

**Freedom Came at Different Times:  
A Comparative Analysis of Emancipation Day  
and Juneteenth Celebrations**

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# **Freedom Came at Different Times: A Comparative Analysis of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth Celebrations**

**J. Vern Cromartie**

## **Abstract**

This paper presents a comparative analysis of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth celebrations within the United States of America. It discusses how emancipation came at different times in various places during the 19th century. This paper also addresses the contemporary celebration of Emancipation Day on January 1st each year in Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina; the contemporary celebration of Emancipation Day on April 16th each year in Washington, DC; and the contemporary celebration of Juneteenth on or near June 19th each year in Texas and California. In addition, it covers the implications of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth celebrations.

## **Introduction**

Between 1862 and 1865, many Black people in the United States of America (USA) managed to become free from bondage. The enslavement experience within the present borders of the USA started in 1526 and continued until 1865. The initial enslaved Black people were brought to this country to be part of a permanent settlement by the Spanish conquistador, namely Lucas Vazquez de Ayllon. The enslaved Africans rebelled against the Spaniards and fled to villages of local American Indians and became Maroons (Mooney, 1910; Aptheker, 1943/1974; P. Wood, 1974; Cook, 1992; Landers, 1999; Cromartie, 2011a, 2011b, 2013).

Thus, from the start of the peculiar institution in the USA, Black people were involved with a wide range of slave resistance activities, including the formation of Maroon communities. The slave activities also included killing White slaveholders, outlying, malingering, using the courts as a tool of liberation, and using the lobbying of politicians as a tool of liberation (Du Bois, 1896; Aptheker, 1943/1974; Franklin & Higginbotham, 1947/2011; Porter 1971, 1996; Franklin & Schweninger, 1999). Black people welcomed liberation from bondage with commemorative celebrations, including Emancipation Day on January 1st each year in Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina; Emancipation Day on April 16th each year in Washington, DC; and the celebration of Juneteenth on or near June 19th each year in Texas and California. Early accounts of those commemorative celebrations have been documented by Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1870), Susie King Taylor (1902), Charlotte Forten (1953), Frederick Douglass (1892/1962), and Isaac W.K. Handy (2013).

The purpose of this paper is to present a comparative analysis of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth celebrations within the United States of America. It will discuss how emancipation came at different times in various places during the 19th century. This paper will also address the contemporary celebration of Emancipation Day on January 1st

each year in Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina; the contemporary celebration of Emancipation Day on April 16th each year in Washington, DC; and the contemporary celebration of Juneteenth on or near June 19th each year in Texas and California. In addition, it will cover the implications of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth celebrations. In terms of methodology, this paper uses a mixed methods approach involving the case study method and the observation method. Regarding the research techniques, this paper makes use of content analysis of primary and secondary source documents as well as participant observation.

## **The Contemporary Celebration of Emancipation Day on January 1st Each Year in Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina**

The contemporary celebration of Emancipation Day takes place on January 1st each year in Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina. It started on January 1, 1863 after Abraham Lincoln (1863/2013) issued the final version of the Emancipation Proclamation. It was composed of 11 paragraphs. The 2nd of the 11 paragraphs of the Emancipation Proclamation announced:

That on the first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves within any State or designated part of a State, the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free; and the Executive Government of the United States, including the military and naval authority thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of such persons, and will do no act or acts to repress such persons, or any of them, in any efforts they may make for their actual freedom. (Lincoln, 1863/2013, p. 1)

With the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln struck a devastating blow to the Confederacy.

In the 4th of the 11 paragraphs of the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln erased any doubts that he had leveled his blow against the Confederacy as a war measure. In no uncertain terms, he stated:

Now, therefore I, Abraham Lincoln, President of the United States, by virtue of the power in me vested as Commander-in-Chief, of the Army and Navy of the United States in time of actual armed rebellion against the authority and government of the United States, and as a fit and necessary war measure for suppressing said rebellion, do, on this first day of January, in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty-three, and in accordance with my purpose so to do publicly proclaimed for the full period of one hundred days, from the day first above mentioned, order and designate as the States and parts of States wherein the people thereof respectively, are this day in rebellion against the United States . . . (Lincoln, 1863/2013, pp. 2-3)

The words of Lincoln sent the message that he was attacking the Confederacy with a fit and necessary war measure.

