



Recognizing Juneteenth

Dear colleague,

155 years ago today - more than two and half years after the confederates surrendered in the Civil War – military directives to free the slaves reached Galveston, Texas. The news was received poorly by slaveowners, many of whom whipped, beat or killed their slaves to prevent them from leaving. Some slaves were able to escape to find family that had been sold and taken to other states. Others stayed with their slaveowners because they didn't know and couldn't imagine a different life.

It was many years before June 19th was recognized, as it is today, because the 'freedom' of being released from slavery didn't end the oppression. Further governmental and societal measures were taken to suppress blacks, including Jim Crow, through the 1960s. Even now, [Juneteenth](#) is bittersweet for many Black Americans. Some communities celebrate joyfully and some commemorate it quietly.

Today, during this time of racial division and unrest, Juneteenth provides us with an opportunity for reflection and action. As we consider the significance of more than 400 years of animus and degradation towards the Black community, we can understand the anger, fear and offense being experienced at the overt resurgence of racism and racist acts in America.

This is trauma. It is a trauma that continues to influence and impact the Black community, and it is relived in every videotaped physical or emotional assault, every police brutality news story, every 'all lives matter' argument on social media. Every 'move on', 'get over it', 'that was so long ago' comment prevents healing. And, we know, in our work with families that unresolved trauma demands a healing-centered approach. That is our vision and our role.

Today, each of us can commit – and commence - individually and as a department to be better and to do better.

Stay safe and be well.

Christine