

## JUNETEENTH: A MOVE TOWARDS LIBERATION

History, with its facts and markers of freedom, does not reveal the anxious wait that took place for enslaved Africans between January 1, 1863, when the Emancipation Proclamation was signed, and June 19, 1865, the day that 250,000 enslaved Black people in Galveston, Texas finally received the news from many Black soldiers. The wait for freedom continued for six more months, which is when, on December 6, 1865 the Thirteenth Amendment was ratified. This Amendment purporting to abolish chattel slavery.

Freedom from slavery did not happen everywhere, and for those who were free, they were still not liberated. Take for example, the African American free man and abolitionist who was captured in Washington DC in 1841 and sold into slavery in Louisiana for 12 years. Solomon Northup's memoir was captured in the 2013 film, *12 Years a Slave*. Northup should never have been recaptured into a brutal system he supposedly had never been a part of, having been born to a free and formally enslaved person. He was not allowed to indulge in his own liberated life. Ana DuVernay's film *13th* is another example we can turn to which highlights the ways the language of the 13th Amendment was exploited to legalize slavery through the prison industrial complex. In an interview for NPR, DuVernay states her rationale behind making the film is, "*so that we don't make uninformed statements, that we can all work from a place of knowledge to try to get to a place where we just do better as Americans.*"



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Although chattel slavery was “legal” in the south in the 1860s, it was illegal to bring new arrivals from Africa and enslave them. That did not stop a white man in Mobile, Alabama who commissioned the Clotilda ship to kidnap captives from Africa and force them onto his land. The story written by Zora Neale Hurston, *Barracoon: The Story of the Last Black Cargo*, is the story of Oluale Kossula, (his captives named him Cudjo Lewis). Kossula was one of the last survivors of the 110 people kidnapped from Benin, Africa. Hurston’s manuscript would have been published in the 1930s, but it remained unpublished for 87 years because she was worried the essence of the narration would be whitewashed. The 2022 films *Descendant* and the film *Woman King* have popularized this past for our continued learning and unlearning.

159 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, and people everywhere are still yearning for, fighting for, or even dying for the right to live a liberated life.

[NMAAHC THE HISTORICAL  
LEGACY OF JUNETEENTH](#)

[JUNETEENTH LEGACY  
PROJECT](#)

[SOLOMON NORTHUP IN  
LOUISIANA](#)

[12 YEARS A SLAVE \(2013\)](#)



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“For to be free is not merely to cast off one's chains, but to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others.”

~ Nelson Mandela ~

Nelson Mandela’s words are a call to action - a call to re-learn truths that were hidden from our collective schooling. It is a call to hold hope for a more liberated world. We are here, each of us, as testimony to the efforts of our collective ancestors.

Today, in many areas of our lives, we see and feel the successes that come from building healthy, thriving, and joyful communities. We collectively benefit from human diversity in our homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, schools, and friendship circles. We celebrate the triumphs of representation in local and federal government, in the C-suites of many organizations, and in the leadership each of us take. On a timeline from December 6, 1865 to June 19th, 2024 we can all mark moments where we felt the most free, the most liberated, and the most joyful because of it. This is the ideal home, work, and social environment.

**Striving for it takes work, and it is work we are all capable of doing.**

[NMAAHC BARACOON: STORY OF THE LAST BLACK CARGO](#)

[DESCENDANT \(2022\)](#)

[13TH \(2016\)](#)

[WOMAN KING \(2022\)](#)