The 5th of the 11 paragraphs of the Emancipation Proclamation was used by Lincoln to identify the impacted Confederate states. He directed his Emancipation Proclamation towards the following Confederate states:

Arkansas, Texas, Louisiana, (except the Parishes of St. Bernard, Plaquemines, Jefferson, St. John, St. Charles, St. James Ascension, Assumption, Terrebonne, Lafourche, St. Mary, St. Martin, and Orleans, including the City of New Orleans) Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, (except the forty-eight counties designated as West Virginia, and also the counties of Berkley, Accomac, Northampton, Elizabeth City, York, Princess Ann, and Norfolk, including the cities of Norfolk and Portsmouth), and which excepted parts, are for the present, left precisely as if this proclamation were not issued. (Lincoln, 1863/2013, p. 3)

However, Black people in the “except” areas also welcomed the Emancipation Proclamation. This was especially true of Norfolk, Virginia.

The masses of Black people welcomed the Emancipation Proclamation with large celebrations. Those celebrations were held in the south and north. A large celebration was held on January 1, 1863 in Port Royal, South Carolina according to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Susie King Taylor, and Charlotte Forten. In the case of Higginson (1870), he has written that:

The services began at half past eleven o'clock, with prayer by our chaplain, Mr. Fowler, who is always, on such occasions, simple, reverential, and impressive. Then the President's Proclamation was read by Dr. W. H. Brisbane, a thing infinitely appropriate, a South Carolinian addressing South Carolinians; for he was reared among these very islands, and here long since emancipated his own slaves. Then the colors were presented to us by the Rev. French, a chaplain who brought them from the donors in New York. All this was according to the programme. (p. 40)

Higginson continued:

Receiving the flags, I gave them into the hands of two fine-looking men, jet black, as color-guard, and they also spoke, and very effectively,—Sergeant Prince Rivers and Corporal Robert Sutton. The regiment sang “Marching Along,” and then General Saxton spoke, in his own simple, manly way, and Mrs. Francis D. Gage spoke very sensibly to the women, and Judge Stickney, from Florida, added something; then some gentlemen sang an ode, and the regiment the John Brown song, and then they went to their beef and molasses. Everything was very orderly, and they seemed to have a very gay time. Most of the visitors had far to go, and so dispersed before dress-parade, though the band stayed to enliven it. In the evening we had letters from home, and General Saxton had a reception at his house, from which I excused myself; and so ended one of the most enthusiastic and happy gatherings I ever knew. The day was perfect, and there was nothing but success. (pp. 41-42)

It was made very clear by Higginson that the first Emancipation Day celebration was a huge success. Higginson said that the celebration brought tears of joy to formerly enslaved people like “Old Tiff and his children” and a “little slave-boy, almost white” (p. 41).

Susie King Taylor (1902) attended the first Emancipation Day in South Carolina as a nurse, teacher, and washerwoman with the First South Carolina Volunteers. Taylor has related that:

On the first of January, 1863, we held services for the purpose of listening to the reading of President Lincoln’s proclamation by Dr. W. H. Brisbane, and the presentation of two beautiful stands of colors, one from a lady in Connecticut, and the other Rev. Mr. Cheever. The presentation speech was made by Chaplain French. It was a glorious day for us all, and we enjoyed every minute of it, and as a fitting close and the crowning event of this occasion we had a grand barbecue. A number of oxen were roasted whole, and we had a fine feast. Although not served as tastily or correctly as it would have been at home, yet it was enjoyed with keen appetites and relish. The soldiers had a good time. They sang or shouted ‘Hurrah!’ all through the camp, and seemed overflowing with fun and frolic until taps were sounded, when many, no doubt, dreamt of this memorable day. (p. 18)

Taylor was a former enslaved person who escaped from bondage in Georgia. When she wrote her memoirs during the first decade of the 20th century, Taylor was able to provide important details about the first Emancipation Day celebration and life from a female perspective in the First South Carolina Volunteers.

