

Arts & ENTERTAINMENT

Juneteenth Origin Debunked

Author corrects myths about the annual holiday

Donald Norman-Cox, a 64 year old resident of Denton, Texas has a message for the nation regarding next month's Juneteenth celebration: "Tell it right or stop talking." Since the mid-2000s, Mr. Norman-Cox has sporadically informed college and community groups that parts of the Juneteenth explanation are flagrantly wrong. This year, his message has muscle.

"Every explanation I've heard since childhood made little sense," Norman-Cox said. But like many others, he never bothered to search for facts. "I wondered how news of the proclamation could travel to Europe faster



D.J. Norman-Cox (standing) teaches senior citizens in Denton, Texas how to locate Texas newspaper references to the Emancipation Proclamation, pre-Juneteenth. Norman-Cox's book "Juneteenth 101" counters claims that news did not reach Texas until two and a half years after the proclamation was issued.

others had researched their explanations. "I challenged nothing," he laughs, "until one question refused to be ignored." That question was why do Texans commemorate both Watchnight and Juneteenth?

Watchnight was the night slaves held vigils to watch for freedom, courtesy of the Emancipation Proclamation. Juneteenth occurred supposedly because no one knew the Proclamation existed. Norman-Cox said, "Those opposing explanations coexist peacefully only in minds of the oblivious."

While digging for clarification, he discovered some Texans knew about the Emancipation Proclamation before it was issued.

"On September 15, 1862, a newspaper in tiny Clarksville, Texas reported Lincoln was about to issue 'a proclamation of general universal emancipation.' Nine days later, Lincoln issued his preliminary proclamation. What little guys knew, the big ones did, too," he said.

That and other discoveries are packed in his new book.

Norman-Cox calls his findings, "Earth shaking, but nothing new." He said, "Professional historians – which I'm not – have known these facts probably since emancipation became a topic worthy of scholarly examination. This book translates existing academic discourse into street speak ... to help Big Mama and Ray-Ray 'nem not be wrong.'"

Juneteenth 101 claims incorrect explanations oversimplify

than it floated across the states. How did news reach what is now New Mexico without going through Texas? When did other states free their slaves?"

Those quandaries and more are addressed in Norman-Cox's new book Juneteenth 101. The book debunks several widely held myths about Juneteenth, including its primary tenet: news of the Proclamation didn't reach Texas for two and a half years.

"You hear that everywhere, but it's wrong," Norman-Cox said. "Delayed emancipation was not caused by not-knowing. The culprit was lack of enforcement."

Norman-Cox admits to holding a near life-long hope that



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Portland Juneteenth Planning

Plans are being made for Portland's annual Juneteenth celebration, coming Saturday, June 16, with the Clara Peoples Freedom Trail Parade and followed by festivities at the Legacy Emanuel Hospital field on North Russell Street between Vancouver and Williams.

Juneteenth is a free family fun event commemorating the end of slavery and is open to everyone. The parade will start at 11 a.m. on June 16 beginning at the Safeway store on Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and proceeding to the Emanuel field where the celebration will follow from noon to 6 p.m. with music, food, hip hop cardio, a kids area and a raffle.

In addition, on Thursday, June 14, the Billy Webb Elks Lodge, 6 N. Tillamook St., will host a Miss Juneteenth Scholarship Pageant. You're invited to join 10 young women, ranging in ages from 14 to 18 years old, as they vie for the title and crown of Miss Juneteenth Oregon.

For information on Portland Juneteenth, visit juneteenthor.com or call 971-930-5862.

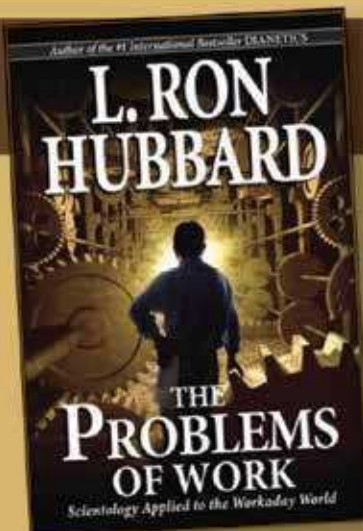
the complex and chaotic way slavery ended. Believing slavery continued because they didn't know, misidentifies 'they.'

"They" refers to slave owners," Norman-Cox contends. "What slaves knew was irrelevant. Their walking off the job is called running away, not emancipation."

According to Norman-Cox, Juneteenth falsehoods are pervasive. Even Congress incorrectly refers to Juneteenth as "the day slavery ended in the United States." Juneteenth 101 identifies 31 congressional resolutions that include or were defended by that statement. "As if six months later, the Thirteenth Amendment did nothing," Cox added.

To replace that inaccuracy the book offers this explanation, "Juneteenth celebrates the end of slavery; not the day slavery ended."

Juneteenth 101 is a 104 page book published by Arising Together Publishing; available exclusively at amazonbooks.com for \$13.



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