



Statement on Juneteenth

The first Juneteenth (then called Jubilee Day) took place on June 19, 1866, one year after Union troops led by General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, proclaiming that individuals subjected to slavery were now free. General Granger and his troops shared this liberating announcement more than two years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation (on January 1, 1863), which freed all slaves in the Confederate States. Again, it took more than two years for this legal and moral pronouncement to reach those whose rights and lives were exploited by the institution of slavery.

Over the next century, Juneteenth was celebrated sporadically throughout the United States, mostly by African Americans. In 1997, Ben Haith created the red, white and blue Juneteenth flag to commemorate the liberation and connect the holiday deeply to the vision of the United States.

While many states, including California, officially recognized Juneteenth, only one had declared it a state holiday—Texas, and this did not take place until 1979.

In 1996, the first federal legislation to recognize Juneteenth was introduced into the U.S. House of Representatives. In 2003, the State of California held its first official observation. By 2019, 47 states and the District of Columbia recognized Juneteenth, but still only Texas declared it an official holiday. It wasn't until June 17, 2021, that President Joseph Biden signed Juneteenth as a federal holiday into law. Even with this, only 28 states recognize Juneteenth as a public holiday. Sadly, California is still not one of them.

For LSS of Northern California, the significance of Juneteenth cannot be overstated. As an organization, we are dedicated to social justice. We recognize that everyone is a valuable human being, worthy of respect and dignity, and significantly deserving of a safe and stable place to call home with sufficient food on the table.

We acknowledge that while African Americans make up 13% of the population of the United States, they comprise 40% of those experiencing homelessness. Further, African American youth have an 83% higher risk of becoming homeless than white youth.

Homelessness is only one component of the prevailing injustice and institutional racism that continues to dishonor America. Inequality and discrimination (institutional and individual) reduce access to life-giving services, limit educational opportunities and minimize employment advancement.

Injustices such as these will not do, and we are determined to do everything we can to continue the celebration and the practice of freedom and equality.

On this Juneteenth, consider wearing red, white and blue—the colors of Juneteenth (our

American colors of freedom); eating and drinking red foods to symbolize perseverance and acknowledge the struggle that enslaved people endured; taking time to meditate on freedom and on how none of us are free and equal until we all are free and equal; and reflecting on the many great contributions African-Americans made and continue to make to our world.

Let us all honor the full freedom of all of us and work diligently to ensure that freedom of all remains the bedrock of the United States of America.

Appreciatively,

Carol Roberts, PhD
CEO

Our Mission

To promote stability and honor the dignity of those we serve by providing supportive housing services that lead to self-sufficiency.