Charlotte Forten (1953) attended the first Emancipation Day celebration in South Carolina as a teacher in and around Camp Saxton, the base of the First South Carolina Volunteers. In her diary, which she called a journal, Forten reported the following observations of that eventful day in South Carolina:

Thursday, New Year’s Day, 1863. The most glorious day this nation has yet seen, I think. I rose early—an event here—and early we started, with an old borrowed carriage and a remarkable slow horse. Whither were going? Thou wilt ask, dearest A. To the ferry; thence to Camp Saxton, to the Celebration. From the Ferry to the camp the “Flora” took us. (p. 171)

Forten related that Robert Sutton and Prince Rivers “made very good speeches indeed” (pp. 172-173). She also related that the speeches by Sutton and Rivers “were loudly cheered” (p. 173).

Charlotte Forten (1864a, 1864b) published a two-part essay titled “Life on the Sea Islands,” which dealt with her experiences in South Carolina. The two-part essay was based on the observations Forten had written in her diary. One part appeared in the May 1864 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. The second part appeared in the June 1864 issue of the *Atlantic Monthly*. In the second part, Forten (1864b) discussed the first Emancipation Day celebration in South Carolina. She stated that:

New-Year's-Day—Emancipation-Day—was a glorious one to us. The morning was quite cold, the coldest we had experienced; but we were determined to go to the celebration at Camp Saxton—the camp of the First Regiment South-Carolina Volunteers, —whither the General and Colonel Higginson had bidden us, on this, “the greatest day in the nation’s history.” (p. 668)

Forten explained that the celebration actually took place in a grove of live-oak trees next to the camp. She also reported the presence of “black soldiers in their blue coats and scarlet pantaloons, the officers of this and other regiments in their handsome uniforms, and crowds of lookers-on—men, women, and children, of every complexion, grouped in various attitudes under the moss-hung trees” (p. 668). She added: “The faces of all wore a happy, interested look” (p. 668).

During the ceremony, Forten (1864b) said that the Emancipation Proclamation was read by Dr. William Henry Brisbane to enthusiastic cheers. She noted that the other speakers included General Rufus Saxton, Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, Mrs. Frances D. Gage, Sergeant Prince Rivers, and Sergeant Robert Sutton. Regarding the latter two, Forten stated:

At the close of Colonel Higginson’s speech he presented the flags to the colorbearers, Sergeant Rivers and Sergeant Sutton, with an earnest charge, to which they made appropriate replies. We were particularly pleased with Robert Sutton, who is a man of great natural intelligence, and whose remarks were simple, eloquent, and forcible. (p. 669)

As was the case with her diary, Forten mentioned the contributions of Robert Sutton and Prince Rivers to the event. Forten acknowledged that both men made effective speeches and were impressive as leaders.

Port Royal, South Carolina was not the only place wherein Black people celebrated Abraham Lincoln’s issuance of the final version of the Emancipation Proclamation. Norfolk, Virginia and Boston, Massachusetts were two other places with Emancipation Day celebrations on January 1, 1863. Isaac W.K. Handy, a Presbyterian minister and Confederate supporter, made a direct observation of Norfolk’s first Emancipation Day celebration. Writing in his diary, Handy (2013) said:

January 1st 1863. This has been a great day among the negroes. Encouraged by the Yankees, and under the impression from Lincoln’s proclamation that “the hour of Jubilee has come,” they have had a wonderful procession through the streets of Norfolk, with banners, flags, sashes and whatever things are used on such occasions. It is difficult to estimate the number in this grand turn out; but, it has been variously estimated from 3,000 to 15,000, including men, women, and children. . . .The United States flag was conspicuous among the various ensigns; and at various certain stages of the wandering, three cheers, each, were given to the U.S. flag, President Lincoln and Liberty. This whole procession advanced to the residence of Gen. Vielé, where this dignitary received them in state and addressed them in a flattering speech. (p. 1)

Handy did not allow his support for the Confederacy to stop him reporting factual information about the celebration. Though the Confederate supporters may not have liked it, thousands of Black men, women, and children saw the event as a great social phenomenon.

