



AARON DOUGLAS

UNCOVERING AMERICA

with the National Gallery of Art

Aaron Douglas
Into Bondage
1936, oil on canvas
National Gallery of Art, Washington
Corcoran Collection (Museum Purchase
and partial gift from Thurlow Evans
Tibbs, Jr., The Evans-Tibbs Collection)

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What does it mean to be American?

Most African Americans living in the United States today are descended in part from enslaved Africans.

In 1936, Aaron Douglas chose to portray the journey of African American life from slavery to the present in a series of murals commissioned for the Texas Centennial Exposition in Dallas. *Into Bondage* was one of these paintings. The series was installed in the Negro Hall of Life, which opened to the public on Juneteenth (June 19).

Union Army officials publicly announced the abolition of US slavery in Galveston, Texas, on June 19, 1865, months after the war ended. Today, Juneteenth celebrates the end of slavery in the US.

DISCUSSION PROMPTS

How does Douglas show the individuals' strength and power in his painting despite their enslavement?

What rights had black Americans gained by the 1930s, when Douglas painted *Into Bondage*? What rights and freedoms did they have yet to gain?

Why do you think Juneteenth, a commemoration of the abolition of slavery, is an important holiday to celebrate?



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