

**Message from the President  
Bennington College  
June 18, 2021**

Dear Faculty, Staff, and Students,

For the first time in history, the United States government observes today the 156th anniversary of Juneteenth, the day that the US Army freed enslaved people in Texas, ending slavery in the Confederate States.

The declaration was made on June 19, 1865, more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation, six months before the ratification of the 13th Amendment, and a century before the Civil Rights Act was passed in 1964. Juneteenth would mark the end of a sustained and horrific period of almost 250 years during which millions of people were enslaved in our country.

For Bennington College, [Juneteenth](#) is an opportunity to rededicate ourselves to the unfinished promise of a more perfect union, a reminder that actively dismantling institutionalized racism demands commitment and moral stamina.

In the words of James Baldwin, "History is not the past. It is the present."

We commend Congress and the Biden Administration for formally observing Juneteenth as a Federal holiday, and we are reviewing our internal policy as well. This step will need to be matched with substantive change on social, economic, and criminal justice for real progress to be realized.

On this Juneteenth, let us rededicate ourselves to advancing meaningful antiracist change.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Walker", written in a cursive style.

Laura Walker