



## It's Time to Revise the Curriculum; Let's Start By Adding Juneteenth

By Educator Barnes – June 15, 2020

When Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation, this marked the end of slavery in the United States ... that is what a lot of people learned in school. Honestly, it is more nuanced than that. The Emancipation Proclamation was issued to free enslaved Africans in the

Confederate states. Even if students learned that component, many of them, including me, did not learn about the rest of the story. They did not learn that it was over two and a half years later when enslaved Africans in Galveston, Texas would be told they were free. These Black men and women worked for free for two and half more years than they had to (and they never should've been enslaved at all) and many students never learned about this.

The enslaved Africans learned of their freedom on June 19, 1865. June 19 got smashed together into the word Juneteenth. This holiday is also known also Emancipation Day. This is the reason why some Black people do not celebrate or acknowledge July 4th. It is hard to celebrate and watch fireworks knowing your ancestors were enslaved. Although Laurie Halse Anderson is not a Black author, I recommend her Seeds of America trilogy: "Chains," "Forged," and "Ashes" which gives you the perspective of the American Revolution from enslaved Black youth.

"Liberty and justice for all" did not come for Black people when the Declaration of Independence was signed on July 4, 1776. It did not come when Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. It didn't come in Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865. It's still not here today in 2020! For Juneteenth 2020, I am challenging educators to emancipate themselves from this colonized curriculum that tells history through the lens of White people. For real change to happen in society, we have to change the way we are teaching our students, all students.

Unfortunately, with the social unrest and demands for justice after the murder of George Floyd, some educators only think they need to take action if they have Black students in their class or school. Even schools with no Black students need a liberated curriculum free from the grips of white supremacy and colonization. Those students may move to another city or town that is more diverse and become just like Amy Cooper threatened by the presence of a Black man. All educators must be engaged in this work.

Many educators use the summer as a time to prepare for the next school year. I am challenging teachers to go through their classroom libraries and evaluate the books that are on the shelves. Look through previous lesson plans. Is there a perspective missing? What is missing from the curriculum? What needs to be removed? All educators need to check themselves and their lesson plans. We all, including myself, can do and should do better.

If you are interested in taking that first step by adding Juneteenth to the curriculum, you can check out resources from the Indiana Department of Education. Reckon also provided

an [informative YouTube video](#) about Juneteenth. Black parents many times have the burden of teaching additional lessons at home. That's how my sons learned about Juneteenth. My sons have attended the Juneteenth celebration at the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art for a few years. Sidenote: even if you are not white, you can and should be an ally to the Black community. I am hoping for the day where I don't have to reteach history at home. I wanted a liberated, anti-racist, decolonized education for my children. This Juneteenth is a good time to start. We can get it right, so there are not more students learning as adults what they should have learned in school.