

PRIVATE: JUNETEENTH

On June 19, 1865, two months after the civil war ended, Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas to inform enslaved African-Americans of their freedom and that the Civil War had ended. This signaled that the Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Lincoln more than two years earlier on January 1, 1863 was finally a reality for hundreds of thousands of enslaved people. The powerful words of the June 19, 1865 order include, "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 hired laborer."

On June 19, we as a nation commemorate our enduring struggle for freedom and equality. This day marks the progress we have made but also reminds us of the important work we still have to do. Walker Wilcox acknowledges the historical significance of this day as one for reflection, unity and the rejection of racial discrimination at all levels.