



## **ABHM Book Club Discussion Guide**

**June 20th, 2024 at 6 PM CT**

***On Juneteenth* by Annette Gordon-Reed (2021)**

### **How to Use this Guide:**

[America's Black Holocaust Museum](#) staff created this guide to assist in reading and discussion of *On Juneteenth*. Please feel free to print a copy and keep it with your book as you lend to friends and others who are interested. Do not expect to get through all of the questions during the upcoming meeting nor in one sitting. Perhaps consider them as conversation starters or an invitation to reflect more deeply about this book.

### **Suggested Questions for Discussion:**

1. What did you learn about the origin story of Juneteenth by reading this book? About the complicated history of Texas? Why does Gordon-Reed argue “if the promise of Juneteenth lived anywhere in Texas, it was in Galveston”? See pages 11, 13, 61, 122, 124, 134, and 137.
2. Although Galveston has been celebrating since 1865 and Milwaukee since 1971 (which is one of the longest-running celebrations in the country), Juneteenth only became a federal holiday in 2021 (when this book was written). What does this book have to say about how we should celebrate and reflect on Juneteenth as a holiday today? How will this celebration compare to that of July 4th in your eyes? See pages 125 and 135.
3. How does Gordon-Reed complicate the traditional Texas historical narrative? What did you learn about Mexican and indigenous history in what became Texas and how does this relate to it becoming a slave state? What issues does she bring to the forefront regarding archives and education when it comes to telling a more honest and inclusive history of Texas and the U.S.? See pages 14, 19, 23, 25, 28, 39, 81-83, and 105.

4. How did you feel about the autobiographical nature of this historical analysis? How did Gordon-Reed's own life story add to our understanding of the history of desegregation/integration, Juneteenth, slavery, and racial justice? See pages 32, 33, 39, 55, 90, 117, 120, 135, and 137.
5. How does the history of lynching and racial violence fit into Gordon-Reed's analysis of Texas and Juneteenth? What about violence, in general? For those of you who are familiar with his story, how do these instances relate to ABHM founder, Dr. James Cameron? See pages 34-36, 100, and 125.
6. What did *On Juneteenth* teach us about the Reconstruction Era? Why were schools and education a central pursuit of newly freed Black people in this country? How did integration impact Black teachers and predominantly Black schools and why? See pages 49, 50, 51, 129, 131, and 132.
7. How does Gordon-Reed define the difference between history, memory, and mythology? How does this relate to Hollywood and pop culture representations of Texas history? What does she share about her own family and missed opportunities for collecting and sharing the stories of her elders? See pages 20, 37-38, 58, 93, 94, 101, 102, 108, 115, and 120.
8. How does Gordon-Reed complicate the 1619 project? What does this book say about the diversity of the African continent? How does she define "Blackness," "whiteness," and "Americanness"? How are they interrelated in the story she tells? See pages 44, 45, 57, 61, 63, 67, 70, 71, 72, 97, and 106.