

INTRODUCTION: Hello, this is Michael Eure and I'd like to invite you to the Michael your show featuring student hosts and very special guests talking about a variety of interesting topics. You can find us on the Eagle Stream YouTube channel.

MICHAEL EURE: Good afternoon, welcome to the Michael Eure show.

Our very special student co-host is Jerry Greene.

And we have our special guest Earl Ijames.

Say a little thing about who you are and what you do, Jerry, and then we're gonna get to Earl.

JERRY GREENE: I am a cyber security major, working towards my applied science associate degree.

EURE: Alright Earl, say hello to the audience. They can't see you, but they can hear you.

EARL IJAMES: Hi everyone. Thank you for having me. Looking forward to our discussion.

EURE: Okay.

So, we're gonna start off with some questions, and I'm gonna ask you to just be brief because I know you are a historian and we might go out of order, but just kind of quick answers and we're gonna start with Jerry. I think he has a question for you.

GREENE: Okay. Can you hear me?

Memorial Day is a really busy holiday. I was wanting to ask, can you tell us something about the history regarding Memorial Day and some contrasting reason are why people began celebrations.

IJAMES: The history of Memorial Day?

GREENE: Yes, um hmm, Memorial Day.

IJAMES: That's a great question, Jerry.

EURE: Hold on one minute.

And Sarah if you don't mind if you could put the image up of Memorial Day. It has, I think some black soldiers from the Civil War, and it has a little write up. But the picture is fine.

So, while he talks, people can kind of imagine what it is and I know, Early, you're going to talk about some Confederate issues that go with it, but just give us a quick, and I'm sorry I interrupted, but go ahead.

IJAMES: Yeah, that's good, and thank you. And I appreciate you, you know, like said, we just started to be like Baptist preachers we don't go past the limit. So, thank you for keeping me between the [inaudible].

So, we just... During the Civil War, 1865.

EURE: I'm sorry, Earl. I had the mic muted. It's not your fault.

So, we are looking actually at the picture of a Freidman school instead of that.

But still, answer the question about the Memorial Day.

IJAMES: Okay, cool.

Well, let me ask you because what I did, I sent a picture of one of the first [inaudible] for the United States Colored Troops to serve as an artifact from the North Carolina Museum of History collection that I got.

EURE: Yeah, it's, it's on the screen right now.

IJAMES: Okay, great. So, what's on the screen now is called an identification tag. Today, United States Army, they call them dog tags.

In case you are killed in action or dismembered, and people in your platoon, your company, your regiment can identify you and get you back to your family.

And so this was a new concept when the Civil War started.

But to remind our readers, the Civil War was the bloodiest conflict in American history.

It took more lives than all the wars in American history combined, and when I say all the wars, I'm literally talking about the American Revolution, The War of 1812, the

Spanish American War of 1847. I mean Spanish Mexican War of 1847. The Spanish American War of 1898. World War I, between 1914 and 18. World War II 1941 to 45 and then the 53,000 soldiers who were killed during Vietnam.

All of those were less in comparison, and the numbers to the 700,000 plus people who were killed and lost their lives between 1861 and 65.

EURE: Okay.

IJAMES: And so a large number of those people were African Americans and people of color, formerly enslaved.

And so when Abraham Lincoln issued the emancipation proclamation effective January 1st, 1863, it changed the course of the war, it changed the meaning of the war and it allowed [inaudible] troops [inaudible] segregated regiments into the war.

It's very important to note that before 1863 it was illegal for black people, for African Americans to be in the United States Army. And that's another whole history lesson Michael and maybe you wanna come to visit that one day.

But many people don't know and assume that black people and Indian people could join the United States Army before the Civil War, and they could not. So that's one thing.

But, when people of color did join the war, ironically it was first with the Confederate Army and the Confederates are the ones who began to actually celebrate as official Holiday Memorial Day. And it was after one of the bloody battles.

And, so, these battles 5 and 10,000 people at a time would die. And many thousands more would be injured, dismembered, they lose their arms and legs or lower torso.

And so, the effect of the war was devastating on the physical bodies of human beings, white, black and [inaudible.]

And as a result, first people were African Americans, and within that context, usually within the Confederate Army.

Now let's go to this artifact that I have on the screen.

That is an identification tag that was issued to the United States Colored Troops.

That tag was specifically given to a soldier, a private John [inaudible], who enlisted in the United States Colored Troops in 1863, as soon as it was legal for black people to join the army.

And when he did, he was issued that identification tag because the United States Colored Troops suffered heavy major casualties during the war. Many times more than the all-white units.

And so that tag was given to the first North Carolina colored infantry, that was later federalized for the 35th United States Colored Troops and to John Jasper in particular in 1863.