Frederick Douglass (1892/1962) attended the first Emancipation Day in Boston, Massachusetts as one of the key leaders of Black people in the USA. Douglass has informed us that:

The first of January, 1863, was a memorable day in the progress of American liberty and civilization. It was the turning-point in the conflict between freedom and slavery. A death-blow was given to the slaveholding rebellion. Until then the federal arm had been more than tolerant to that relic of barbarism. (p. 351)

Douglass continued:

I was in Boston, and its reception there may indicate the importance attached to it elsewhere. An immense assembly convened in Tremont Temple to await the first flash of the electric wires announcing the “new departure.” Two years of war, prosecuted in the interests of slavery, had made free speech possible in Boston, and we were now met together to receive and celebrate the first utterance of the long-hoped-for proclamation, *if* it came, and, if it did *not* come, to speak our minds freely, for, in view of the past, it was by no means certain that it would come. . . . Every moment of waiting chilled our hopes, and strengthened our fears. A line of messengers was established between the telegraph office and the platform of Tremont Temple, and the time was occupied with brief speeches from Hon. Thomas Russell of Plymouth, Miss Anna E. Dickinson (a lady of marvelous eloquence), Rev. Mr. Grimes, J. Sella Martin, William Wells Brown, and myself. (p. 352)

For the Douglass, “This proclamation changed everything” (p. 352). He also informs us that the antislavery phalanx, who welcomed the proclamation, included William Lloyd Garrison, Wendell Phillips, Gerrit Smith, and Charles Sumner. The proslavery social forces included, who did not welcome the proclamation, consisted some people in the North as well as the South.

Douglass (1892/1962) painted a very clear picture of the anxious people who waited to receive word that Lincoln had signed the Emancipation Proclamation. They gathered in large numbers to wait, watch the clock, and the chance to roar with approval when the word came down. Douglass has written:

Eight, nine, ten o'clock came and went, and still no word. A visible shadow seemed falling on the expected throng, which the confident utterances of the speakers sought in vain to dispel. At last, when patience was well-nigh exhausted, and suspense was becoming agony, a man (I think it was Judge Russell) with hasty step advanced through the crowd, and with a face fairly illumined with the news he bore, exclaimed in tones that thrilled the hearts, “It is coming! It is on the wires!!” (p. 353)

Douglass explained that the news was met with joy and gladness as well as forms of expression that ranged “from shouts of praise to sobs and tears” (p. 353). According to Douglass and other writers, both before and after the Emancipation Proclamation, many Black people fled from plantations and headed to Union Army lines, including Hilton Head Island in South Carolina, St. Simons Island in Georgia, and Amelia Island in Florida.

### **The Contemporary Celebration of Emancipation Day on April 16th Each Year in Washington, DC**

On April 16th each year, the contemporary celebration of Emancipation Day takes place in Washington, DC. The celebration began when Abraham Lincoln issued the DC Emancipation Act, which was actually titled “An Act for the Release of certain Persons held to Service or Labor in the District of Columbia.” It consisted of 12 sections. In the first section, the DC Emancipation Act stated that:

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That all persons held to service or labor within the District of Columbia by reason of African descent are hereby discharged and freed of and from all claim to such service or labor; and from and after the passage of this act neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except for crime, whereof the party shall be duly convicted, shall hereafter exist in said District.*  
(Lincoln, 1862/2013, p. 1)

The DC Emancipation Act was designed to free Black people from bondage in Washington. It brought freedom to around 3,000 Black people in that city.

The DC Emancipation Act stipulated that White slaveholders would be compensated for the enslaved people they lost in the form of property as a result of the measure. The 3rd of the 12 sections of the DC Emancipation Act announced:

*Sec. 3. And be it further enacted, That the President of the United States, with the advice and consent of the Senate, shall appoint three commissioners, residents of the District of Columbia, any two of whom shall have power to act, who shall receive the petitions above mentioned, and who shall investigate and determine the validity and value of the claims therein presented, as aforesaid, and appraise and apportion, under the proviso hereto annexed, the value in money of the several claims by them found to be valid: *Provided, however,* That the entire sum so appraised and apportioned shall not exceed in the aggregate an amount equal to three hundred dollars for each person shown to have been so held by lawful claim . . .* (Lincoln, 1862/2013, p. 1)

As a result of the DC Emancipation Act, White slaveholders could receive up to \$300 for every enslaved person who received his or her freedom. Thus, White slaveholders received reparations from the federal government.

