JUNETEENTH

Act 215 of 2023

AN ACT to designate June 19 of each year as Juneteenth.

History: 2023, Act 215, Eff. Feb. 13, 2024

The People of the State of Michigan enact:

435.381 Juneteenth.

Sec. 1.

(1) The legislature recognizes that slavery existed in American history for more than 200 years. Millions of African-Americans were brought to the Americas as slaves stacked in the bottom of slave ships in a 5- to 12-week journey across the Atlantic Ocean known as the "Middle Passage". Although approximately 11,500,000 African-Americans survived the voyage across the ocean, the number of those who died in the inhuman conditions of the passage is probably even higher. Once in the United States, the slaves were subjected to whipping, castration, branding, and rape. The legislature further observes that President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation was issued on January 1, 1863 and declared that all slaves in Confederate-controlled areas were free. In the following months, spontaneous celebrations erupted throughout the United States as African-Americans learned of their freedom. News of the Emancipation Proclamation reached the states at different times, and it was not until June 19, 1865 that the message of freedom reached the state of Texas. In honor of this great moment in United States history, the legislature declares that June 19 of each year shall be known as "Juneteenth".

(2) The legislature encourages each individual in this state to pause on Juneteenth and reflect on the strong survival instinct of the African-American slaves and the excitement and great joy with which African-Americans first celebrated the emancipation from slavery. It is a reminder to all Americans of the status and importance of Americans of African descent as American citizens.

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