

## LAWCHA Member Paul Ortiz on Emancipation Day in Florida

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LAWCHA Member Paul Ortiz wrote a stunning article on the nearly uncelebrated Emancipation Day, May 20, in Florida. He writes, "Today, May 20, is Emancipation Day in Florida. In order to commemorate this magnificent event-which is all but forgotten in the Sunshine State-the Coalition of Immokalee Workers asked me to write a short essay on the significance of Emancipation Day in a state where slavery is still a fact of life for thousands of workers in our agricultural industry. Please take a few moments out of your busy schedule to click the "Publix Supermarkets" link in the Facing South url to ask Publix to join the CIW at the bargaining table. Working together, we can make Emancipation Day in Florida-and in the United States more generally-more meaningful than ever."

### [VOICES: A new Emancipation Day for Florida's Farmworkers?](#)

On May 20, 1865 United States General Edward M. McCook gave the first reading of the Emancipation Proclamation in the state of Florida. It was a moment that African Americans had fought for. During the Civil War, over 1,000 black Floridians had joined nearly a quarter of a million African Americans across the nation to serve in the Union Army and Navy.

Many more worked as scouts, spies, and laborers in a struggle to end the long nightmare of slavery. Henceforth, black Floridians observed May 20 as a sacred day of remembrance of the Peculiar Institution's many victims, and in hope that the nation would nevermore place property rights above human rights.

See the full piece at [SoutherStudies.org](#).

## Author



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