



June 19, 2020

Juneteenth Statement

We find ourselves in the midst of acknowledging the painful truth that persistent and systemic racism continues to grip aspects of our society and fuels deep injustice toward African Americans. As a system, as campuses, and as a broader community, we must acknowledge and learn from the lived experiences of our African American students and colleagues. We must commit to building the capacity to have difficult conversations and that begins with the recognition that their lives and lived experiences matter.

As an educational entity, Minnesota State emphasizes that learning and reflection is a lifelong journey. Recent events have brought to light for many of us gaps in our own educations, especially as they relate to the historical experiences of Black people in the United States. One aspect of these gaps is the history related to emancipation and freedom.

Juneteenth is both a celebration of the emancipation of those enslaved in Texas in 1865 and a stark reminder that freedom for Black communities was and continues to be delayed. While the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Abraham Lincoln on September 22, 1862 and became official on January 1, 1863, it was not swift or declarative in freeing African Americans from the bondage of slavery. Black people held as slaves in many states were not freed until the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in December 1865. We hope you will take some time today to join us in learning more about the history of Juneteenth as well as other emancipation celebrations that are observed by African American communities around the United States and abroad. As we take the time to learn we should acknowledge that barriers extending from our history of slavery still exist for many Black Americans today.

We invite you to learn more about the history of slavery in Minnesota from Dr. Christopher Lehman, Chair of the Department of Ethnic, Gender and Women's Studies at Saint Cloud State University, whose recent publication, [Slavery's Reach: Southern Slaveholders in the North Star State \(2019, Minnesota Historical Society\)](#) won the Minnesota Book Award in the category "Minnesota Nonfiction." Dr. Lehman was recently featured on the [Untold Stories of Central MN podcast from KVSC talking about his work and book.](#)

