

June 18, 2020

Dear Brooks Community,

As we strive to live the values of an antiracist community at Brooks School, it is important that we acknowledge watershed moments in Black history; tomorrow, June 19th, is one of those watershed moments. June 19th, also known as “Juneteenth”, is an annual celebration of the emancipation of Black Americans in the United States. This day was created by Black Americans to celebrate their freedom after centuries of slavery in the United States. Freed Blacks in Texas created “Jubilee Day” on June 19th, 1866, and this tradition spread as Black people migrated from Texas into other parts of the country. It is important that we do not whitewash American history and that we acknowledge that Black people freed themselves and fought for their freedom long before the Civil War and Emancipation Proclamation. Specifically, Black Americans took up the date June 19th, 1865, the day when the state of Texas acknowledged what had already been true in fact and in spirit, to commemorate the full realization of their freedom. However, it must be noted that Black Americans were freed only in the Confederate States and that it took the 13th Amendment before border states, like Delaware, followed. Even though “freedom” was granted, Black Americans continued to face decades of systemic racism perpetrated by Jim Crow laws, the war on drugs, mass incarceration and police brutality. It is June 19th, 2020 and Black Americans still continue the struggle and fight to realize the promise of freedom. As the Black Lives Matter movement has forced us to realize, we can no longer hide the truth of this continued oppression and denial of freedom.

At Brooks School, we stand in solidarity with our Black community members and lift up the Black Student Union. As stated by Coshandra Dillard of Teaching Tolerance, “Lessons about Juneteenth need to recognize the challenges those who fight injustice have always faced, but they shouldn’t be marked only by the tragedy of enslavement. Students, particularly Black students, can find empowerment in the jubilant celebrations of culture, activism and the humanity of a people.” Today, we celebrate in honor of our Black community members, but we cannot stop there. As a community, we must continue to be actively antiracist in our efforts to strive for equality and justice.

Additional Juneteenth Resources:

- ["So, You Want to Learn About Juneteenth" Derrick Bryson Taylor](#)
- ["Teaching Juneteenth" Coshandra Dillard](#)
- ["1619 Project" New York Times](#)

All my best,

Ms. Johnston  
Dean of Community Life  
Brooks School