

## Freedom To Be You!

### Dear Hornet Community,

Poet and playwright Oscar Wilde is credited with saying, “Be yourself, everyone else is already taken.” Wilde was a literary anomaly of his time, writing to expand readers’ minds about homosexual relationships and fully exercising his freedom to express himself through his clothing, speech, behavior, and writing. He also was imprisoned and had his career destroyed because of those who wanted to oppress him due to his expression of his homosexuality.

The [First Amendment of the Constitution](#) affords us freedom of speech, the press, and religion, and freedom to petition and assemble. However, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities, and Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), Jewish, Muslim, Sikh, and other ancestral or ethno-religious groups have been in constant and ongoing fights to claim and exercise those rights.

In June, we celebrate both PRIDE and Juneteenth.

PRIDE is an annual celebration that speaks to the civil rights of the LGBTQ+ communities to express their authentic selves, without apology, shame, or harassment. As with most movements, PRIDE was born out of an incident of injustice, on June 28, 1969, when police officers raided the Stonewall Inn Bar in New York City, where a majority of gay patrons were enjoying themselves and breaking no laws. Though Stonewall is a critical milestone, the national gay rights movement has many other antecedents, including when gay activists in 1964 demonstrated at the Army Induction Center in New York City, bearing the slogan “Homosexuals Died for the U.S., Too.”

Considering others who died while struggling for their rights under the constitutional ideal of freedom, we honor millions of Black people who endured over 250 years of legalized slavery (1619-1863) in Colonial America and the United States. These same people fought and died in both a personal and political civil war for their freedom and the freedoms of others.

History shows that two labor systems existed in the U.S. in 1860.

Under the Confederate banner in the South, agricultural labor widely was supplied by enslaved African people, a system enforced by law and built on white supremacy, dominance, and power that devalued, dehumanized, and brutalized dark-skinned people who lived under it.

At the same time, the North’s industrial labor system increasingly focused on manufacturing, utilizing the labor of poor, European immigrants from Germany, Ireland and Scandinavia and Black people who had escaped from legalized slavery of the south. As tensions intensified about which labor system would become the single labor system in America, the Civil War began.

While the Civil War was being fought, President Abraham Lincoln reluctantly freed some enslaved African people and allowed freed Black men to join the Union Army as the [United States Colored Troops](#) (U.S.C.T.). After four long, bloody years, the Union won the Civil War, and the institution of slavery was fully abolished. Before the states that made up the Confederacy were readmitted to the Union, the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments were added to the Constitution. These amendments, respectively, ended legalized slavery, provided equal protections to all under the law, and granted Black men the right to vote alongside white men. Women were still not afforded all of their rights at this time.

Though slavery had ended in most of the states in 1863 through the Emancipation Proclamation, it was not until June 19, 1865, that in Galveston, Texas, enslaved African people learned of their freedom. Therefore, we recognize that date as Juneteenth in celebration of the liberation and emancipation of Black people from the bondage of slavery. In 2021, Juneteenth was made a national holiday and the CSU issued its approval to make it a paid holiday this year and beyond.

In recognition of this, please help us celebrate [Juneteenth](#) 11 a.m. – 2 p.m. Tuesday, June 13, at Sac State in the Main Quad (near Sacramento Hall and Lassen Hall). As an anchor community, we will join in the celebration and parade at Juneteenth Sacramento on Saturday, June 17 at William Land Park.

To celebrate multiple types of freedom, please join [Sacramento PRIDE festivities](#), June 10-11. Though we still have work to do, we hope you will join us at all of these events celebrating victory over these historical and factual injustices.

**In partnership,**

**Dr. Mia Settles-Tidwell**

**Vice President for Inclusive Excellence & University Diversity Officer**

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