

Juneteenth: A Spotlight on Justice and Equality

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"On June 19, 1865, Union troops arrived in Galveston, Texas, with the news that more than 250,000 enslaved Black people in the state were free."^[1] This day became known as Freedom Day and now is referred to as Juneteenth. Juneteenth is significant in the Black community because more than two years prior to this date, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, abolishing slavery and ending the use of Black individuals as chattel property in the United States. Thus, Juneteenth is celebrated to commemorate the end of a painful era and the beginning of a new age filled with hope and new possibilities.

As the members of my community are awakening to the brilliance of their ancestry marred by both struggle and strength, it has been a pleasure to watch joy fill the hearts of many as we prepare to celebrate Juneteenth. Juneteenth is not solely a day to take off from work, but it is a day of celebration of all things Black: Black music, Black art, Black brilliance and Black innovation because though our story consists of colonization and oppression, it does not end there. Our story as a community is continuing to evolve, push and create what we characterize as American culture.

As one of the two percent of Black female lawyers in the US, my celebration of Juneteenth is an act of activism and social justice because to live in joy and peace is to refute the current narrative of Black American life in our nation. I believe that as a community, joy and peace are one of our weapons; they are the things we wield in our hands in the face of racism, discrimination and micro-aggressions. One of my heroes, Dr. Charles Hamilton Houston, once said, "A lawyer's either a social engineer or a parasite on society..." As members of the legal community, I believe that we have been given the privilege to be social engineers, to educate ourselves and to uplift diverse and marginalized communities, and we do so by acknowledging their pain but also celebrating their triumphs and contributing to their joy. Juneteenth allows us to do just that: to listen, learn, recognize, contribute to and join in on experiencing the joy within the Black community.

So, how can you actively get involved [during] Juneteenth? Here are several ways you can celebrate with the Black community:

- Patronize Black businesses and buy Black-owned-crafted goods.
- Support Black art: Whether it's film, music or other forms, enjoy what Black artists have created worldwide.
- Attend Black community events, such as festivals, cultural experiences, food tours, etc. Some of the best dialogues happen at a dinner table, so do not be afraid to go out of your comfort zone.
- Read literary texts by Black authors, scholars and visionaries, choosing to educate yourself about the Black community and its history.
- Address biases, stereotypes and/or negative thoughts you may have

about Black people or the Black community. Juneteenth is all about liberation, celebration and the acknowledgment of the truth.

- Be a true ally and acknowledge Black individuals in your sphere of influence, taking the time to get to know them, their families and the things they hold dear.

Liberation is for all, including those with different complexions and hues. Thus, I hope that as we celebrate, listen and learn from one another this Juneteenth, we will be inspired to admire the resilience of a people who, against all odds, continue to push forward for justice and equality.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Attorney [Simone Holloway](#) handles real estate law in MGC's Greenville office. Holloway earned a Juris Doctor from the University of South Carolina School of Law and a Bachelor of Arts from Furman University. She is a member of the South Carolina Bar and serves on the organization's Pro Bono Committee. Holloway is also a member of [Belong @ MGC](#), one of the firm's DEI-focused committees with the goal of fostering an internal culture where talented individuals from all backgrounds and experiences are recruited, empowered, included, respected and rewarded.

[1] National Museum of African American History and Culture, www.nmaahc.si.edu/juneteenth