



Juneteenth reminds us that no matter the advancements made, we struggle toward progress, and that struggle continues nearly 160 years later. In Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865, African Americans living in Texas just learned that slavery had been abolished. Nearly 2.5 years had passed since the Emancipation proclamation was issued in 1863 declaring three million enslaved African Americans living in confederate states free. For 2.5 years, enslaved African Americans continued to live in bondage and continued to work for their masters even though they had been emancipated.

Symbolism of the day continues to do important work today reminding us how persistent and pervasive racism continues to be in our country. The events of the past 18 months remind us again of the importance for Juneteenth because of the senseless killings of numerous Black Americans such as George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Daunte Wright, and James Scurlock - rightly sparking national outrage.

Juneteenth continues to be important, because it marks the end of slavery at the same time reminding us of African Americans ongoing struggle in a nation that's so invested in forgetting. It frames African Americans ongoing struggles in relation to slavery; nearly 160 years have passed, and we come to see the generational deprivation that African Americans have experienced as a result of slavery.

While many people may not think of themselves as racist, many of our systems, structures, and policies were constructed 400+ years ago on the foundation of slavery and racism and many of those systems and structures remain today perpetuating racism in our country. We are all a part of these systems, and so it is our responsibility to continue the work of justice – recognizing these systems, calling them out, and dismantling them.

I am no different. I do not think of myself as racist, however, being silent and not educating myself on the history of slavery and racism in this country and its generational impact on African Americans allows the systemic racism to continue. I need to be more educated; I need to engage, I need to listen, I need to reflect, and I need to speak up when I recognize inequity in our community. My time at Together working on the front lines of hunger and homelessness has opened my eyes to the inequities that exist in our country and the devastating effects of those

inequities that I previously did not recognize. We cannot address hunger and homelessness without also recognizing and addressing the role systemic racism plays.

Together has been a part of the Omaha community for the past 46 years. We have had a front row seat to what is systemic racism and the generational deprivation that comes with it, and its impact on our neighbors, particularly as it relates to hunger and homelessness. Hunger exists not due to lack of food but due to inequitable distribution that represent food apartheid. To this day, redlining in our housing remains to separate our society based on race. “Together believes, without compromise, that access to housing and food are human rights.” We see the geographic segregation, the income inequality, education disparities, and infrastructure decay due to lack of investment, and what that means in the daily lives of our neighbors.

On this Juneteenth 2021, we ask you to think, reflect, and consider how slavery and racism have contributed and still contribute to racial inequality in our community. Finally, we ask you to ACT! How can you get involved to help educate, bring awareness, and create positive change!

With respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Hornacek". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping flourish that loops back under the name.

Mike Hornacek  
President and CEO  
Together