

# The Delray Democrat

## Juneteenth<sup>1</sup>

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The editorial reprinted below was published prior to passage of the “Juneteenth National Independence Day Act.” Making Juneteenth a federal holiday is symbolically huge but does nothing to protect Black America from Republican voter suppression laws.

In 2021, the same year Juneteenth became a national holiday, “states enacted more restrictive voting laws than at any time” since the [Brennan Center for Justice](#) began tracking them. Even more bills have been introduced in 2023.

Perhaps that’s why the Juneteenth bill passed the Senate unanimously and with only 14 nays in the House (all Republicans). It’s easy to celebrate equality when you’re legislating inequality.

One Republican Congressman attempted to justify his opposition to the Juneteenth bill by claiming that “naming this day ‘National Independence Day’ will create confusion and push Americans to pick one of those two days as their independence day based on their racial identity.”

Actually, making Juneteenth a national holiday can only hasten the day all Americans have reason to celebrate both holidays. Fourteen years *before* the first Juneteenth, the great Frederick Douglass delivered a thundering [denunciation](#) of the chasm between what the Declaration of Independence promised and what it delivered, telling a White audience, “This Fourth July is yours, not mine.”

Even so, he paid tribute to the Founders as “brave men . . . great men . . . [who] seized upon eternal principles, and set a glorious example.” If July 4 memorializes the founding of a nation dedicated to the principle that *all* men are created equal and entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, Juneteenth memorializes the day that nation began to make good on those principles to those it had tormented for centuries. And passage of the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act brings us closer to making that a reality.

That said, we are still a long way from realizing that first Juneteenth’s promise of “Absolute Equality.”

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<sup>1</sup> [The Delray Democrat](#), Juneteenth 2023, page 1.