col. M. he bought one, two of the horses from him. I recollect, I rode the horse a many a time. One of those big horse they

call Yankee Tom, big sorrel horse. And another big old horse was a saddle horse, old Col. M. bought, and he was called B[oston (?)]. He was a great big black horse. Now [unintelligible] he took them all down to the farm, I recollect all of that. I was a big, big boy then. A good big boy. And the Yankees had come, and after a while there'd be a whole troop of men come, they said they was Yankees. All walking, all walking. That crew of Yankees would go through. Next time you see, there come a whole troop of Yankees, all riding horses, big guns a-hanging on in there, and all like that you know. Yeah. We all would standing looking at them, all going home. And I said, I ask them, I said, I ask them, I say, "Mama, where they, where they going?" Said, "They all going home now." And old Col. M. that was our master, he was in there, and he say, "Well, Harriet, all of you niggas is all free now. Yankees all going home." I remember that just as well. Right, right in town where we living at. Right above the new, the new, uh, Post Office. That was my old, old master's home, right, uh, up, up above the old new Post Office. Well that is his square, from that Post Office clean down to the Citizen Bank. All that was his whole square there. And clean over to the old part, coming on up to, toward the Methodist Church. That was my old master's place. I can remember he was a speculator. I can remember it, I was good big boy then. He had a big old shed there. And he, and he had cotton all in that shed, and we boys would all go up and play in that shed everyday. And he had, a, had wagon, every, everyday he'd load up all them wagon and take all that cotton and go off, go off. Now you see, that, that was in slavery time. I recollect just as well, and he'd bring back whole lot the colored people. Old Col. M., they said he was a speculator. And he sell them to all these people around this country. There's lot of old people, they all dead now, what he brought there and sold. He'd go off and bring them in. I recall that my old, my old, my old papa was his wagoner. I used to go, he used to carry me with him all the time. Used to haul cotton, carry cotton from Jasper to Wise's Bluff. And, and carry it to Wise's Bluff, and they'd carry cotton over here and weigh it up at a place they call uh, forgot that place now. Carry cotton there and weigh it. I remember he used to be, he used to always work. I was good, big boy at the time, and he had a oxen, had a old, had a oxen, had a old oxen name Brandy. That how come he was his wagoner. He'd get tired and sit down. "Bill." "Yes sir." "Get on, that, get this whip and get on it." And I'd ride old Brandy. Ride old Brandy, drive the rest of them. Ride him, till I get tired and get down, then walk side of them. I been, I own it, I been through a heap [laughs] all that stuff. That, that was in slavery time, that was old slavery time, it was. And I remember I can tell you some more about slavery time. Right down, [mumbles], right down close to Miss, uh, M.'s place there was an old jail house there, old log jail house. Old log jail house was there. That, that's only, that's all, that's the, that's the way, and wasn't no, wasn't no court, wasn't no, uh, some king of courthouse, I recollect it.

And used to put prisoners in that jailhouse. And me, me and another young white fellow I believe his name C. M., [unintelligible]. And we used to go home to people that worked in the kitchen. We used to go home and steal bread and stuff and poke it through them little bars to the prisoners. We was boys. That's right here in Jasper. And it was an old log jailhouse. And all around [unintelligible]. And I recollect one time, we all was looking at it. And they, and they brought in, had hounds. And they brought them hound in and brought three niggas with them hound, runaway niggas, you know, caught in the wood. And they, right, right across, right at the creek there, they take them niggas and put them on, and put them on a log lay them down and fasten them. And whup them. You hear them niggas hollering and praying on them logs. And there was a nigga bring them in. Then they take them out down there and put them in jail.

Ruby T. Lomax: That'll be enough. [slight pause]

Uncle Billy McCrea: Now I see all of that I was a boy. [tape gets stuck and interview ends]

END OF SIDE A

[Interview with Billy McCrea | Library of Congress](#)

Giving Thanks

It is important that we take moments every day to express our gratitude for all that we have.

מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ שְׂאֲתָהּ הוּא ה' אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְאֱלֹהֵי אֲבוֹתֵינוּ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד צוּר חַיֵּינוּ מָגֵן יִשְׁעֵנוּ אַתָּה
הוּא לְדוֹר וָדוֹר
נוֹדֶה לָךְ וְנִסְפֵר תְּהִלָּתְךָ עַל חַיֵּינוּ הַמְּסוּרִים בְּיַדְךָ וְעַל נְשְׁמוֹתֵינוּ הַפְּקוּדוֹת לָךְ וְעַל נְסִיךְ שְׁבָכְל
יוֹם עִמָּנוּ וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְטוֹבוֹתֶיךָ שְׁבָכְל עֵת עֶרֶב וּבֹקֵר וְצַהֲרָיִם
הַטּוֹב כִּי לֹא כָלוּ רַחֲמֶיךָ וְהַמְּרַחֵם כִּי לֹא תָמוּ חַסְדֶיךָ
מֵעוֹלָם קִיֵּינוּ לָךְ

Modim anachnu lach sh'ata hu Adonai Eloheinu v'elohei avoteinu l'olam va'ed.
Tzur chayenu, magen yeshuateinu ata hu l'dor vador.