Now, even though on the [inaudible] on the medallion itself, it says 1861, 1862 and 1863.

As far as historiography, we have never seen an artifact that actually belongs to another soldier, identification tag like that.

So, but that's a great question. Memorial Day and the origins of it. Thank you.

EURE: Alright.

And thank you, Earl.

And we're gonna keep that image up as we talk.

Umm, the next question I'm gonna ask you is gonna be about the Freedman's Bureau.

And I know that we're going out of turn, but the Freedman's Bureau in North Carolina was, as I understand it, housed at William Peace University. What is now William Peace.

Can you tell us a little bit about the Freedman's Bureau and what they did and then stay involved with the establishment of schools like Shaw University for Saint Augustine's?

IJAMES: Exactly. Thank you, that's excellent question too.

Before I forget though, just one ohh last thing about Private John Jasper.

This is how bad people wanted to join the war and fight for their freedom to help save the liberty and freedom of everybody in this country. And it's exhibited by Private John Jasper.

I researched him and he's from Washington, NC, which, by the way, is the original Washington in America, the first Washington in America, established in 1785, after the Revolutionary War.

That's where he was born and I found out that John Jasper was born in 1820.

EURE: Hello?

IJAMES: I'm sorry. Can you hear me?

EURE: Yes. Did you stop?

IJAMES: I'm sorry.

He was born in 1810. He was born in 1810. And that made him and when he enlisted in the Army 52 years young. 52. And I can imagine I am 52 years old right now, and I cannot imagine going through bootcamp and three years of actual war.

So, he actually left the plantation walked and escaped from slave traders and Confederate recruiting officers to go from Washington, NC, to Newburn, North Carolina, and enlist at age 54 in the in the Army.

And so that's something that really contemplate on how much people wanted freedom back then.

EURE: And we're gonna get you back Gaskill. But I want you to make sure...

IJAMES: The Freedmen's Bureau was a good question.

So, when the Civil War ended the federal government set up what they called the Bureau of Refugees abandoned Lands and Treatment, also known as the Freedmen's Bureau.

And the objective were several things. Back then as everyone knows, and if you don't, you need to know that most people who were enslaved did not have nuclear families.

In other words, you didn't have a mother and a father, a sister, and a brother that were usually all on the same farm and plantation.

That was very rare, so one of the main objectives of the war was to reconnect families with their kinfolk. And also to create a safe space for them to do so. So the Fredmen's Bureau in North Carolina and the capital city of Raleigh was that was then called Peace Institute.

It was established in 1856 and 57 by William Peace, and his endowment here in Raleigh.

He was very wealthy white man who opened the school initially for white women, which Peace Institute was a two-year institute. But the significance of that is historically that spot as it was chosen, it actually allowed for Peace and Peace University to play a significant role in the freedom of everyone because one of the roles of the previous bureau was to settle disputes among freed men and free people. And many times, former slave owners who would then usually be employing them with wages.

And so, one example that I found that I'm gonna be using in an upcoming exhibit is a dispute between a man here and Wake County and his former slaveholder over a horse. And who actually owned the horse.

And so the Freedmen's Bureau was used to settle that dispute instead of the Wake County Court. But now many times the Freedmen's Bureau weighed on the side of the free people, a lot of the white people in the South did not like that and actively rallied against it and vilified it. And so, it did not have a long tenure as long as it should have been.

But to your point, Michael, it was also very instrumental in the founding of Saint Augustine's University. Now, that was established in 1867 because a lot of the trustees and the people who helped to establish who we now call Saint Augustine's University. This in coordination in conjunction with that previous Bureau that's on the campus, that was on the main campus building that you see on William Peace University now right there at the end of, on Peace Street right next to the end of Wilmington Street there. Uh, as it comes out in downtown Raleigh.

EURE: And I think Sarah has a picture.

IJAMES: Yeah, very good.

EURE: Okay.

IJAMES: Yeah, to that point, William Peace University is also participating in the capital city Juneteenth celebration.

EURE: Okay, don't spill the bean on that. Jerry's got a question.

IJAMES: Okay. Yeah.

EURE: No, we gonna ask you about it. We don't want you to tell us yet.

GREENE: That's perfect timing.

IJAMES: The Freedmen's Bureau...

EURE: Go ahead.

IJAMES: ...was essentially negotiating tool for freed people, people who were free from slavery, freedom from slavery to be able to mitigate disagreements or contracts with many times former slaveholders and land owners who they were working for after the Civil War.

EURE: Okay. Now, thank you for answering that Earl.

And before we get to the next question, I want to remind the audience, if you have a comment or question, ask them in chat and I know we already have some questions and comments, but I'm gonna let Jerry ask his question first, okay?

