

To All Department Members,

Tomorrow, Saturday August 1st is Emancipation Day in Ontario. This commemorates the United Kingdom's Abolition of Slavery Act which came into effect on August 1, 1834 throughout almost all of the British colonies. More than 800,000 people of African descent throughout the British Empire were freed when the Act came into effect, and the day has been officially commemorated in Ontario since 2008 although it has been celebrated for much longer. It remains an important expression of identity for Ontario's Black communities and a reminder of the continued struggles faced by the people of African descent towards a more inclusive and diverse society.

In honour of Emancipation day I would like to suggest a couple of things you could do.

One is to take a virtual tour of the Griffin House in Ancaster [link](#). The Griffin House was built in 1827 and was purchased in 1834 by Enefers Griffin – an escaped African American slave – along with the surrounding 50 acres, which his descendants farmed for the next 150 years. It is recognized as an important Canadian Black History site and stands as a testament to the bravery and determination of black men and women who journeyed to freedom in Southern Ontario, by the Underground Railroad.

And the second is a link (if you haven't already seen it) to a transcript of Barack Obama's eulogy at John Lewis's funeral yesterday. It is moving, informative and important at so many different levels ([link](#)).

So however you're going to be spending it, I'd like to wish you and your families an enjoyable, restful and safe long weekend.

Nick