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Juneteenth

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By Sydney Goggans



"Lift every voice and sing..."

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This is the song that Black Americans cry and rejoice to during our moments of tears, oppression and rejection. We are being plagued by two viruses in this country: COVID-19 and racism. To conclude, Black people are disproportionately affected by both. As we lift our voices, we are constantly left with a *shhh* to quiet our songs of freedom.

The Declaration of Independence states three unalienable rights in which we are given—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Innocent Black Americans are dying from brutal murders at the hands of oppression. Where is our right to live? The system is set up for us to fail and for others to move ahead. Where is our liberty? Black people and black culture alike are shamed, mocked and used as a source of commodity. Where can we get this pursuit of happiness?

We are tired. And we have been tired since our ancestors were forced against their will.

Juneteenth should not go unnoticed or forgotten. It is OUR history that we will continue to cherish and love. Americans are taught to learn the history of the country's Independence Day. Textbooks glorify and uplift the day in 1776 that gave this country our renewed liberty away from the hands of the British. We are expected to be well versed in the struggles of "our forefathers" that paved the way for the Constitution and American values. The United States of America's origin story is highly important and there is no denying that. However, we only focus on the white heroes that "made" this country. Black people are forced to feel patriotic on the Fourth of July. The question remains for so many of us is how do you celebrate a holiday that was never meant for you to celebrate? Juneteenth and much of Black history is ignored, ultimately, it feeds into this understanding for Americans that Black history is not important enough to teach or learn about.

America must come to recognize Juneteenth as a national holiday. As a Black American, my curriculum in grade school taught me that my history started with my ancestors being enslaved and it ended with the Civil Rights Movement. We briefly highlighted any other types of Black history and Juneteenth was definitely not one of them. My history began before the slave trade and our stories are still being written.

By us recognizing Juneteenth, this can be an opportunity for Americans to converse about the struggles and sacrifices of Black bodies. The country's narrative for the Fourth is not the same for all of us. We cannot sweep the struggles of our ancestors under the rug. By continuously doing so, we only further white supremacy and create the notion that the Black cause is irrelevant. These types of conversations may seem uncomfortable but in order to have healthier solutions, we must lift up our voices and sing.

Goggans is a student at Spelman College in Atlanta, GA. She currently majors in English and has an interest in how the media we consume influence culture. In her free time, she enjoys reading current affairs and attending local cultural events.