And it's gonna be about the upcoming Juneteenth, I think. Which will give you the opportunity to talk about what you were getting ready to talk about.

Okay, Earl?

GREENE: I was about to ask, there's some upcoming events in Raleigh and other places in North Carolina regarding Juneteenth. I was gonna ask, would you like to share any information about any of those activities?

IJAMES: Uh, yes, I can, and thank you. That's a great question.

Because one of the main reasons... did you say Jerry or Jeremy?

GREENE: Jerry.

IJAMES: Yes. So, Jerry, one of the main reasons that I've gotten involved with helping to educate people and bring the history back to life about Juneteenth is that many people automatically related to Texas, which is a problem.

However, Juneteenth as it relates to Texas needs to be more properly examined as it relates to North Carolina and North Carolina's role. And then within North Carolina, the individual geographic places during the civil war that contributed to Juneteenth.

So, let's back out of that.

Juneteenth celebrations are being planned across the state of North Carolina like they are across the nation. But one of our missions is to educate people about how it relates to them, specifically.

And so, I'm involved here in Raleigh with planning and coordination and the program for the inaugural capital city Juneteenth celebration, which will be the entire week of June 15th through June 20th.

And what we're doing this year is both on the national and the statewide scope level, because we here in North Carolina and at the North Carolina Museum of History in particular were contacted by the people in Washington, DC at the Smithsonian about helping to better explain Juneteenth to the nation because the Smithsonian wants to do a virtual presentation this year to help people better understand Juneteenth.

And so they've unrolled the program all the Civic Season, where we're gonna celebrate and commemorate American freedom between a week of Juneteenth, June 15th, all the way through 4th of July. And they want to use North Carolina in particular, to help the United States of America and the world understand Juneteenth.

And that is because the Civil War ended in North Carolina, number one that's important to know. The largest Confederate surrender in the history of the Civil War happened in Durham, North Carolina. That's important to know.

So, with all of that, it contributed to the end of the Civil War.

Now, while that was going on and the end of the Civil War was happening, United States Colored Troops, who have been raised at the direct result of the Emancipation Proclamation were in North Carolina to help everyone be free from slavery. And that's important to know, not only black people.

Well, white people and Indian people and everyone were required to obey the laws of slavery or what we called the slave covenants.

So, that's another topic, but having said that, Juneteenth in New Bern, North Carolina, where they're gonna have a big program on June 19th that Saturday in New Bern, where, that is where the Union Army and Navy first occupied North Carolina, and any place on the southeastern coast outside of New Orleans.

And they captured Newburn, North Carolina on March the 14th, 1862. And when I talked with the planners and working with them down there, they celebrate their Juneteenth when the Army liberated Newburn from slavery on March 14th, 1862. So they educate people in New Bern about that.

Likewise, I have helped Goldsboro do the same thing, because fast forward at the end of the war, the United States Colored Troops were actually in North Carolina with Union General William T. Sherman. And they were in Wilmington and Fort Fisher with the general Kilpatrick down there helping to liberate Wilmington and southeastern North Carolina from slavery.

But what they did also is to defeat the Confederates at the Second Battle of Fort Fisher in the largest amphibious assault in the history of the world, before D-Day.

Now, I was telling this history yesterday to the state legislators and I told them to imagine.

So, D-Day in World War II and the images on TV that we saw of the paratroopers by the thousands dropping into Normandy.

And if you can consider an image like that, of all black troops in the Civil War they weren't dropping out of planes, but they were jumping out of boats into the Atlantic Ocean and to the Cape Fear River. And they were seizing and seizing the largest, [inaudible] in the history of the world called Fort Fisher.

And they did that in the largest amphibious assault in the history of the world.

And when it ended, and the Congress found out about that action and that heroic deed for capturing when the 27th United States Colored Troops planted the Union flag in January 1865. The news when it was telegraphed, to the U.S. Capital and is what caused the United States House of Representatives to actually vote on the 13th amendment outlawing slavery.

And so, in Wilmington, North Carolina, and that part of the state and Myrtle Beach in that area, they actually celebrate that in January along what used to be called Emancipation Day. Because the Emancipation Day was what was originally celebrated as Juneteenth in North Carolina, in South Carolina, in Virginia and Georgia, because of course, Juneteenth was actually again effective in Texas at the end and after the Civil War actually ended.

So Juneteenth in Wilmington is different than Juneteenth in Wilmington and Juneteenth in Goldsboro, for example, is where General Sherman captured Fayetteville and Goldsboro in March of 1865. And he required the 135th United States Colored Troops Regiment that he had raised in Goldsboro to actually build the first actual road from Goldsboro to Raleigh.

