



## Office of the President

MSC 3Z  
New Mexico State University  
P. O. Box 30001  
Las Cruces, NM 88003-8001  
575-646-2035, fax: 575-646-6334  
president.torres@nmsu.edu

DATE: June 19, 2024

TO: Our NMSU Community

FROM: Mónica Torres, Interim President

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Torres".

SUBJECT: Reflections on Juneteenth

Today, I have been reflecting on the historical significance of Juneteenth. In 1863, the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln. It stated that “all persons held as slaves” ... “are, and henceforward shall be free.” It wasn’t until more than two years later that the news of emancipation finally made it to African Americans in Galveston, Texas. This day, now known as Juneteenth is an opportunity for our community to come together to celebrate, educate and advocate for social justice.

The truth is, the delay in word getting to Galveston about emancipation is something we see too often – genuine progress is made, but not everyone is able to benefit from that progress, at least not right away. I think about how history has shown us time and again, sometimes we lose the progress we’ve made as a society, only to have to fight for it once again.

NMSU’s own history shows the continued fighting and resilience in which African American students engaged. This was brought to light this afternoon in “Launching of a Legacy: Black Programs and Community,” an exhibit curated by NMSU alumna Laretta King at NMSU’s Branson Library. The exhibit chronicles the 50-year history of NMSU’s Black Programs. I’m so grateful for this curated collection, as it showcases a vast array of memorabilia, files and other records from student groups within Black Programs. Importantly, it chronicles the history of Black Programs and the experience of Black students at our university.

As a Minority-serving Institution, NMSU continues to emphasize the importance of equity, inclusion and diversity. Our mission aligns with the focus of Juneteenth: continued advocacy for antiracism, justice, social mobility and service to the broader community.

As the day comes to a close, I am proud that our NMSU community is dedicated to supporting and celebrating Juneteenth. It’s a holiday that asks our communities to understand and recognize the important and complicated moment in history that ended the policy of the enslavement of African Americans. We also know that even while the policy of enslavement in the U.S. ended more than 150 years ago, we unfortunately still see incidents of racism, hate and violence. This is why remembering our history while also connecting and engaging with our communities to find support and to support one another is so very important.

Let us honor Juneteenth. Let us celebrate all the progress we have made as a society. But let us not forget the struggles of our past, and the struggles that many still experience to this day.