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**JUNETEENTH. *The beginning of family reunions.***

Valley Forge, PA June 14, 2022. On June 17, 2021, President Biden signed into law the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, commemorating the end of slavery on June 19, 1865 in *all* states, including those under Confederate control (like Texas) which did not comply with the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. This Act made June 19, celebrated independently by many Blacks for 158 years, a federal holiday.

“Juneteenth” is a phrase coined by its original celebrants. For the 2022 celebration, the Nation has the opportunity to not only reflect upon our history and the 620,000 lives lost in the war to free slaves, but the devastating cost to Black families systematically dismantled during slavery. It has been said, *“To remember where you come from is part of where you’re going”*. But when you don’t know where you come from—as is the case for many enslaved descendants—the path to making a family whole can be a bittersweet journey. *“Slavery in this country disrupted the family structure, particularly since slavery allowed for no legal marriage, no legal family and no legal control over the children,”* according to Dr. Ione Vargus, founder of the Family Reunion Institute (FRI), Dean Emerita of the Temple University School of Social Work, and author of [Black Family Reunions, Finding the Rest of Me](#). *“As soon as slavery ended, women and men went about trying to put the family back together. The stories of the formerly enslaved trying to locate their families after the original Juneteenth is inspiring, to say the least. And many of these stories are told at family reunions, along with stories of hopeful descendants who struggle to identify their family lineage.”*

FRI is dedicated to providing information, assistance and resources to help families reflect upon their history and resilience as well as reinforce bonds of love through reunions. Juneteenth, 1865 was the kickoff for Black family reunions that have become a vital part of American life today.

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