



June 17, 2022

President Cropper

Welcome – Cal Maritime’s First Annual Juneteenth Celebration

Welcome everyone. Welcome to our Juneteenth Celebration.

We are taking time today to observe Juneteenth. One year ago today, President Biden signed legislation into law making Juneteenth a federal holiday. As a result, our nation will officially observe Juneteenth on Monday. Juneteenth has been celebrated in Vallejo for many years and today we are proud to join in that celebration.

So, what are we celebrating? We are celebrating the end of chattel slavery in the United States in 1865. It ended amidst a Civil War in which over 360,000 Union soldiers gave their last full measure. Two-and-a-half years after the Emancipation Proclamation, it took more federal soldiers to enforce it. They went into the far reaches of the Confederacy, in this case marched into Galveston to enforce the emancipation of slaves. On the morning of June 19, 1865, [Union](#) Major General [Gordon Granger](#) issued General Order No. 3, finally freeing the last slaves in the Confederacy.

While we celebrate this momentous day, we must also acknowledge the impacts that the cruel, horrible and utterly debasing practice of slavery wrought on African-Americans. The toll has been heavy, and the journey to freedom has been uphill all the way – at times treacherous -- even deadly. So today, I ask you to reflect on that struggle for freedom, that struggle for equal rights, that struggle for the franchise.

I returned yesterday from the CSU Juneteenth Symposium, where I, like the hundreds in the audience with me, was confronted with a sobering observation: While our fellow Americans are no longer shackled in chains, many of them have been shackled, simply, by the way they have been treated by other Americans. As Dr. Cornell West shared, this has led to an “incarceration of the mind.” Many of our fellow Americans cannot see a path forward to true freedom in a society that creates barrier after barrier to that freedom. Some of these barriers are seen and felt, many are not. I suggest it is time for us to discover – and eliminate - those barriers.

How? Maybe we can start with this – unshackling our own minds. Each moment we are on and off-campus, intentionally look for the barriers to success for our Black employees, students, neighbors and fellow citizens. Look for those that are glaringly obvious – and those that are hidden. The hidden barriers are especially important – they may not be sinister, but they are real barriers and must come down.

The hidden barriers may originate in biases that are unconscious. They may exist because “that’s how we did it in 1972 and we haven’t really interrogated that thinking.” However they were formed, they are still barriers. People don’t always feel policy – but they usually experience its intensive, grind-down nature alongside insensitivity or inflexibility in the resulting procedures and practices. Or more simply, the way we behave or respond may just be the real barrier.

If you will agree to unshackle your own minds and discover these barriers, guess what will happen.

Nothing.

Because looking, observing and noting what needs fixing... does not fix the problem. It's the necessary - but insufficient step - to positive progress.

So, the next domino has to be a move. A move from expressions of unity and solidarity toward concrete actions... and moving into - in the lyrics of Earth, Wind and Fire – the kingdom of doing. Moving from saying I care to showing I care. Moving from sharing ideas to implementing plans. Moving from acknowledging the problems to acting on them and solving them.

This is my call to you. See. Act. Solve.

Let's start moving. Now.

Thank you!