
THE BRIGHTEST DAY:

A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology

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Foreword by Beverly Jenkins

THE BRIGHTEST DAY

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Read by General Gordon Granger "19th of June," 1865 Galveston, TX:

General Order #3

"The people (of Texas) are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of personal rights and rights of property, between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them, become that The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology between employer and hired labor. The freed are advised to remain at their present

homes, and work for wages. They are informed that they will not be allowed to collect at military posts; and that they will not be supported in idleness either there or elsewhere.”

When Union Army General Gordon Granger and 2,000 Union soldiers landed at Galveston Island Texas, June 19, 1865 and read General No. 3, slavery was abolished in Texas. Most African-American communities chose January 1 as Freedom/Emancipation Day because President's Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation went into effect January 1, 1863. Others celebrated September 22 because September 22, 1862 was the preliminary day of the Emancipation Proclamation. In parts of Southern Virginia, freedman The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology celebrated April 9th the day Lee The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology surrendered at Appomattox while those in Richmond chose April 3^d, the date the capital of the Confederacy fell to Union troops. But the 250,000 formerly enslaved Texans chose June 19th, or *Juneteenth*, and their descendants still do.

The first organized Juneteenth celebration began in 1866. Because of the state's segregation laws many gatherings were barred from The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology public parks, so in Houston, Austin, and other places, Black Texans pooled their money and purchased land for their purposes. Statewide celebrations continued well into the mid-1880s with baseball games, parades, speeches touting pride and progress, boat rides, music and lots and lots food. In Galveston in 1883, even the prisoners in the city's jail were allowed a day of freedom to join the celebrating.

As The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology the years passed and Texans migrated into other areas, they took Juneteenth with them. It was successful in some areas and found no traction in others, but it soon became part of the debate initiated by those who wanted Black people to choose *one* universal date to celebrate The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology emancipation.

Before the Civil War, August 1st had been such a date. Black abolitionists did not celebrate July 4th. With nearly 3 million people of African descent being held against The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology their will in the slaveholding areas of the south, celebrating America's The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology Independence Day was as ludicrous as it was hypocritical. August 1st was chosen instead. The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology On August 1st, 1834, Britain emancipated its slaves in the West Indies. All over the world from England to Canada to the pre-civil war north, the day was revered. There were picnics, parades, banners, speeches and church night watch services. Many of the gatherings were interracial like one in Harrisburg, Ohio

in 1849 which drew a multi-racial crowd of two thousand people. As late as the 1980s, August 1st was still being celebrated in the *The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology* Midwest and Ontario, Canada.

Why the race needed to be limited to just one day of celebration was the question the Black citizens of El Paso, Texas probably wanted to know after learning the fledgling *The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology* NAACP was behind a report that advocated doing away with Juneteenth and its decades of traditions in favor of making January 1st as *the* day to honor emancipation.

In the end, it didn't matter. In 1980, Texas was the first state to make Juneteenth a state holiday and unfortunately January 1st has faded from our collective memory. Juneteenth stands as the last of the African-American embraced Freedom Days and that alone makes its continued existence worthy of celebration. Legislation to recognize its significance has been introduced in both houses of Congress. The United States Post Office has been petitioned to issue a stamp in honor of the day and its history. This is its 150th anniversary year. Thanks to the people of Texas, Juneteenth has established itself across America from sea to shining sea. When General Granger read General Order No.3 in Galveston that day, little did he know what he was setting into motion.

Sources:

- *Black Abolitionists* by Benjamin The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology Quarles. Oxford University Press. 1972.
- *Festivals of Freedom: Memory and Meaning in African American Emancipation Celebrations, 1808-1915* by Mitch Kachun. University of Massachusetts Press. 2003.

Amazing Grace

Lena Hart

It's the year 1866—the Civil War is over and slavery has ended...

Yet life for 18-year-old Gracie Shaw takes an unexpected turn when she is “encouraged” to marry a man sight unseen. To ensure the financial stability of her family, she agrees—until a handsome stranger captures her attention and makes going through with the marriage almost impossible.

Determined to start a new life far from his old one, former Confederate soldier Logan Finley boards a train headed West—to lawless territory. When he is entrusted with the duty to escort the loveliest woman he’s ever met, he realizes he wants more than just a fresh start. He wants her.

While Gracie wrestles with her desires, she soon learns that there is more to *The Brightest Day: A Juneteenth Historical Romance Anthology* Mr. Logan Finley than she could have ever imagined. Will she find the grace within to forgive their past—or will her anger and pain blind her to true love?

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