

This year, Juneteenth is now a recognized Massachusetts state holiday. For myself and CPCS, I hope that we grow to see this achievement, not simply as another day off, but a time for reflection on the cruelty of slavery and its final, formal demise through the late notice of freedom given to Black people who remained in bondage, two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863.

It is fitting that this month, agency leadership is in the midst of anti-racism training, a building block to similar training for all staff later this year, which will firm up the ability of all of us at CPCS to understand, respect, embrace and advocate for each other as equals.

Our colleague, Kisha Jones, CAFL Supervising Attorney in Springfield, born and raised in that great Western Massachusetts community, has kindly shared her experience and thoughts regarding Juneteenth, to help us think about and honor a people who experienced this unique moment in American history.

As with most things, my community is divided in their observance of this event. I grew up participating in the symbolic celebrations of this day. Attending church services and celebrations to mark the event - paying homage to our ancestors who had their bondage extended due to lack of central communication and let us all admit the malfeasance of white people who simply did not tell them they were no longer slaves.

In celebrating the day, we celebrated our achievements as a people. We noted how over all odds in the face of horrific subjugation we continued to not only survive, but at times thrive.

We celebrated the achievements stolen from us due to being enslaved, where the slave masters held all patents and took all credit for the inventions and labor of our ancestors.

We acknowledged that the existence of this holiday is a reminder to our family and friends that there existed and continues to exist those who do their best to not allow us as a people to thrive on the basis of envy and hatred due to nothing more than our race.

We were taught our history, the many Black Wall Streets that existed and were destroyed. The inventions and initiatives we created but were denied deserved recognition for our contributions at the time. The kingdoms in Africa of the past and their achievements. We learned about the Black Panthers who initiated and implemented the Free Breakfast for School Children Program that exists today as free lunch in public schools.

In my family, the day was used to counter negative propaganda and to educate the children about who we are and uplift them. We were taught that the lie of American slavery was the inferiority of a people due to race. We were taught the economics of the institution. We would discuss how could we be lazy and dumb when during slavery we were relied upon to do all the work and how ridiculous it was for anyone to let dumb lazy people run their economy. We learned that propaganda was nothing more than mind control to allow others to use us for their own economic benefit.

As I have grown older and my focus shifts to work and immediate needs of family, I did not reflect much on Juneteenth. With the events of the past few years and the passage of this date as a holiday I find myself slowly giving in to the hope that this Country is making progress toward a more a racially accepting society. So, perhaps the designation of this state holiday,

although symbolic, is a reflection of the possibility that this country and its citizens can grow in their understanding and acceptance of each other.

The designation of this day as a holiday is a reminder to all of us seeking change that it can happen and to remain vigilant and persistent in working toward the changes we want to see. It reminds me that we have allies in other races and that although they should not lead the fight their participation is valuable and can be embraced.

These open and deeply felt thoughts can help to carry us through this first official Massachusetts Juneteenth holiday, thinking about each of us can better share in uplifting Black people to the place they have so steadfastly earned and deserved, yet continue to be denied. Equality means more than an opportunity – it means owning up to history, seeing the damage of the past and taking steps to make up for what has been lost, and all there is to be gained. Equality across the Black community is necessary for the United States to finally live true to the founding principles of democracy.

Please enjoy a well-deserved Juneteenth and help make this day an essential feature in the American calendar and all of our lives. Happy Juneteenth!

Juneteenth Events to Consider

Juneteenth

Google Listing of Juneteenth events - statewide

<https://www.google.com/search?q=juneteenth+events+massachusetts&oq=juneteenth+events+massachusetts&aqs=chrome..69i57.6676j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8&ibp=htl;events&rciv=evn&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwjy9P475nxAhUBTN8KHZscBdAQ8eoFKAJ6BAglEA8&sxrf=ALeKk02QqmvHNUXwQJeIEl5ZSLvp7nJynQ:1623768205428#htivrt=events&htidocid=L2F1dGhvcml0eS9ob3Jpem9uL2NsdXN0ZXJlZF9ldmVudC8yMDIxLTA2LTE5fDE0NjU5MzExNTkyNTYzMDkwMzcz&fpstate=tldetail>

Boston Area Juneteenth Links and Events

<https://www.bostonusa.com/events/holidays/juneteenth/>

Regional Juneteenth events – Providence Journal

<https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/2021/06/11/juneteenth-celebrations-massachusetts-rhode-island-new-hampshire-connecticut-maine-1865-end-slavery/7526866002/>

Museum of Fine Arts (which has had a rocky history on race – they are trying to do better)

<https://www.mfa.org/event/community-celebrations/juneteenth>

Select Boston Events

<https://www.wbur.org/artery/2020/06/18/juneteenth-events-happening-in-boston-this-weekend>