

# JUNETEENTH – CELEBRATING EVERYBODY'S FREEDOM

A year ago, President Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, which made June 19 a permanent national holiday—a second Independence Day, this one acknowledging that African Americans are free and independent just like everyone else in America whose freedom was recognized by the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 1776. The freedom of people formerly held in slavery in the South was formally acknowledged on June 19, 1865—Juneteenth—with the signing of General Order No. 3 by the Union Army at Galveston, Texas.



As we are learning even today, freedom must never be taken for granted, so Juneteenth, like Independence Day, should be celebrated every year and not merely with fireworks and partying but by serious reflection on what it means to be free and what it meant not to be free. For many Americans today, much of that freedom came within their lifetimes.

So it was that Boys, Girls, Adults Community Development Center celebrated its first Juneteenth on June 20, with some partying and fun but also by serious reflection with the community's young people on what Juneteenth in 1865 meant for people then and all the steps that have occurred since then to make the freedom promised on that Juneteenth a true reality for everyone. BGACDC partnered with two individuals in the Marvell community, Jesselia Maples and LaPearl Shelby, to develop a true educational experience for youngsters. Shakina Gates, Lois Bowdry, KenTonya Cox, Anita Harrison, and Latina Taylor shared with the community the importance of Juneteenth and its impact on American history.

It was essential to have the Marvell-Elaine community included in this traditional experience and be educated on its significance and why it should be celebrated. After the speakers, the event concluded as everyone came together for fellowship and to play games. We had food and a bouncy house for the children and parents to enjoy.