With regard to enslaved people, the DC Emancipation Act was not as generous as it was for White people. The 11th of the 12 sections of the DC Emancipation Act stated that:

Sec. 11. *And be it further enacted*, That the sum of one hundred thousand dollars, out of any money in the Treasury not otherwise appropriated, is hereby appropriated, to be expended under the direction of the President of the United States, to aid in the colonization and settlement of such free persons of African descent now residing in said District, including those to be liberated by this act, as may desire to emigrate to the Republics of Hayti or Liberia, or such other country beyond the limits of the United States as the President may determine: *Provided*, The expenditure for this purpose shall not exceed one hundred dollars for each emigrant. (Lincoln, 1862/2013, pp. 4-5)

The DC Emancipation Act clearly stated that each Black person freed from slavery in Washington would receive up to \$100 if they would leave the USA. It specified that the money could be used to emigrate to Haiti, Liberia, or elsewhere. For those newly freed Black people who chose to stay, they did not receive any money.

Three months later, the Thirty-Seventh Congress (1862/2013) saw fit to pass a supplemental bill connected to the Lincoln's DC Emancipation Act. On the one hand, the aim of the Lincoln's Act was to free Black people from slavery in Washington; compensate White slaveholders who lost property in the form of people as a result of the Act; and compensate Black people who were willing to emigrate to Haiti, Liberia, or elsewhere. On the other hand, the aim of Congress's supplemental bill was to allow formerly enslaved Black people to apply for compensation even if their former slave masters had not done so; allow the testimony of Black people as well as White people; and allow equal weight to testimony by Black people and White people. The National Archives and Records Administration (2013) has disclosed that, "Over the next 9 months, the Board of Commissioners appointed to administer the act approved 930 petitions, completely or in part, from former owners for the freedom of 2,989 former slaves" (p. 1).

Despite the shortcomings of the DC Emancipation Act, the signing of the measure by Abraham Lincoln was met by Black people with joy and gladness. For example, on April 19, 1866, threes of Black people turned out to celebrate the abolition of slavery in Washington through the DC Emancipation Act. In the shadows of the White House, Black people gathered to celebrate that some of them were liberated from bondage on April 16, 1862. They realized that the DC Emancipation Act was an important step towards the Emancipation Proclamation and General Orders, No. 3.

### **The Contemporary Celebration of Juneteenth on or Near June 19th Each Year in Texas and California**

The contemporary celebration of Juneteenth takes place on or near June 19th each year in Texas, California, and elsewhere. It began on June 19, 1865 when General Gordon Granger sailed into Galveston, Texas and issued General Orders, No. 3 because White slaveholders would not let enslaved Black people go free. General Orders, No. 3 was composed of one paragraph. Granger (1865) stated:

The people are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property, between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them, become that between employer and hired labor. The freed are advised to remain at their present homes, and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts; and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere. (p. 1)

With the language of his General Orders, No. 3, Granger specified that all enslaved people in Texas were free in accordance with the Emancipation Proclamation. He also specified that there was to be equality between the White slaveholders and formerly enslaved Black people. Granger advised Black people that the new arrangement would reflect a social relationship between an employer and hired labor. He advised Black people to remain in their present homes and work for wages.

Black people in Texas knew about the Emancipation Proclamation before June 19, 1865 because of the Federal occupation of Galveston from Fall 1862 to January 1, 1863, telegraphs, and the grapevine. However, the White slaveholders refused to free them from bondage even after the surrender of Robert E. Lee on April 9, 1865. Some seven days following Lee's surrender, a White person made the following statement in an April 16, 1865 letter to the editor of *The Galveston Tri-Weekly News*:

There are now on the island—well, ever so many troops. Enough for all purposes, as Mr. Yankee may find to his cost, if he attempts to come here. In other respects than the one I have mentioned, there are no changes. I noticed that a free negro, brought in her [sic] inadvertently on one of the blockade runners, has been hired out under the law for six months. After the expiration of that time, he will be given half the proceeds of the hire, deducting first all expenses, and be allowed to leave the country. I have also noticed that the negroes captured in different engagements with the enemy, are allowed to roam at will in this place and Houston. They mingle freely with our slaves and poison their minds with Utopian dreams of freedom—thereby rendering them discontented, lazy and impertinent. In fact from the great license allowed negroes in Houston, that place is becoming a nuisance. I have seen squads of negroes saunter along the sidewalks and rudely jostle white passengers, uttering loud and blasphemous language. This has become such a nuisance at one particular spot on the sidewalk of the restaurant near the Old Capitol, that ladies have been compelled to abandon that side of the street. In fact I have heard ladies assert that they were always afraid to walk on the street alone for fear of encountering impertinence from negroes. In Mobile, Savannah, Charleston and other Southern cities a negro would never dare stand on a sidewalk while a white person was passing, but would respectfully step aside and take off his hat. Street municipal regulations required this of them. The result was they were kept in a proper condition of subjection. (M, 1865, p. 4)

