



December 9, 2021

Road Map Bulletin: Juneteenth Update

Happy Thursday, Mount Sinai community –

As we are winding down the year, we wanted to share some exciting news. In 2022, Mount Sinai Health System will begin to phase in Juneteenth as an official paid holiday. As we have discussed previously in [this broadcast on the Intranet](#), Juneteenth celebrates the emancipation of the last enslaved African American people in the Confederacy in 1865. This is an American holiday for everyone to celebrate as well as remember, and we are honored and proud to formally join in the celebration.

First, the details: starting in 2022, Juneteenth will be a paid holiday for 1199SEIU employees. Because June 19—Juneteenth—falls on a Sunday in 2022, the holiday will be observed on Monday, June 20. As with other holidays like Christmas and New Year’s Day, Juneteenth will be treated as a floating holiday and employees who are eligible for premium pay will receive it for working on Juneteenth. The phase-in will continue in 2023 with all non-bargaining-unit (or “exempt”) employees.

Here’s why this matters: Juneteenth—also known as Jubilee Day, Emancipation Day, Freedom Day, and Black Independence Day—memorializes **June 19, 1865**, when Major General Gordon Granger of the Union Army arrived in Galveston, Texas, to proclaim the dual end of the Civil War and slavery, two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. **After this announcement, approximately 250,000 slaves in Texas learned that they were free.** While we celebrate this day, we must also acknowledge that General Granger’s announcement itself contained racist ideas, sending a clear message that freedom would not be free—this would only be the beginning of the fight for Black civil rights in America.



Photos from the earliest celebrations of Juneteenth in Texas between 1900 and 1908.

The following year, Texans began celebrating the day as Juneteenth, and the holiday has since spread across the country.



Al Edwards, a Black state legislator in Texas, led efforts to codify Juneteenth as a state holiday, which became official in 1980. Today, 46 states and the District of Columbia formally recognize the holiday and earlier this year, President Biden signed the

Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, designating Juneteenth as a federal holiday.

While this was a huge step forward, there is still work to be done to ensure Juneteenth is given its due as a national day of recognition and remembrance. As **Jeremy Boal**, MD, Executive Vice President and Chief Clinical Officer of Mount Sinai Health System, told us, “There is a long list of important moments that we do not, as a country, come together to celebrate—and the end of slavery is at the very top of the list. Making Juneteenth an official paid holiday for Mount Sinai gives us an opportunity to **recognize this historic day** and serves as a **reminder of the effort and persistence needed to make change** while giving us an opportunity to **rededicate ourselves to equity.**”

Recognizing Juneteenth at Mount Sinai has been years in the works, with many people playing an important role in making it a reality—but we would be remiss if we did not specifically mention the B.L.A.C.C. ERG (Black Leaders Advocating for Change & Community Employee Resource Group) [Juneteenth panel](#) hosted on June 15, 2021. We’d like to take a moment to thank our B.L.A.C.C. ERG leads, as well as the Office for Diversity and Inclusion and many others who helped with the event as panelists and collaborators:

- **Ronald Powers**, Assistant Director of Respiratory Services at Mount Sinai Morningside (ERG co-lead)
- **Monica Keith**, Operations Manager at the Mount Sinai Morningside Emergency Department (ERG co-lead)
- **Robin Givan**, Patient Representative, Mount Sinai Queens
- **Shirmira Wilson**, Care Coordinator, Mount Sinai Queens
- **Ashley Clouden**, Volunteer Coordinator, Mount Sinai West
- **Germaine Nelson**, DNP, MBA, NEA-BC, CPXP, RN, Clinical Program Manager for the Department of Environmental Medicine and Public Health
- **Donnette Truss**, Director of Human Resources for Mount Sinai Beth Israel and New York Eye and Ear Infirmary of Mount Sinai

- **Shawn Lee**, Associate Director of Operations Central Billing Office and *Bulletin* co-author

Designating Juneteenth as a holiday at Mount Sinai represents part of our efforts to create equity throughout the Health System, in line with the [Road Map for Action](#), and is one way we're helping ensure this day receives its due as a national holiday. No matter your background, racial and ethnic identity, or how long you and your family have lived in the United States, the legacy of slavery reverberates in everyday American life. Juneteenth is an opportunity for us to not just take part in celebrations, but also to reflect on the horrors of slavery, acknowledge how its tentacles reach through history and manifest today in inexcusable racism, interrogate that continued legacy today, and commit to moving toward equality.

We look forward to both continuing to engage Mount Sinai community members in this work and highlighting Juneteenth celebrations next summer. In the meantime, we encourage you to attend this event:

Join Us for an Upcoming Event

Chats for Change: Ableism x Racism and White Supremacy Culture—Join facilitators **Leona Hess**, PhD, Director of Strategy and Equity Education Programs at the Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai, and **Mary Koshy**, MPH, Director of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, on **Tuesday, December 14, at noon** to discuss how ableism is a system that places value on people's bodies and minds based on societally constructed ideas of normalcy, intelligence, and productivity, which are rooted in white supremacy culture, anti-Blackness, eugenics, colonialism, and capitalism. Explore what an inclusive society would look like and what our responsibility is to remove barriers and make life more accessible for everyone. By understanding the historical connection between racism and ableism, the chat will show how we can join our efforts to dismantle these interlocking systems of oppression. [Register on Zoom](#).

[Road Map for Action](#)

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