



Celebrating Juneteenth: A Reflection on Freedom and Unity

Juneteenth, also known as Freedom Day, is an important commemoration in American history. It marks the emancipation of enslaved African Americans in the United States, representing a significant milestone in the ongoing struggle for equality and justice. As an organization dedicated to protecting lives and property, we recognize the importance of this day and acknowledge the value of unity and freedom for all and the enduring principles it represents.

Juneteenth, observed on June 19th each year, commemorates the day in 1865 when Union Gen. Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, and announced the end of slavery. This announcement came two and a half years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued by President Abraham Lincoln. The day serves as a reminder that the path to freedom is a constant pursuit that requires dedication and resilience.

At CAL FIRE, we understand the importance of unity and community in overcoming challenges. The abolition of slavery was a collective achievement that required the combined efforts of people from all walks of life.

As Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a better person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in."

We value diversity and inclusivity within this organization and the communities we serve. Juneteenth reminds us to reflect on the experiences and embrace contributions of African Americans and other marginalized communities. It serves as a call to action to confront systemic barriers and create an equitable society where everyone can thrive. By fostering an inclusive environment, we strive to build a stronger, more resilient team capable of addressing the complex challenges of wildfire management.

Environmental justice is closely tied to the struggle for racial and social equality. Historically, underserved communities have disproportionately borne the burden of environmental hazards, including the devastating impacts of wildfires. We are committed to addressing these disparities by prioritizing equity in our operations and reaching out to vulnerable communities to enhance preparedness and resilience. Juneteenth reminds us to advocate for environmental justice, ensuring that all individuals have access to a clean and safe environment.

One of the ways that we work towards the goal of environmental justice is through our grants programs. For example, our [Urban and Community Forestry Grant Program](#) strives to increase the long-term benefits trees provide, and to improve the understanding and appreciation of urban trees. We place special consideration for projects that serve disadvantaged communities.

CAL FIRE's [Forest Health Program](#) is part of [California's Climate Investments](#), a program administered by the California Air Resources Board. The CCI puts billions of dollars to work reducing greenhouse gas emissions, strengthening the economy, and improving public health – particularly investing in disadvantaged communities as a priority.

As we celebrate Juneteenth, CAL FIRE remains committed to fostering a culture of equality, diversity, and inclusion. We are dedicated to recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce that reflects the communities we serve. By honoring Juneteenth, we reinforce our commitment to a future free from discrimination and injustice.

Together, let us commemorate this historic day and work towards building a brighter and more inclusive future for all.