Nodeh lecha u'nesaper tehilatecha chayeinu hamesurim b'yadecha v'al
nishmoteinu ha'pekudot lach v'al nisecha shebechol yom imanu v'al niflotecha
v'tovotecha shebechol et: erev, vavoker, v'tzohorayim.

Hatov ki lo chalu rachamecha v'ham'rachem ki lo tamu chasadecha. Mei'olam
kivinu lach.

We give thanks to You that you are the Lord our God, and God of our ancestors
forever and ever, Rock of our lives and Shield of our salvation from generation
to generation.

We give thanks to you and recount your praises, for our lives that are entrusted
in your hand, and for our souls that are in your safekeeping, and for your
miracles that are with us every day, and for your wonders and good deeds that
are with us at all times: evening, morning, and midday.

Good One, your mercies never fail us, Compassionate One, your loving
kindness never ceases.

Still I Rise
By Maya Angelou

**You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.**

**Does my sassiness upset you?
Why are you beset with gloom?
'Cause I walk like I've got oil wells
Pumping in my living room.**

**Just like moons and like suns,
With the certainty of tides,
Just like hopes springing high,
Still I'll rise.**

**Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries?**

**Does my haughtiness offend you?
Don't you take it awful hard
'Cause I laugh like I've got gold mines
Diggin' in my own backyard.**

**You may shoot me with your words,
You may cut me with your eyes,
You may kill me with your
hatefulness,
But still, like air, I'll rise.**

**Does my sexiness upset you?
Does it come as a surprise
That I dance like I've got diamonds
At the meeting of my thighs?**

**Out of the huts of history's shame
I rise
Up from a past that's rooted in pain
I rise
I'm a black ocean, leaping and wide,
Welling and swelling I bear in the tide.**

**Leaving behind nights of terror and
fear
I rise
Into a daybreak that's wondrously
clear
I rise
Bringing the gifts that my ancestors
gave,
I am the dream and the hope of the
slave.
I rise
I rise
I rise.**

Festive Meal

Heather's mother shared the story of what Juneteenth meant to her as a child growing up in Texas. She recalled going to her grandmother's house and they would go to a picnic where they were served by White people. She said that even when she was a kid, she knew that the event meant a lot to the White people in her grandmother's town. She remembers the message being sent that it was their way of making up for their ancestors not freeing their slaves. When asked what she remembered eating, she emphatically said, "Texas BBQ of course!" that and Big Red.

We have included recipe cards of popular Juneteenth/Emancipation Day foods. Here are the traditional Juneteenth food categories you'll want to have at your meal:

- **Red Foods:** Strawberry soda, punch, hibiscus tea, red velvet cake, red beans and rice, hot sauce, fruits (strawberry, watermelon)
- **BBQ Foods:** Chicken, ribs, sausage, brisket, hot links with Texas BBQ Sauce
- **Foods of Prosperity:** Corn (symbolizes gold), cornbread, collard greens (bring good fortune), cabbage, Black-Eyed peas (represent wealth), potatoes, yams, sweet potatoes, tea biscuits, red velvet cake

These are some of the food items that help mark Juneteenth as a celebration of good luck. In "Juneteenth Food Traditions" Michael Twitty offers that "collard greens and sweet potatoes both offer historical context, as the foods were easy crops for the enslaved to harvest, store over the winter and prepare themselves at meal times." As different regions took Emancipation Day into their cultural practices, different local foods became staples. Some regions mark the holiday with fish fries and vegetarian friendly foods have been added to menus as well.

Resources for Further Conversation

Articles and Key Websites

- <https://www.juneteenth.com/> [link]
- [Pennsylvania Juneteenth Chapter](#) [link]
- [Juneteenth Food Traditions](#) [link]
- [Emancipation Proclamation](#) [link]

Books for Adults and Children

- "On Juneteenth" by Annette Gordon-Reed
- [20 Children's Books Celebrating Juneteenth](#) [link]
 - "The Story of Juneteenth" by Dorena Williamson
 - "Juneteenth for Mazie" by Floyd Cooper
 - "The History of Juneteenth: A History Book for New Readers" by Arlisha Norwood

Courses

- [Explore the Civil War's Long Term Impact](#) [link] (Columbia University)
- [The Civil War and Reconstruction Era, 1845-1877](#) [link] (Yale University)

Books on Black and Jewish Relations

- "Struggles in the Promised Land: Towards a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States" by Jack Salzman and Cornell West
- "Blacks and Jews in America: An Invitation to Dialogue" by Terrence L. Johnson and Jacques Berlinerblau

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