

Juneteenth marks our advances

It is 1865, Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee has surrendered, the Civil War is over and President Abraham Lincoln has been assassinated, yet the state of Texas still practices slavery. It is not until June 18 that Union Army Major Gen. Gordon Granger sails into Galveston to issue and enforce General Orders No. 3, which freed Texas slaves on June 19, 1865, 2 ½ years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued. It is the first day of absolute freedom in Texas.

Flash forward to the present, when we continue to reflect and celebrate this important time in history as Juneteenth, although many wonder why. I've also asked myself that question. It is clear that race continues to be a difficult topic of discussion in America. And some people tend to feel shame about slavery, and thus, Juneteenth. But as we remember the events that led up to the abolishment of slavery, we must look at who was really freed in 1865. Most think it was only blacks



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abuse they suffered as a result. And those who preferred to maintain the status quo for the sake of tranquility were absolved of their guilt. So, you see, the Emancipation Proclamation affected all Americans.

Today, people on both sides of the issue say they can't be held responsible for what their ancestors did or did not do. I agree. No one today should be held responsible for slavery. And no one, especially African Americans, should feel any shame because of it. Instead, as Texans, we should all embrace Juneteenth for its uniqueness and importance to all races.

As a result of efforts by Democratic State Rep. Al Edwards and former Republican Texas Gov. Bill Clements in 1979, Juneteenth was declared a state holiday in Texas. San Antonio has consistently had one of the largest

publisher and advocate of political, economic and social justice who was instrumental in the city's Juneteenth ceremonies until her death last year. Her legacy continues to be perpetuated through an endowed scholarship in communications at UTSA. This year, Dallas County District Attorney Craig Watkins, the first and only African American elected District Attorney in Texas, will speak at the scholarship dinner on June 19.

Let's all come together to commemorate this momentous occasion as we remember a unique Texas event in history. In addition to celebrating our past, Juneteenth allows us to measure how far we have come as a society. And even in this political season, it is a time to set aside our differences and resentments and celebrate our common interests and the advances our country has made.

We must teach our children about this unique Texas history. We must tell them how slavery occurred and how it came to end. And we must continuously work to break the chain of resentment and

who gained freedom back then, but, in a way, whites were also freed.

Those who believed that enslaving other human beings and treating them like chattel was humane were relieved of their ability to cause further oppression. Those who detested slavery and worked to end it were freed of the pain, hostility and

Juneteenth celebrations in the state, coming second only to Galveston in the early years of the event. This year, we will again mark the day with pageants, parades and festivals.

We will also use the occasion to honor the memory and works of the late Kathy Clay Little, a journalist, newspaper

shame.

Remembrance without resolve is hollow. Remembrance without action is useless. The history of slavery does not have to be an open wound. Let this be a call to action and challenge us to be a catalyst for continued positive change; as we take pride, reflect, and celebrate our past always appreciating what freedom means to all.