

'Juneteenth:' Many Holidays Packaged in One

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Los Angeles Sentinel (1934-2005); Jun 19, 1975; ProQuest Historical Newspapers: Los Angeles Sentinel

pg. A7

HOW LITTLE WE KNOW

'Juneteenth:' Many Holidays Packaged in One

By LIN HILBURN

We know that the truism "you can never go home again" applies to all and yet just as some people revere



HILBURN

Memorial Day or as they used to say in Texas, Decoration Day, I remember the 19th of June or, as they say in Texas, "Juneteenth."

In rural East Texas where I

spent my childhood, black children were taught black history as a matter of course.

We were singing the Negro National Anthem way back there and we recognized all of the famous black men and women who had contributed to our progress.

We knew all about Booker T. Washington, George

Washington Carver, Phylis Wheatley, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, etc.

We recited the poems and speeches of these people with regularity and I suppose that aside from knowing "The Eyes of Texas," we knew these people and what they stood for best. However, our one great holiday was "Juneteenth."

The 19th of June is the day that slaves in the Southwest were told that they were free and for as long as I can remember it has been a holiday for black folks in Texas.

In fact, although non-blacks did not necessarily celebrate the day, they acknowledged the day by giving black employees the day off.

If you lived in rural East Texas as I did, then you really looked forward to "Juneteenth."

There would be a sort of picnic flavor. Concession stands would be selling all kinds of goodies from ice cream to watermelon to barbecue of every description.

There would be sandlot baseball, and in general a lot of strolling, singing, dancing, guitar playing and a few people getting loaded and even a few fist fights; nothing serious mind you, just a few brothers getting rid of some pent-up emotions.

It occurs to me that maybe we ought to rekindle that spirit of recognition of the accomplishments of our forefathers. Maybe we ought to celebrate our forefathers a little more.

A very dear friend of mine, Dr. Ronald Luncetford, who also is a former Texan and a psychologist of some repute, would, I am sure, agree with me. Many of our city-reared

brothers and sisters would do well to emulate our rural-reared relations.

There is the tendency of some people of little knowledge to laugh at our rural relations, but let me tell you there was more pride of accomplishment, more drive for independence of direction, more effort for economic stability than many of us have seen for many years in our people.

As we approach the 200th anniversary of the founding of the United States of America we would do well to remember the contributions of black Americans to our country's progress.

We ought to remember that black citizens of this country, many of them or most of them without benefit of formal training or education, at one time owned in excess of 55 million acres of land.

We should remember that despite a painfully oppressive political and economic system that for many years deprived us of our civil liberties and degraded us at every turn, our people have made progress and, to me, one of the duties of a progressive people is to remember, with much affection, the contributions of those who have gone before us.

It might come as a surprise to many of my readers that some of the folkisms associated with black life in these United States are as true of other ethnic groups as they are of us.

For example: The Irish love to sing and dance, so do we, the Spanish believe that they sing better than anyone else, we know that we do, the French think that they are the world's best cooks, and you know that we think that we

have a corner on that market.

We come now to the great folk tales about how we blacks love chicken and watermelon; well check out your market and see who is buying more of these items.

What I am trying to say is that we have contributed much to the advancement of our country and we have a right to be here.

Remember, we are the only people who were brought here against our will. All other people here, native Americans excepted, are here of their own volition.

So, on this "Juneteenth," revel in the glory of your ancestors. Through their labor (free), the mercantile industry of a nation was built.

Eat your fried chicken, your watermelon, your ice cream and what-have-you.

Have a good time

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