



## Opal Lee

Known as the “Grandmother of Juneteenth,” Ms. Opal Lee was present on June 17, 2021, when President Joe Biden signed the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act bill that established June 19 or “Juneteenth” a federal holiday. Ms. Lee said on that day, “Now we can celebrate freedom from the 19th of June to the 4th of July!”

Opal Lee was born in Marshal, Texas in 1926 and moved to Fort Worth, Texas in 1937. At the age of 12, her family’s home was destroyed on June 19, 1939, but she nor her family allowed that to deter them from making an impact in the community. She has served on many boards and with many organizations including Citizens Concerned with Human Dignity (CCHD), Habitat for Humanity, and the Tarrant County Black Historical & Genealogical Society dedicated to the preservation of the history of the Fort Worth Black populace. During her tenure as Chairman of the Community Food Bank, the organization received the 1.3-million-dollar 33,000 sq. ft. facility that now serves 500 families a day.

Ms. Lee is the oldest living board member of the National Juneteenth Observance Foundation (NJO) a national movement started by the late Dr. Ronald Myers to have Juneteenth declared a National Holiday. At 90 years of age, she started her walking campaign from Fort Worth, TX to Washington, DC to bring awareness to the need for celebrating Juneteenth nationally. She walked 2.5 miles in cities across the country to represent the 2.5 years it took after Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation for enforcement to reach Texas to free the enslaved. In 2019, she launched an online petition campaign that garnered over 1.6 million signatures to continue the crusade for holiday observance.