



PERSONNEL AND
READINESS

UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
4000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301-4000

JUN - 2 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR SENIOR PENTAGON LEADERSHIP
DEFENSE AGENCY AND DOD FIELD ACTIVITY DIRECTORS

SUBJECT: 2022 Department of Defense Juneteenth National Independence Day Observance

The Department recognizes June 19, 2022 as Juneteenth National Independence Day, the commemoration and recognition of the end of African American slavery in the United States. On this day we celebrate resilience, resistance, and liberation.

When General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas to issue General Order No. 3 and secure the Union Army's authority over Texas, he spoke not just of freedom, but "an absolute equality of personal rights." However, that absolute equality was not immediately realized. For 400 years, African Americans reminded America of its obligation to treat all people equally under the law. Even in times of slavery, brutally enforced segregation, Jim Crow, and legally enforced inequality, Black Americans fought for their freedom: their right to vote, to hold political office, to pursue education, to hold property, and to ensure their own safety and prosperity. Even when confronted with threats of violence and death, African American leaders and activists created institutions of higher learning, local governance, the arts, faith, and more. Juneteenth calls us to recognize these remarkable achievements and what has been overcome.

The African American journey in the military has also been marked by the struggle for equality. Black Service members have served with distinction throughout the history of our Nation, and their honorable service has been critical in breaking down racial barriers in the military and civilian spheres. However, it has been only 70 years since the signing of Executive Order 9981 ending segregation in the Military Services. The history of explicit inequality is not so far removed.

In 1999, then-President Clinton posthumously pardoned Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper, the first African American to graduate from the U.S. Military Academy and the victim of racial injustice that ended his military career. In the 145 years since Lieutenant Flipper's commissioning, the highest ranks in the Department have been held by African American Service members and civilian employees. These successes are built on the struggles and achievements of those who have gone before and serve as a reminder of our own ongoing commitment to equality.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.