

# Black History Month 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment



National Freedom Day kicks off the celebration of Black History Month. Freedom Day commemorates the signing of a resolution by Abraham Lincoln on February 1, 1865, that became the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. While the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863 outlawed slavery in certain states, the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment abolished slavery throughout the country.

On December 6, 1865, 10 months after the resolution was signed and 8 months after the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution is ratified.



The 13<sup>th</sup> amendment to the United States Constitution provides that:

**“Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.”**

**“Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.”**



Major Richard Robert Wright Sr., a former slave, college founder and banker led the effort to create National Freedom Day in observance of Feb 1, 1865.



On Jan 25, 1949, President Harry Truman signed the bill establishing National Freedom Day on February 1.



Though the 13th Amendment outlaws slavery, it does not apply to persons convicted of a crime. This loophole led to former slaves being convicted of petty crimes then “convict leased” to plantation owners and railroad industrialists, and later chain gangs and mass incarceration.

<https://www.history.com/news/13th-amendment-slavery-loophole-jim-crow-prisons>  
<https://www.history.com/topics/black-history/thirteenth-amendment>  
<https://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/us/national-freedom-day>

