

Juneteenth: How to Celebrate and Educate



Just learning about Juneteenth? Learn and honor the real racial history

This has been a very tough few weeks. Between this past weekend's racially motivated mass shooting targeting people of color and the *Rowe v. Wade* leak that, if reversed, would **disproportionately affect communities of color...** **now** is the time for organizations to show deep commitment to DEI. These are human issues that are deeply impacting your colleagues and employees. They are not leaving this behind when they login to work each day. Juneteenth is taking place about one month from today, so let's collectively pause to think about how we plan to engage during this holiday on a personal and professional level. Are you an aspiring ally just learning about Juneteenth? Ask yourself the hard questions and dig into why that is. Let's learn and work to honor this real racial history.

Juneteenth commemorates June 19, 1865 when the U.S. federal government finally reached Galveston, Texas to enforce Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation. This was two years after it was signed. For two years, 250,000 Black people remained enslaved there, unknowingly, as free folks.

Let that sink in. Two years.

Today is the two-year anniversary of the murder of George Floyd and very little has changed since. Sure we have greater understanding of Juneteenth, but police reform has been stagnant at best. **Black people are still disproportionately fatally shot by police than other racial groups**, less white folks are supportive of the **black lives matter movement**, and the S&P 500 still has only 5 total Black CEOs and very little representation in C-Suites.

Is your organization recognizing Juneteenth?

It is estimated that **fewer than 10% of US workers get the day paid off**, and even fewer observe it. Because it falls on a Sunday this year, companies are conflicted about which day to give employees off and many are electing to make it a floating holiday. Compare that to Independence Day, where 90% or more workers have the day off and about 30% have Martin Luther King Jr. Day off. These statistics illustrate a sad acceptance of what's really important to organizations. If DEI is important, holidays like MLK Day and Juneteenth are important.

Last year, about 460 companies in the US gave their employees the day off according to **USA Today**. The number is expected to rise this year, but it is worth celebrating these organizations for stepping up as allies. In an increasingly tough labor market where employees are in charge and employers are struggling to find talent, let alone diverse talent, this is a competitive advantage.

Job openings in the US are at a record high. This means organizations need to be providing more benefits, more reasons why employees should work there. Let's not forget that **toxic workplace culture** is the

number one reason people have cited for leaving their workplaces over the past year. At the top of the list and reasons for toxic culture is the *lack of respect and inclusion*. What better way to signal you want to be inclusive than honoring this important holiday.

Honoring our real racial history and showing you want to be more inclusive by celebrating this important and long overlooked holiday is smart. It's not just smart to honor the humans in your workplace that want to feel included and recognized, it's also smart for business. It gives you an advantage over your competition. It makes you more relevant to a broader consumer base. Recognizing this holiday signals real action beyond the words and declarations of justice your organization might have made surrounding this holiday in the summer of 2020.

This Juneteenth, *celebrate and educate*

For Black and Brown folks, Juneteenth has long been of great significance and for many is considered the true day of emancipation of enslaved African Americans. Many have celebrated this holiday and honored the real racial history for some time. For White folks, this was something many likely learned in the summer of 2020 or are just now learning about as it hits the news cycle more and more.

If you're one of the lucky folks that have Juneteenth off, celebrate and educate. Take time to share resources and learnings with people in your family and friends or find someone you can be an ally to, and show your support. It's more than just putting a sign in your yard or sharing social media posts, it's about real action.

Ideas to celebrate and educate around Juneteenth this year

- Learn more about this holiday with [resources](#) from the National Museum of African American History & Culture and beyond.
- [Join the #hellajuneteenth movement](#)
- [Find a Black History Museum](#) near you to visit and donate to.
- Research whether your local community or local university is having a Juneteenth celebration – check out volunteer opportunities or attend to support.
- Support Black owned businesses in your community or abroad (and continue year round!).
- Check out our extensive [resources list](#) for ideas for films, books, and podcasts to do some deeper anti-racism and allyship self-education.

Honoring and accepting our troubling racial past is an opportunity to get better and not accept the status quo. Mediocre changes have happened over the last two years. Active allies do hard things, they:

- Advocate for others.
- Amplify the voices of others.
- Ask their organizations what they're doing to drive real diversity?
 - How are they measuring improvements in diversity and inclusion?
 - What inclusive behaviors are they holding people accountable for?
 - What are they doing to support DEI year round?