Before 1865 there was not a US 70 highway or a Hwy 55 that connected Goldsboro to Raleigh. There wasn't the road between Goldsboro and Raleigh.

And so, and in about three weeks, United States Colored Troops built a road from Goldsboro to the capital in Raleigh for 100,000 Union troops to March into Raleigh and capture Raleigh and help end the war.

So in Goldsboro on May 10th Congressman Butterfield actually went down there and delivered their Juneteenth celebration, which have been postponed due to the pandemic from March to May.

So coming full circle Capital City Juneteenth celebration is centered around the fact that when those United States Colored Troops were here in Raleigh, the African American people in the state of North Carolina determined to have what was called a Freedmen's Convention.

This was the first such convention of his kind anywhere in the country and in the South, and it was held in Raleigh at a place called Saint Paul's AME Church, which is still standing downtown in Raleigh.

And St. Paul's participation in our annual African American cultural celebration, which Mike is a member of our selection committee.

And so, what happened is that the Freedmen's Convention was held deliberately in Raleigh in September and October of 1865, while the United States Colored Troops were in Raleigh, so that it could afford some degree of protection.

And while that convention was taking place, the expressed purpose of that Freedmen's Convention at Saint Paul AME Church was for the 350,000 formally enslaved men, women and children in North Carolina. And about the 35,000 former free people of color in the state of North Carolina to claim the rights of citizenship, American citizenship, and to demand equality before the law and to mark those resolutions to the state capitol downtown in Raleigh. That's capitol, with an OL, the building in downtown Raleigh across from the museum.

And that is when the state legislators had called a special session for November and December of 1865 to ratify that 13th amendment that the U.S. House and U.S. Senate had ratified after Fort Fisher. After the U.S. Colored Troops had captured Fort Fisher, they ratified, they voted on the 13th amendment in Congress. And the process is, after Congress votes on an amendment what they do is they send that amendment to all the states in the Union so that those state legislatures have debate whether or not to ratify that amendment

and give 3/4 of those states ratify that amendment, then that amendment becomes a law in the United States Constitution. And so that's the process.

So, back then, the United States, actually had 36 states, not 50. But in 1865 there were only 36 states.

So, when November of 1865 got around, North Carolina was about the 24th or 25th state to vote on the amendment. Now this is very significant because there were eleven former Confederate states, including North Carolina, so, if you do your math, 36 minus 11 leaves 25. So, when North Carolina begins to debate the 13th amendment outlawing slavery, 25 states have already ratified the amendment. Which meant that only two more states needed to ratify the amendment and two of those states would need to be southern states because the former southern states of the former Confederate states had not yet ratified the 13th amendment.

So, when North Carolina's amendment debate took place, the Freedmen's Convention at Saint Paul Church have launched the resolution demanding citizenship and equality before the law to the state capital to the legislature for the state legislature in North Carolina refused to acknowledge them and would not consider their resolutions.

And so, what they did is literally slam the door on the Freedmen's Convention and then proceeded to debate the 13th amendment. But one of the caveats or one of the resolutions that the state legislature demanded before they could vote on ratifying the 13th amendment was that they passed a resolution calling for the removal of the United States Colored Troops from the state of North Carolina because they were quote, a hindrance and a danger to the core color people and a nuisance to the white people of the state of North Carolina, end quote.

And that was dated October 17th, 1865.

EURE: Okay, and Earl...

IJAMES: So that resolution passed and with that the state of North Carolina proceeded to ratify the 13th amendment, but the colored troops had to leave North Carolina. They had to leave Raleigh, they had to leave Wilmington, they had to leave Goldsboro, they had to leave Fayetteville, they had to leave Tarboro.

And the federal government reassigned them out to Texas and that's where they became part of Juneteenth that ended on June 30th, 1866. A full year after the [inaudible] of June 19, 1865, when they first arrived in Galveston, Texas.

So, that's a very long answer. I know, and I probably went over my time and thank you for letting me explain that.

EURE: Well, you actually are ending at the end.

So, Jerry, I thank you for participating, do you have anything? You have 30 seconds you can say.

GREENE: No, I don't have any questions, but just listening to what he were saying, you gave a lot of good information.

EURE: Alright, thank you.

And Earl, as we talked before, you'll be back on June the 10th and we will talk more.

So, this is the end and Jerry and I have to go to a meeting that starts in a minute.

So, thank you.

IJAMES: Thank you, and June 10th we'll be in Rocky Mount celebrating Juneteenth on June 10th [inaudible] for Black Music Month.

So, thank you.

EURE: And thank you.

And we'll be back next month, June the 10th.

Thank you. And thank you, Jerry.

IJAMES: Thankyou Michael, and thankyou everybody.

Bye now.