The writer, who simply signed the letter with the initial “M.,” made it clear that White slaveholders in that area had no intention of releasing enslaved Black people from bondage. The writer also made it clear that he or she was aware that Black contrabands or Black Union soldiers were in contact with enslaved Black people; that he or she wanted Black people held in a position of subjection; that he or she resented the presence of a free Black man working for wages; that Confederate military forces in Galveston were going to continue to fight against Union military forces.

The letter by “M.” in *The Galveston Tri-Weekly News* is evidence that Texas White slaveholders and other Confederates wanted to continue the war despite the surrender by Robert E. Lee. In fact, the last battle of the Civil War was fought at Palmito Ranch, Texas near Brownsville, Texas on May 13, 1865 more than a month after Lee’s surrender. That armed conflict is also known as the Battle of Palmito Ranch. The Union Army military forces included the U.S. Sixty-Second Colored Infantry fighting against White Confederates (Barrett, 1896; Branson, 1896).

## **Implications of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth Celebrations**

One significant consequence of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth Celebrations is that they are similar in that they provide a forum for affirmation of the desire of Black people for freedom from chattel slavery. They are dissimilar in that the celebrations developed under different social conditions and different circumstances. A second significant consequence of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth Celebrations is that they provide a setting in which Black people can reflect on and learn about the enslavement faced by their ancestors. A third significant consequence of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth Celebrations is that they provide a setting in which Black people can gather with family and friends to partake in food and beverages from their cultural backgrounds.

A fourth significant consequence of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth Celebrations is that they provide a setting in which private and public institutions (e.g., churches, grade schools, colleges, and recreation department parks) can host special programs and musical events. A fifth significant consequence of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth Celebrations is that they provide a setting in which merchants can sell products to people who come to them. A sixth significant consequence of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth Celebrations is that they provide a setting in which the concerns Frederick Douglass expressed on July 5, 1852 regarding the Fourth of July can be dealt with in a profound manner.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

This paper has presented a comparative analysis of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth celebrations within the United States of America. It has discussed how emancipation for Black people came at different times in various places during the 19th century. This paper has also addressed the contemporary celebration of Emancipation Day on January 1st each year in Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina; the contemporary celebration of Emancipation Day on April 16th each year in Washington, DC; and the contemporary celebration of Juneteenth on or near June 19th each year in Texas and

California. Additionally, it has covered the implications of Emancipation Day and Juneteenth celebrations.

At the 80th annual conference of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Sonja Woods and Hari Jones (2013) presented a paper titled, "April, Not June: Why African-American Emancipation Should Be Celebrated in the Month of April." In their paper they argued that since the DC Emancipation Act came first, it should take precedence over the Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth. They posed that celebrations of the Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth should defer to the DC Emancipation Act. They also asserted that April 16th should become a national holiday on the basis that it was first. Of the two presenters, Hari Jones was most vociferous on that assertion.

Contrary to the views of Sonja Woods and Hari Jones, Black people should celebrate all three. Each year Black people should celebrate the DC Emancipation Act on April 16th since it has been going on since 1862. Black people should also celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation each year on January 1st since it has been going on since 1863. In addition, each year Black people should celebrate Juneteenth on or around June 19th since it has been going on since 1865.

The record is clear that freedom came at different times for Black people in the USA from the institution of slavery. Instead of arguing which one is more important, Black scholars should encourage Black people to recognize that all three are important aspects of the Black experience in the USA. It very well may be a waste of time and energy for a Black scholar like Hari Jones to expect that Black people will stop celebrating the Emancipation Proclamation and Juneteenth in favor of the DC Emancipation Act. Again, all three celebrations are important and should continue forever.

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