

Black Freedom Days Fact Sheet -

A Summary of Key Events in the Abolition of Slavery Worldwide

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- January 1, 1804 Haiti celebrates independence. This country is the first modern nation to be led by a person of African descent. Haiti is the world's only example of a successful slave revolt leading to the establishment of an internationally recognized nation or republic. Celebrations of Haiti's existence and achievements take place throughout the Black Diaspora.
- September 15, 1829 Mexico abolishes slavery.
- March 25, 1807 The British Parliament passes the 1807 Abolition of Slave Trade Act to outlaw such trade throughout the British Empire. The Act prohibited British ships from being involved in the slave trade and marked the start of the end of the transatlantic traffic of human beings. A year later, the Royal Navy's West African Squadron is established to suppress transatlantic slave trading. Over the next 60 years, the squadron's anti-slavery operations along the West Coast of Africa and into East Africa and the Caribbean enforced the ban. William Wilberforce, the British Parliamentary leader of the anti-slavery movement, with key allies Thomas Clarkson, Olaudah Equiano and others, led the successful effort to convince the Parliament to pass the Act. The measure set in motion an international crusade that ultimately resulted in the outlawing of slavery worldwide.
- August 1, 1834 The 1833 Slavery Abolition Act takes effect to abolish slavery throughout the British Empire. At this time, the Empire spanned several continents and encompassed parts of the Caribbean, Africa, Canada, India, China, Australia, and South America as far as the tip of Argentina. Also at this time, there are about 800,000 enslaved persons in the British West Indies. This historic action fueled abolition movements worldwide that led to slavery's end in Europe, the Caribbean colonies, the United States, and South America. Annual observances still occur in Trinidad, Jamaica, and Guyana. The Caribbean Historical Society leads present-day efforts to make August 1st, International Emancipation Day worldwide.
- April 27, 1848 The French republic decrees the end of slavery in its empire. Annual commemorations occur in France and some former French Caribbean colonies.
- April 16, 1862 President Abraham Lincoln signs the District of Columbia Emancipation Act which abolishes slavery in the District and provides the only example of compensation by the Federal Government of former slaveholders for the freedom of the enslaved persons.
- June 19, 1862 Slavery is ended in all United States territories, e.g. Utah, Nevada, and Colorado, et al.
- January 1, 1863 President Abraham Lincoln signs the Emancipation Proclamation. Yearly observances take place in Black communities in the East and South.
- July 1, 1863 Holland frees its enslaved persons.
- June 19, 1865 Union Army General Gordon Granger lands in Galveston, Texas, and issues General Order No. 3 bringing an end to slavery and equality before the law. Juneteenth celebrations commence.
- December 6, 1865 The U.S. Congress ratifies the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution ending slavery.
- May 13, 1888 Slavery ends in Brazil.
- 1868 – 1888 Slavery is abolished in Cuba, Puerto Rico, Brazil, etc. Yearly observances were held often.

Note: Many Caribbean and South American countries substituted their respective independence celebrations for earlier emancipation festivities.