Diversity OnCampus
United We Stand

Monthly Newsletter
July 2020 Edition

The UNITED STORIES of AMERICA

JUNETEENTH
Celebrate Freedom
JUNE 19th

Trail of Tears
In the United States, July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month, a time to bring awareness to the mental health struggles of underrepresented groups. But words matter. And in the history of mental illness, words have played a crucial role in discriminating and disempowering people.

To help individuals reclaim their identity and control over their role in their therapeutic process, Mental Health America advocates for renaming the month BIPOC - Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Mental Health Month.

A community-based nonprofit dedicated to the needs of those living with mental health illness, MHA is a proponent of people-centered language for which the person and not being ill is the focus. In addition to being recovery-oriented, the MHA approach helps disrupt stereotypes and biases against people with mental illness. Indeed, "psychiatry is politics" (F. Basaglia).

For more information on BIPOC Mental Health Month, please visit the [MHA mental health hub](#).
Care about diversity, equity, and inclusion at the University of Oklahoma?

Want to contribute to making OU a better experience for all?

Want to be a catalyst and an active change agent by making sure our campus is open and welcoming to all?

Help create the home away from home experience for others.

Become a D.O.V. Diversity Outreach Volunteer pronounced "dove," and join a community of care that is passionate about diversity, equity, and inclusion-related matters on campus and beyond.

Who can volunteer?
Students, faculty, and staff

How do I sign up?

Complete a quick survey (https://bit.ly/2DjTWzN) to be added to the D.O.V. list.

The School of Dance in the Weitzenhoffer Family College of Fine Arts has established two new endowed scholarships in support of dance majors in honor of Marjorie and Maria Tallchief.

Named in honor of the Tallchief sisters, two members of the Osage Nation with distinguished careers in the dance world during the 20th century, the scholarships will be awarded annually to full-time OU School of Dance students. Priority will be given to those students of American Indian backgrounds and/or students with demonstrated financial need.

For more information or to contribute to these funds, please contact the OU School of Dance at (405) 325-4051 or dance@ou.edu.
But one thing is to be free from slavery; another is to be a free person in a society meant for you. At the core of slavery lies the deprivation of one's agency, of one's will. Conversely, freedom involves enacting one's will in a community where systemic constraints hinder certain groups but not others.

Yet, despite of the circumstances, people who articulate their will, who commemorate and celebrate collectively-experienced events, leverage the generative nature of language, which “makes meaning that secures our difference, our human difference.” For Morrison, the felicity of language is “in its reach toward the ineffable.” Therefore, as a community, we should not look for a final word about slavery and freedom, but for a language that “surges toward knowledge.” The knowledge about June 19, 1865.

By Paola Conte

“Are we free?” With this question, Karlos Hill, associate professor and chair of the African and African-American Studies department at OU, ends a video he recently recorded about Juneteenth. If words are not substitute for experience but inadequately describe it, as Nobel Prize Toni Morrison reminds us, then what do we miss when we do not honor an event of our past? How free are we when a collective experience, good and bad, is silenced?

In 1863, Lincoln wrote the emancipation proclamation, but those words were heard only on June 19, 1865, in Galveston, Texas. In the following years, that day was celebrated as Juneteenth, but only by the Black and African-American community, as if discussing the progress toward freedom of a community was inconsequential for the others. During the Reconstruction, the Jim Crow era and the Civil Rights movement, Juneteenth was not consistently celebrated, but eventually spread from Texas to many other states until, in the 1980s, it became a state holiday in 45 states and Washington, D.C.
On June 18, 2020, the Supreme Court of the United States, SCOTUS, narrowly ruled to uphold the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, commonly known as DACA. The ruling stated that the current administration failed to put forth a proper justification for ending the program, which therefore remains to protect the nearly 650,000 people who currently hold DACA status. While the decision does not allow for unending protection, it opens a new opportunity to institute concrete pathways to citizenship and protections for immigrants who have come to live, work and learn in the United States. With this decision comes also renewed hope to open pathways to citizenship for more than 10 million unauthorized people currently living in the US, 1.3 million of which are eligible for DACA.

Concerned with the impact of immigration policies on students, campuses and communities, the Presidents’ Alliance on Immigration and Higher Education welcomed the SCOTUS ruling. In a meeting on June 22, members of the Alliance highlighted the need to improve rights and pathways to citizenship for students from all countries. They also discussed the need to establish solid partnerships with private, public and nonprofit entities to speak with one voice and address immigration issues at the federal level.

While more work needs to be done to provide pathways to citizenship, the recent SCOTUS ruling will give some peace of mind to many.

Did you know that there are approximately 450,000 undocumented students in higher education and 643,000 circa DACA students in the United States? Some of them are at OU. On June 24, the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion hosted a webinar for the university community to dispel common myths about DACA and to provide relevant information and resources to faculty and staff to support DACA recipients. The webinar is part of the DEI plan to build a network of support across OU and to provide DACA recipients with guidance on admission and tuition. If you would like more information on local resources and financial opportunities available to assist DACA recipients, please visit the DACA Hub and the Admissions and Recruitment webpage.

**DREAMERS**

**Assistance For DACA Students**

By Monique Ramirez Lemus
On June 22, the president issued a proclamation suspending the entry of certain new immigrants who do not already have an approved immigrant visa. This proclamation is in effect until Dec. 31, 2020, and includes those holding the following types of visas:

- **H-1B or H-2B visa**, and any person accompanying or following to join the visa-holder
- **J visa**, to the extent the visa-holder is participating in an intern, trainee teacher, camp counselor, au pair, summer work travel program, and any person accompanying or following the visa-holder
- **L visa**, and any person accompanying or following to join the visa-holder.

Important H1B category-holders who are in the United States as of the effective date of the proclamation are exempt from this proclamation, as well as J1 professors and research scholars. Anyone with an H1B visa prior to June 24 should be exempt from this proclamation.

The ban is problematic for several reasons. First, it furthers family separation, as the new ban blocks spouses and minor children from being with their families. Secondly, though this proclamation doesn’t directly affect international students, the ban results in a “chilling effect” by sending the message to international students that the government will not welcome those who would like to move to the United States to live and work.

Miriam Feldblum, executive director of the Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration, states: “We are relieved that, for now, international students and Optional Practical Training have been spared, but this suspension will directly impact higher education’s ability to attract and recruit international faculty and researchers. The damage to our reputation and innovation prospects for the future and the human costs to those individuals and their families will be long-lasting.”

For more information on the ban, please visit the NAFSA webpage.
Today in the United States there are nearly 3,000 people on death row. Every year, on average, five of them are found innocent and set free. Perhaps, there are more, if we look more carefully.

Oklahoma native and resident, Julius Jones has been in jail for 18 years and is set for death row. In 1999, Jones, a University of Oklahoma student, was arrested for the killing of a man in Edmond. In 2002, he was convicted and sentenced to death. His case has caught the eye of many famous Oklahoma residents to include Blake Griffin, Trae Young, and Russell Westbrook, who spoke out in Jones' favor.

To gain more insight about Julius Jones case, please watch the 3-part docuseries.