

James Ford
Brunswick

Hello, my name is James Ford and I am a resident of Brunswick Maine and I am on the Education Committee for the Abyssinian Meeting House in Portland Maine. I rise to speak to the need to make Juneteenth a paid state holiday. From the very inception of our country, the idea of freedom was held up as a shining light for all to see. Yet it wasn't until June nineteenth 1865 that the words written on that hot July day finally became more than an idea on a piece of paper. A full 2 years after the emancipation proclamation freeing the slaves was signed the news finally reached the last outpost of slavery in the United States. On that day at long last, people of color in the United States became included in what is truly self-evident, that at least here in this county all people are created equal with certain unalienable rights. Juneteenth therefore is in a very real way our true independence day. A day when everyone regardless of color, gender, or social status has the innate right to be free. Freedom was and is hard fought and precious. People have fought to protect it, died to uphold it and stood fast to keep it. A day set aside to honor and reflect on what it takes to not only celebrate our freedom but also protect it is most fitting. It is a day to dedicate ourselves to the dream which the founding father articulated but could not fulfill. It is a day to join together in celebration of our most precious right, the right to live, work and love as free people

The Abyssinian Meeting House in Portland has had Juneteenth Celebrations for the past 5 years. Last it was virtual with one of our guests was Angus King. The last 2 years, Governor Mills has issued a proclamation for the day for the Abyssinian. We have momentum. Although the day was as a result of something that happened in Texas, let us acknowledge the slavery we had here in Maine.

Thank you
James E. Ford 2/17/2021