

What are you doing to celebrate Juneteenth this year?

Although the majority of African Americans aren't enthusiastic participants, Juneteenth is worthy of contemplation and memorial. Juneteenth comes from a portmanteau of the words June and teenth and represents the legacy of injustices done Blacks in this country. It honors African-American heritage by commemorating the announcement of the abolition of slavery in Texas in 1865. Blacks across America should begin special activities on, or about June 19th each year. June 19, 1865 is the date when the last slaves in America were freed. Actual emancipation of American slaves did not come for a year and a half after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Juneteenth is a date for African Americans to recognize because it represents the chance for a new beginning. Unless we collectively expose the truth about the African-American slave experience, Americans won't be truly free.

Juneteenth represents remembering our history and moving to bring friends and neighbors together to ensure previous mistakes are not repeated and that everyone has an opportunity to succeed. We reflect on Juneteenth so that we can learn from each other and grow together.

The paramount issue is that African Americans start to unabashedly appreciate our contributions and constantly remind our heirs of the trillions of unpaid dollars earned by our ancestors. They made the largest national loan in history and financed the world's greatest power. Most of that "loaned money" is still in circulation today and the "Debt" is still alive and real. Slavery conjures up a host of negative images for Black people; so much so, we fail to realize the tremendous economic contributions we made to the development of the United States into a world power. This lack of realization stems from the national shame of slavery and the concomitant national denial. To a large degree Blacks and whites have bought into this denial. Through the shame of slavery African Americans continue to increase the "Debt" we are owed instead of steadfastly demanding payment.

Calculations of our ancestors' coerced and uncompensated labor totals more than \$7 trillion dollars in today's money. Yet, African Americans will continue yielding to the empty symbolism of re-electing Obama as president rather than rekindle the movement to be paid just reparations. Black Americans must never forget our ancestors' endurance of one of the worst experiences in human history. Blacks cannot forget or forgive the fact that every American has benefited from the wealth Blacks created through free labor and commemorating Juneteenth allows us to acknowledge that.

From the outset, we've been robbed. It's time we do for ourselves and not be browbeaten or deprived of having important discussions about racial issues that persist. The idea that the election of the first Black president would nullify racial grievances, bridge racial differences and erase racial animosities has faded and we still wrestle with the meaning and importance of race in politics. In reality, racial attitudes in politics have become more fraught with racial motives and political objectives as accusations and denials of racism and reverse racism serve as a subterfuge of resentment and prejudice.

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Let's start a tradition of Juneteenth empowerment. Annually, we need to come together so that we can include celebrations of enunciated public readings of the Emancipation Proclamation. These should be congratulatory and festive events. African Americans can use this opportunity to retrace roots to ancestors who were held in illegal bondage, as we exchange artifacts and stress responsibility to strive to be the best that we can be. Juneteenth celebrations also include a wide range of festivities to celebrate American heritage such as parades, rodeos, street fairs, cookouts, family reunions, or park parties that include African-American music and dancing or contests of physical strength and intellect. Events may include Black Cowboy historical reenactments or Miss Juneteenth contests. Traditional American sports such as baseball, basketball or football tournaments may also be played. For information on Juneteenth and ways Blacks can coalesce around the concept of real equity in American society, contact Dr. Ronald V. Myers, Sr. via: e-mail JuneteenthDOC@yahoo.com, or www.NationalJuneteenth.com.

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