



PEPPERDINE
Human Resources



"The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free. This involves an absolute equality of rights and rights of property between former masters and slaves, and the connection heretofore existing between them becomes that between employer and hired laborer."

Major General Granger, General Order Number 3

In 2017, my husband was working on the Juneteenth episode of the hit sitcom "black•ish" on ABC. "[B]lack•ish" was an award-winning sitcom that ran for eight seasons and comically portrayed the life of an upper-middle-class Black family in the metro Los Angeles area navigating their identity as it related to their success. My husband and I were very excited about the exposure that this episode would give to Juneteenth and how people around the world would learn more about this significant day in history, marking the true emancipation of all enslaved people.

On this holiday, we get to honor the resilience of our enslaved ancestors and celebrate the freedom promised to them that day in Texas. I grew up in Memphis, TN celebrating this day with family and cultural traditions like eating red-colored food; the barbeque and cold strawberry soda were my favorites. But also, around this time, I often think about the mixed emotions of my ancestors, learning they were no longer enslaved but had technically been "freed" two and half years prior. What could those 250,000 people in Texas have done with the extra two years of freedom if the Proclamation had been enforced—as it should have been—throughout every state? Those lost years make me

think about today, and those on the receiving end of injustices, such as the falsely imprisoned, and how much time has been shaved from their freedom.

Juneteenth is a celebration but also a reminder of our journey toward true and timely freedom for all people. During the Juneteenth episode of "black•ish," the lead character, Dre, was explaining the significance of the Juneteenth holiday when his supervisor responded, "Maybe it's healthier for you to put all this negativity behind you. Your people have been free for a long time." Of course, we acknowledge our progress. But we are continuously reminded that the promises made that day of "absolute equality of rights and rights of property" sadly have not proven true for the descendants of the enslaved Africans in America. After the abolition of slavery and the Reconstruction period, Jim Crow laws and redlining prevented African Americans from accumulating and passing on wealth within their families.

In the spirit of Pepperdine University's mission to pursue truth and knowledge in a context of faith and values, we should strive for a community that embodies justice, unity, and understanding. Juneteenth is not just a day of remembrance; it's a call to action. As we commemorate Juneteenth, let's dismantle systemic barriers, promote inclusivity, and empower every member of our community. As we learn and grow together, we enrich our understanding of the past, our role in the present, and our impact on the future.

When I was an undergraduate student at Spelman College, I was a member of the glee club, and we often performed "We Are" by Sweet Honey in the Rock. This song reminds me that I am my ancestor's wildest dreams.

Let's keep dreaming together and make our descendants proud of our contributions toward absolute freedom for all God's children.

"Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep" (Romans 12:15, NIV).

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