National Freedom Day celebrates the day that President Abraham Lincoln signed the 13th amendment, which formally abolished slavery. On February 1, 1865, Richard R. Wright, who was enslaved at the time of the Emancipation Proclamation, lobbied for the creation of National Freedom Day and held a grassroots celebration on February 1, 1942, then went on a national speaking tour to push for national recognition. Wright was a trailblazer in the post-reconstruction era and made great contributions in the fields of education, banking, and publishing, although he died in 1947 before his efforts at national recognition were realized. On January 25, 1949, President Harry Truman signed the bill that established February 1 as an official observance.

Charlane Oliver and Tequila Johnson are the co-founders and co-executive directors of The Equity Alliance, a grassroots non-profit advocacy organization in Nashville that educates, empowers and mobilizes Black people to take action and keep government in check. By focusing on democracy, growth and power, TEA improves the quality of life of Black Americans. With the election of President Biden and Vice President Harris, Oliver has been named among 8 women fighting for voting rights in the South, and Johnson is cause-driven community organizer with numerous awards and accolades. Both Oliver and Johnson were recently recognized as The Tennessean’s 2020 People of the Year. For more on Oliver, Johnson and the work of The Equity Alliance visit theequityalliance.org.