



**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** North Carolina A&T Employees and Students

**FROM:** Harold L. Martin, Sr., Chancellor 

**DATE:** June 18, 2021

**RE: Juneteenth**

One hundred and fifty-six years ago today, nearly a quarter-million enslaved people in the state of Texas were finally given news of the passage of the Emancipation Proclamation issued by President Abraham Lincoln. They became among the last major populations of enslaved Americans to be freed at the conclusion of the Civil War.

Generations later, America struggles to reach a shared understanding of how and why the evil of slavery was permitted for nearly 250 years in this country, why similar racial atrocities were allowed for more than 100 years after slavery ended, and why major issues around equity, equality and social justice persist in our nation to this day.

The passage this week of the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act constitutes a welcome and long overdue recognition of that turning point in American history in 1865. But more than that, it represents a recognition that the history of slavery is one we must look at with clear eyes, understanding that great stain upon our nation and the ripple effects that continue to wash upon our shore so many generations later.

As America's leading institution of higher education originally established for African American students – a university whose own history began just a few short years after slavery in the United States ended – we join with others across this country in celebrating and recognizing a moment that must have caused unspeakable joy in the hearts of so many upon hearing the news of General Order No. 3 in Texas. We feel the unimaginable happiness of our ancestors in knowing that whatever else might await them, they were finally free. We recommit ourselves as a doctoral, research university to providing clarity, understanding and truthful representation of the history of race in this country that stretches back to 1619 and that has important, abiding implications and meaning for us today.

I enthusiastically wish each and every member of the North Carolina A&T community, our students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends, a joyous, heartfelt, memorable and historic Juneteenth.