

# ARE WE REALLY FREE?

BY: RAGAN SAVAGE, CLASS OF '23

Recent events that captured the eyes of many and opened the eyes of many more, is just a glimpse of what African Americans can endure on a day-to-day basis. Ahmaud Arbery, a Black man taking a jog, was gunned down by two men who racially profiled him due to recent robberies in their neighborhood. Breonna Taylor, an emergency room technician whose house was raided in the middle of the night by authorities on an alleged no-knock warrant, suffered eight gunshot wounds in her sleep. The officers involved have not been charged and although her boyfriend is an eye-witness, the report states that there were no wounds in the murder of Breonna Taylor. If this doesn't cause pain and disgust, then maybe George Floyd's death will. His murder was caught on video by bystanders as an officer knelt on his neck continuously for 8 minutes and 46 seconds, even when bystanders urged officers on the scene to check his pulse. Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, RaShard Brooks, Riah Milton, Dominique Fells and the deaths of countless other Black lives are merely a few of the names we need to acknowledge in this time in which we are witnessing worldwide protest that have erupted in rage, frustration, and exhaustion out of a hunger for equality.

Juneteenth is supposed to be a celebration of African American freedom. This is the day that enslaved people were *officially* informed of their freedom in this country. However, recent events demonstrate that there is still racial discrimination and systemic oppression of Black and Indigenous People of Color, and that we still have to fight for our freedom that was allegedly granted to us over 150 years ago. However, we continue to live with fear and move through spaces with caution. We all learned in school that Independence Day is July 4th, 1776. Although this day is said to be the day of freedom for all, not all were free. Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, to put an end to 244 years of the enslavement of Black people. However, it was not until June 19th, 1865 that major Gordon Granger finally issued the order to the people of Texas, that alerted the enslaved of their freedom in Galveston. It was in 1866, that Texas became the first state to celebrate Freedom Day or Juneteenth (June plus nineteenth) with family gatherings, parades, and prayer to honor the freedom of the African American people.

We come together today, here at Muskingum University in honor of the ancestors in what I hope will not be our last Juneteenth celebration...Happy Freedom Day!