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JUNETEENTH

Milwaukee Juneteenth celebration, 1984. *Photo courtesy of Milwaukee Public Library and* Milwaukee Journal Sentinel.

Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865, when Union Army General Gordon Granger declared the enslaved people of Texas free. The Emancipation Proclamation had been in effect since 1863, and in January of that year, Union soldiers (many of them African American) marched into the South reading copies of the Emancipation Proclamation and declaring enslaved people legally free.

However, the Emancipation Proclamation was not observed or implemented in areas still under Confederate control; in many outlying areas, African Americans were still enslaved. In Galveston Bay, Texas, freedom finally came on June 19, 1865 when about 2,000 Union troops arrived and announced that more than 250,000 enslaved people were free by executive degree:

> *"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

In 1979, Texas became the first state to make Juneteenth a holiday. Now, 47 states and the District of Columbia recognize it as an official holiday or observance.

Learn more about Juneteenth celebrations happening in Milwaukee!
Visit organization pages, like **this one here**.