

Juneteenth celebrates the abolition of chattel slavery in the United States of America in 1862. As we commemorate the anniversary of this glorious event, on the precipice of Independence Day, we implore you to reappraise the true cost of the American dream. According to the Declaration of Independence, all humans are guaranteed life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Instead, white supremacy robbed Black Americans of their rights using lynching, sharecropping, redlining, voter suppression, mass incarceration, environmental racism, and healthcare disparities.

One hundred fifty-five years have passed since Union Army Major General Gordon Granger, first arrived in Galveston, Texas to inform former slaves of their emancipation. However, the bonds of systemic racism still shackle our communities today. The 13th Amendment states, “Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as a punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or any place subject to their jurisdiction.” Thus, the Constitution supports slavery as a consequence for crime. African Americans only make up 13% of the U.S. population yet account for 37% of the US incarcerated population. Apparently, Blackness fulfills the criteria for a ‘lawful’ “convict[ion].” Despite the Founding Fathers' affinity for liberal ideals, they made anti-Blackness foundational to the American consciousness by weaving racism into all of our institutions: educational, economic, housing, judicial, medical, and political.

Though these systems were built to destroy us, we have used them to fuel our pursuit of happiness. We, [Sisterhood](#) and [The Society of the Griffins](#) aim to combat oppression by unifying, supporting, and empowering our community while amplifying our intersectional voices. We have joined our voices in making this statement to acknowledge the significance of Juneteenth by celebrating our victories, learning from our losses, and thriving as a collective. In this spirit of solidarity, our two groups have decided to come

together to cultivate our kinship and provide visibility to Black students and alumni within the Williams community.

Oluwatoyin Salau, Dominique “Rem’Mie” Fells, Riah Milton, Ahmad Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Philando Castille, Sandra Bland, Eric Gardner, Tamir Rice, Laquan McDonald, Michael Brown and Trayvon Martin. These are just some of the many names among countless others, martyred in America due to a culture of police violence and negligence. We call on these names to remind you that Black Lives Matter and justice has yet to be served for the use of terrorism and brutality against Black and brown bodies. On this day of celebration, it is with heavy hearts but enlightened spirits that we, the members of Sisterhood and The Society of the Griffins, embrace the long journey ahead towards our liberation.