

Remarks by Ardella Coleman, Vice President of Diversity and Talent Acquisition at the Juneteenth Event at Cooper University Hospital

Welcome.

I'd like to acknowledge our Co-CEOs, Dr. Anthony Mazzarelli and Kevin O'Dowd. Much appreciation for your continued support in moving the Cooper diversity agenda forward. I also want to thank the rest of our executive leadership team for continuing to help wherever necessary.

It took a lot of team members to help with an event at four different locations. For that, I'd like to thank some people before we move forward:

Chris Winn is always there to advise me. Thank you, Phyllis Liberi and her team in facilities; Steve Boyle and his team are amazing partners; Terese Vekteris and the communications and marketing team, and we could not do our work without them.

And many others.

I also want to thank HR for always supporting the work we do every day.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge the work of the African American Empowerment Enterprise TRG and its executive sponsors, Dr. Porter and Kevin Killian, who always stand by to assist.

That said, let's get started.

In 1852, Frederick Douglass delivered his speech "What to the slave is the 4th of July?" before the start of the Civil War. He laid bare the distance between the country's founding ideals and the life for millions of enslaved people. It wasn't until 13 years later, on June 19, 1865, when 2,000 Union soldiers rode into Galveston, Texas, to announce the end of both the Civil War and the end of slavery to 250,000 people still remaining in bondage.

Juneteenth, sometimes referred to as our country's second Independence Day, or second Emancipation Day, became a time of celebration in Texas that has spread across the nation to recognize the steadfast resilience and freedom of African Americans.

In 2021, President Biden made June 19 the newest federal holiday, and described it as “a day to reflect on both bondage and freedom — a day of both pain and purpose. It is, in equal measure, a remembrance of both the long, hard night of slavery and subjugation and oppression. It is also a celebration of a promise – promise of a brighter future filled with hope and anticipation.

Arriving two weeks before Independence Day, Juneteenth confronts a hard truth about U.S. history. Especially considering that 250,000 Texas slaves – and countless others around our country – were denied their freedom during the period after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. This miscarriage of justice ran counter to the American ideal and the beliefs of people who considered freedom and justice foundations of our nation. It is with freedom and justice for all that diversity flourishes. With diversity, we are strengthened and enhanced. And we strive to make equity and belonging our North Star.

At Cooper, to serve, to heal, and to educate is the mission we strive toward every day when we come to work, and it is a reflection of our core values and service to those who turn to us in their times of greatest need and distress. Our diversity represents the best parts of our humanity. With it, we grow stronger as a team. It is good to recognize the historical past, including the profound suffering and injustice wrought by slavery and generations of segregation and discrimination against Black Americans, yet, let us find the joy, hope, and promise of the future. Let us reconcile the past and spring forward in celebration of what is to come.

Happy Juneteenth!