



“Juneteenth is a moment where we step back and try to understand the Civil War through the eyes of enslaved people.” -Karlos Hill

This time of year, First Pres recognizes the holiday known as Juneteenth. You may be aware that Juneteenth became a federal holiday on June 17, 2021. All 50 states and the District of Columbia now recognize Juneteenth as a holiday or observance, and, as of June 2024, at least 28 states, including Illinois, have designated Juneteenth as a permanent paid and/or legal holiday.

What is Juneteenth all about?

Juneteenth is a holiday that honors the emancipation of enslaved African Americans in the United States. The name “Juneteenth,” you may have surmised, is a blend of two words: “June” and “nineteenth.” It's also known as Freedom Day, Jubilee Day, and Emancipation Day.

On June 19, 1865, the enslaved people of Galveston, Texas, finally received the news they were free when federal troops arrived to assume control of the state and enforce President Lincoln’s Emancipation Proclamation guaranteeing that all enslaved residents were freed. The announcement happened two years after Lincoln’s proclamation, one year after the Senate passed the 13th Amendment (abolishing slavery) and about two months after the end of the Civil War.

Juneteenth is believed to be the oldest African-American holiday, with annual celebrations in different parts of the country dating back to 1866. Early celebrations involved prayer and family gatherings and later included annual pilgrimages to Galveston by former enslaved people and their families, according to Juneteenth.com. Today, in addition to recognizing the end of slavery in this country, many use the holiday to celebrate African-American culture—from backyard family barbeques to larger community events such as parades and festivals.

Why is it important for us to learn about and acknowledge Juneteenth?

While it can be a difficult topic for us to tackle, Karlos Hill, a professor of African-American studies at the University of Oklahoma says it well: “As a nation, as a collective, we’ve never really acknowledged the 250-plus years of slavery, and the depth of it, and the trauma it caused and the wealth it created. We haven’t really had an accounting for that. Can you imagine 9/11 happening and there not being a recognition, a ritual, a moment where we step back and take an accounting of what happened on that day? Where we think about who it happened to and the trauma that it caused and how people have dealt with its wake, and how we’re still dealing with it? Can you imagine that not happening?” he asked. “Think about how that one day had this tremendous ripple effect — it changed how we did everything in this country. Now look at 250 years of slavery, and all that is bound up and connected in that. We have done almost nothing as a nation to deal with that. ...with things like a national Juneteenth holiday, we can begin to really acknowledge and address all of the issues, past and present, tied up in this issue of slavery,” he said.

What can we do to respectfully acknowledge Juneteenth?

Learn about the history of Juneteenth and how it came to be.

- Check out www.Juneteenth.com
- Short article by New Hampshire Public Radio: **Juneteenth is a Jubilant Celebration — And a Sacred Lament** - <https://www.nhpr.org/2022-06-19/juneteenth-is-a-jubilant-celebration-and-a-sacred-lament>
- Vox article featuring a very informative 7-minute video - **"Why Celebrating Juneteenth is More Important Now Than Ever"**: <https://www.vox.com/identities/2018/6/19/17476482/juneteenth-holiday-emancipation-african-american-celebration-history>

- A 6-minute YouTube video from CBS This Morning, June 2022 - "What is the Significance & History of Juneteenth" with Henry Louis Gates: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6unHgUZ6IA>
- A 3-minute story from NPR-WBEZ from June 2022 - "How to Properly Celebrate Juneteenth in the Age of Commercialization": <https://www.npr.org/2022/06/20/1106193407/celebrate-juneteenth-the-right-way>
- Episode of CodeSwitch, a 31 minute podcast by NPR from June 2022 - "A Taste of Freedom" <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2021/06/15/1006735929/a-taste-of-freedom>

Give to a local Black organization or charity that serves the needs of African Americans.

Educate ourselves on the origins of Black culture in America, including its appropriation and oppression.

- Help uncover the stories and celebrations of African Americans in Texas after the Civil War by helping transcribe Freedman's Bureau records. For details visit <https://transcription.si.edu/instructions-freedmens-bureau>

Attend a Juneteenth celebration to which you are invited or find one that is open to the public. Here are public events and opportunities in Lake County & surrounding areas all this week:

- **Juneteenth Community Unity—June 14, 2025, 1-5pm at Oakton Park, 5215 Oakton St., Skokie** This drop-in celebration features activities and performances for all ages at Oakton Park. <https://skokie.libnet.info/event/13163063>
- **24th Annual Juneteenth Celebration —June 14, 2025, 2:30-6:30pm at Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Park, 51 N. Farnsworth Ave., Aurora.** Hosted by African American Men of Unity, this free event includes live music, poetry, storytelling, Black history tributes, double Dutch, food and craft vendors, games, prizes, 3-on-3 basketball and more. <https://www.facebook.com/AuroraAAHAB/>
- **Juneteenth Celebration -- June 16, 2025, 6-8pm at Cary Area Public Library meeting room, 1606 Three Oaks Road, Cary.** This free event includes music, food samplings and community. <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/juneteenth-celebration-tickets-1368622860819?aff=ebdssbdestsearch>
- **Bolingbrook Juneteenth Music Festival -- June 18, 2025, 4-9pm, behind Town Center, 375 W. Briarcliff Road, Bolingbrook.** Free event with music by Fernando Jones Trio and The Hurricane Project. Silent disco, kids' tents with arts and crafts, spades tournament with prizes, food trucks and local food. Community marketplace featuring Black-owned and local businesses, free health and wellness services, giveaways. www.bolingbrook.gov
- **Teen Space Tuesday: Juneteenth Celebration—June 17, 2025, 1-3 pm at Zion-Benton Public Library, 2400 Gabriel Avenue, Zion—** Learn about & celebrate Juneteenth. For teens grades 6th – 12th grade. Food and activities. <https://zblibrary.libnet.info/event/13587052#branch>
- **Juneteenth Journey 2025—Wednesday, June 19, 2025, 10am-12pm, Boards at Haines House Bowen Park, 1917 N. Sheridan Rd., Waukegan —** Bus tour exploring Waukegan's rich Black history, highlighting the influential people and places that laid the foundation of the community. Discover remarkable individuals whose stories, although perhaps unfamiliar, have significantly shaped local history and culture. Registration: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/juneteenth-journey-waukegan-tickets-908782772737>
- **American Girl: Juneteenth—Addy's Journey to Freedom— June 19, 2025, 12:30-1:30pm at Cook Memorial Library, 413 N. Milwaukee Ave., Libertyville —** Special outdoor picnic to celebrate Juneteenth. Bring a sack lunch and hear the amazing story of Addy and her mom on their escape to freedom. Register: <https://cooklib.libnet.info/events?n=90&r=days>
- **Juneteenth: A Celebration of Freedom Walk—Thursday, June 19, 2025, 5-7pm, Grayslake Area Public Library,**

100 Library Ln, Grayslake— Bus tour exploring Waukegan's rich Black history, highlighting the influential people and places that laid the foundation of the community. Discover remarkable individuals whose stories, although perhaps unfamiliar, have significantly shaped local history and culture.

<https://grayslake.librarycalendar.com/event/juneteenth-celebration-freedom-walk-27983>

- **Seeking Freedom: The True Story of Sara Lucy Bagby & the Fugitive Slave Act—June 19, 2025, 6:30 pm** Lake Bluff Library presents a free virtual Zoom event celebrating Black American history. The powerful story of Sara Lucy Bagby and her flight from slavery to freedom will be portrayed by Robin Pease of Women in History. Event URL will be sent via the registration email. <https://lakeblufflibrary.libcal.com/event/14478130>
- **Gospel Celebration “Lift Ev’ry Voice”-- June 19, 2025 6-8pm. at Gail Borden Public Library Outdoor Stage, 270 N. Grove Ave., Elgin.** Elgin Symphony Orchestra Brass Quintet and local gospel church choirs come together in song and spirit to celebrate Juneteenth with a free concert. Bring blankets, lawn chairs and picnic dinners. Food trucks on site. <https://elginil.gov/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=2799>
- **Juneteenth Lake County Parade & Festival—Saturday, June 21, 2025, 1:00pm in Waukegan—(Washington St. from Jackson to Sheridan)** — Experience the Mobile Museum of Tolerance bus, featuring information on the Civil Rights Movement. Parade features the Elite Striders Drill Team & Drum Corps, South Shore Drill Team, local school marching bands, low riders, motorcycles, Mr. and Ms. Juneteenth and more. <https://www.facebook.com/events/s/juneteenth-lake-county-parade-/631327493187227/>
- **Juneteenth in the Burbs: A Freedom Celebration — June 21, 2025, 2-6pm at Harper College Ender Pavilion, 1200 W. Algonquin Rd., Palatine Rd.**— Event features a live jazz band, youth talent showcase, indoor Freedom Exhibit, free books written by Black authors, free food, human foosball, poetry, and opportunities to engage with Black-owned professionals and businesses. <https://www.icu-community.org/community>
- **McHenry County Juneteenth Celebration: June 21, 2025, 3-5:30pm at Center for the Arts, 690 S. Eastwood Drive, Woodstock.** Third annual celebration of freedom and unity. Free programs by Stev Walker and the Artistas Da Capoeira Woodstock troupe and the vocals of Darlene Benton. Learn about McHenry County’s connection to the Underground Railroad and enjoy catered soul food. Local exhibitors and activities for all ages. www.mchenrycountyjuneteenth.com
- **Juneteenth Road to Freedom Commemoration—June 22, 2025, 10:30am-12:30pm at First United Methodist Church, 232 S. York St., Elmhurst.** Southern comfort food from Aunt Tina’s Kitchen, music by the Evon Sams jazz combo and a community service project. Guest speaker: Jahmal Cole, founder and CEO of My Block My Hood My City. Silent auction for homemade Underground Railroad themed-quilts and quilt art. All proceeds go to My Block My Hood My City. <https://umcelmhurst.org/events/category/connect/day/2025-06-22/>
- **Famous Black Composers Concert—June 22, 2025, 12:30-1:30pm at Lords Park Zoo, 325 Hiawatha Drive, Elgin.** Juneteenth Week concert by the Octavio Serrano Quartet. <https://elginil.gov/DocumentCenter/View/78116/May-August-2025-Activity-Guide?bidId=>

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