
Bennington Observes Juneteenth

President Laura Walker <president@bennington.edu>

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BENNINGTON COLLEGE

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students,

Throughout this weekend and on Monday, Bennington College joins in the nationwide observance of [Juneteenth](#), which commemorates June 19, 1865, the day that the last enslaved people in America learned they were free.

The [Juneteenth flag](#) represents the historical significance of past events, serves as a present-day banner of racial solidarity, and acts as a symbol of hope. It was designed by activist Ben Haith in 1997. The flag features a white star at its center surrounded by a starburst over an arc with red on the bottom and blue on the top.

The white star symbolizes Texas, the birthplace of Juneteenth, and long-delayed freedom in every state in the nation. The starburst represents a nova, or the birth of a new star. It represents the beginning of a new age. The arc represents broadened horizons and new opportunities.

Like the American flag, the Juneteenth is red, white, and blue as a recognition that enslaved people were and their descendants are Americans. Black history and American history are one, intertwined and inseparable. It recognizes that Black Americans' challenges to patriotism are aligned with American ideals.

If you are a member of the Black American community or another racially minoritized group, we hope you will use Juneteenth to rest, reflect, connect, and heal. This is an opportunity to consider liberation, resilience, and the beauty and joy of African American culture.

Others can use the day in service of equity or to engage in gaining a deeper knowledge of Black American culture. It is an opportune time to initiate conversations about the scourge of racism in America, especially with children, and to face systemic and internalized racism with an earnest commitment to dismantle it.

Mia Schultz, President of the Rutland Area Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), echoes our hopes for Juneteenth. She wrote, "I encourage both racially minoritized people and others to spend the day engaging in meaningful conversations, learning about our shared history, and taking action to create a world where equality and justice prevail."

Everyone can come together to learn about and celebrate Black American culture at Juneteenth events. Locally, the Southwest Vermont Supervisory Union will hold a [Juneteenth Community Celebration](#) noon-3 pm on Saturday, June 17, 2023, at [113 Depot Street](#) in Bennington.

For Bennington College, we continue to work toward our just, equitable, and antiracist goal. We are learning, reflecting, and healing through meaningful action. This is work we all must do every day. We continue as a part of our mission to make the world more beautiful, sustainable, democratic, and just.

Sincerely,

Laura Walker

President

Alfredo Medina, Jr., Ph.D.

Vice President for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and College Diversity Officer