



Juneteenth is a national holiday. Some, like a former institution of mine, do not honor it. Others believe it should not be a holiday. Albeit, for totally different reasons, I, too do not think Juneteenth, the event itself, should have existed.

Why? I lament that Juneteenth needs to be a holiday because there never should have been a two-year delay in emancipating people who never should have been enslaved. However, since none of us were here to experience what any of our ancestors experienced in 1865, it is necessary for us to commemorate Juneteenth today because it is the only national holiday commemorating the end of the worst era of our history, an era in which our country failed to live up to the ideals promised in the Declaration of Independence: "...that all [people] are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

Though we failed then, today God has graced us with a "do over." We each can do our part to help our precious democratic experiment live up to her loftiest ideals.

It is fitting, therefore, that Juneteenth is celebrated nearly two weeks to the day before the commemoration of our freedom and independence as a nation, allowing us simultaneously to mourn the past, celebrate the present, and commit to doing better in the future. So, the Office for Community Belonging invites you to join us this June 19th, Juneteenth, in reflecting upon how we can each build a stronger, even more inclusive community at Pepperdine and—as a result—a fairer and more inclusive world.

**J. Goosby Smith**

Vice President for Community Belonging and  
Chief Diversity Officer