A Message on the Significance of Juneteenth From Kenneth Holmes

Senior vice provost for student life calls it a time to 'educate, engage and empower each other'

Kenneth Holmes, senior vice provost for student life at UNH, reflects on the significance of Juneteenth. Also known as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day, Juneteenth commemorates the emancipation of enslaved people in the United States, when Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865 and announced the end of slavery, two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was signed.

Holmes recalls growing up in Savannah, Georgia, as a descendent of slaves, "surrounded by the echoes of history."

"My elders shared tales of resilience and hope, grounding us in our heritage and the real meaning of freedom," he says.

Juneteenth serves as a reminder of the progress that has been made, as well as a chance to reflect on the work that still remains, Holmes says.
“Let us use this day to celebrate and reflect on how far we’ve come and still must go,” says Holmes. “Let us educate, engage and empower each other, continuing to build a community that upholds the dignity and rights of every individual.”

If you’d like to take part in local celebrations of Juneteenth, there are many community events (https://www.unh.edu/diversity-inclusion/community-equity-diversity/trainings-programs/juneteenth) scheduled in the Seacoast area and throughout the state to honor the day, including several events in Portsmouth on the holiday itself.

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