

Why I Volunteer on the Juneteenth Planning Committee

By Jacqueline Badeau

Because I can, for the people I meet, the stories I hear, the dancing I do, the food I eat, the music I hear, the performers who inspire me, students who impress me and the joy of a collective effort.

Introduction

Volunteering to be on Newton's Juneteenth Planning Committee gives me an opportunity to recognize a significant cultural event while promoting unity and understanding. Just by showing up to volunteer, I help dismantle the harmful impact of "us vs. them" thinking, and scarcity versus abundance consciousness. Finally, it is a way to promote reciprocal relationships like those illustrated by the Three Sisters planting arrangement.

The Importance of Volunteering for Juneteenth

As many of you know, Juneteenth commemorates the Order freeing all enslaved African Americans in Texas. Although Abraham Lincoln had made the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, two and a half years earlier, notice had not reached Galveston, Texas, until June 19, 1865. By helping to plan Newton's Juneteenth Celebration, I demonstrate solidarity, respect and honor for African Americans' struggles and, as importantly, celebrate their triumphs. It fulfills my personal commitment to learning and understanding about the experiences of others, as much as possible. It challenges "Us vs. Them" thinking which maintains false divisions, and perpetuates prejudice, discrimination, and conflict.

Scarcity Consciousness vs. Abundance Consciousness

Volunteering for Juneteenth is also a way to confront Scarcity consciousness. Scarcity or Poverty Consciousness is the belief that resources are limited and one must compete to secure them. This mindset results in inequality and hoarding, where some accumulate wealth at the expense of others. In contrast, **abundance consciousness** embraces the idea that there is enough for everyone, promoting sharing, generosity, and collaboration. By shifting from a scarcity to an abundance mindset, I contribute to environments where everyone can thrive. My participation builds on a collective effort that helps to break down barriers, promote understanding, and ensure that everyone enjoys the benefits of abundance.

Reciprocal Relationships: The Three Sisters Planting Arrangement

In her book *Braiding Sweetgrass*, Robin Wall Kimmerer, a Potawatomi Professor of Plant Ecology at SUNY ESF, describes the **Three Sisters planting arrangement**, where corn, beans, and squash are grown together in a mutually beneficial relationship. Corn provides a structure for beans to climb, beans fix nitrogen in the soil to nourish all three plants, and squash spreads out to suppress weeds. This symbiotic relationship exemplifies reciprocity and interdependence—each plant contributes to the others' growth and well-being. Similarly, when we foster reciprocal relationships in our communities, we all benefit.

Conclusion

Volunteering for Juneteenth celebrations is a powerful way for me, a white woman, to honor African American history, promote unity, and reject divisive thinking. By working with a collaborative team, I am embracing abundance consciousness, fostering reciprocal relationships and building towards to a more inclusive and equitable society.

I would like to end with a quote by Hank Willis Thomas, the sculptor who created “The Embrace,” which depicts the love between DR. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King.

“I talk about Black joy as the most powerful source of energy in the universe and I consider it that because it’s been forged, much like a diamond under all forms of compression and oppression. It shines through everything. There’s never been a form of Black love, Black joy, Black power that was not inclusive to those who are not Black. At the core of Black joy, Black love, Black power is a love of all humanity, of oneself, of life itself.”

The Black history I carry with me is love: Hank Willis Thomas

Love is our past, present, and future. A Beautiful Resistance celebrates Black love.

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