

YWCA Alaska

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Juneteenth Resources

For Juneteenth and Beyond

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Content Warning: The resources provided and linked here contain strong and graphic language about violence against Black people in the United States through slavery, racism, and anti-Blackness.

This resource guide is meant to provide a starting point for deeper reflection and learning about major events in Juneteenth's history as well as the larger Black history and culture in the United States.

It is important to remember that Juneteenth [commemorates the announcement of the Emancipation Proclamation in Galveston Bay, Texas, on June 19th, 1865, more than two years after it was initially issued](#). The Emancipation Proclamation announced that enslaved people in Confederate territories not yet under Union control were free. However, it could not be enforced or widespread until those territories were actually under Union control, which is what occurred in Texas on that day.

The Emancipation Proclamation was fundamentally limited. The Emancipation Proclamation still permitted [slavery in the Union border states of Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, and Kentucky, as well as in Confederate territories already held in the Union at the time of the Proclamation](#). A full end to slavery nationwide did not occur until the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution in December 1865.

Questions to reflect on:

How familiar was I with Juneteenth before learning from these resources? Why?

What are continuing issues affecting the Black community? How much do I see them in my daily life? Why am I exposed to them (or not?)

What new information have I gained here and how has it shifted my perspective on Black history and culture in America?

What can I learn from the concept of "Black Joy?" How do I use joy as a tool for resistance and resilience?

What does a deeper commitment to these issues look like for me? Examples include donating time or money to organizations, political activism, further education, or having thoughtful conversations with others.

Where is my place in this issue? What am I responsible to and for? How do I play a role in perpetuating the issues, as well as breaking them down?

How can I use what's available to me to commit myself more deeply? What's accessible and what do I need to do more work to acquire in my social justice journey?

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["Juneteenth, Explained" by Fabiola Cineas, Vox](#)

An introduction to the holiday Juneteenth, including the historical significance of the holiday, the waves of anti-Black legislation in the "Reconstruction" and "Jim Crow" eras of American history (roughly 1863 to the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960s,) and the meaning of the day to Black Americans and society at large.

["Juneteenth Reading List," Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture](#)

A recommended reading list by the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture includes poetry, biography, realistic fiction, and important pieces on Black history and culture for all age groups.

["Worse than Slavery": Parchman Farm and the Ordeal of Jim Crow Justice by David M. Oshinsky, Simon & Schuster](#)

An important exemption in the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution was that it banned slavery and involuntary servitude ["...except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted"](#).

This exception formed the basis of ["convict leasing," where individuals could buy labor done by imprisoned people from the state. Prisoners, who were overwhelmingly Black, were not entitled to any compensation for their labor in dangerous and inhumane work conditions, while states \(that often passed laws explicitly meant to imprison Black people\) profited.](#)

This book details the hazardous and deadly working and living conditions of the Mississippi State Penitentiary in Parchman, Mississippi, which replaced the convict leasing system in the state. Oshinsky contextualizes the Penitentiary in the larger systems of convict leasing, Jim Crow legislation, and explicit and deadly racism and anti-Black violence that influenced its creation and traumatizing effects on prisoners.

["Inside Mississippi's Notorious Parchman Prison" by Hannah Grabenstein, PBS NewsHour](#)

This article further details the history and living conditions inside the Mississippi State Penitentiary (MSP) in Parchman, Mississippi, which once held the infamous Parchman Farm. Grabenstein provides an update on the developments made within the Penitentiary in recent decades from lawsuits, investigations, and court orders, as well as progress that still needs to be made at the prison. [To this day.](#)

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[prisoners at MSP provide over 100,000 hours of free labor per year to adjacent municipalities, counties, and state agencies.](#)

["Why Black Joy on Juneteenth is an Act of Resistance Against Racism" by Kiara Alfonseca, ABC News](#)

Amidst the violence and difficulties of systemic racism and oppression, an important component of Juneteenth is the uplifting and celebration of Black joy. ["Black joy," defined by Elaine Nichols of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, is "...finding the positive nourishment within others that is a safe and healing place."](#) Imagining a world that uplifts and celebrates Blackness, rooted in hope, celebration, and affirmation, is both resistance and healing resilience. This article speaks about the power of Black joy in resistance and the role it plays in the holiday of Juneteenth.

["Three Artists Explain and Visualize What Black Joy Means to Them," American Civil Liberties Union](#)

This collection of short videos and visuals is supported by interviews with Black artists discussing their pieces, which represent their definition of Black joy.

["Historically Speaking: Black Joy - A Conversation with Tracey Lewis-Giggetts," Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture](#)

This conversation between Michel Martin of National Public Radio (NPR) and author Tracey Lewis-Giggetts, who published the book [Black Joy: Stories of Resistance, Resilience, and Restoration](#), discusses the nuances of this concept and its power.

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