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NEWS RELEASE
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STATE ATTORNEY MONIQUE H. WORRELL'S STATEMENT ON JUNETEENTH

ORLANDO, FL — Saturday, June 19th marks the 156th Anniversary of Juneteenth. Juneteenth is a celebration of independence and commemorates a day when **all** Americans were proclaimed to be free. Specifically, on June 19, 1865, two and a half years *after* the Emancipation Proclamation was signed by President Abraham Lincoln, Union soldiers finally notified the last of enslaved men and women in Galveston, Texas that the Civil War was over and that they were no longer slaves. The Union was finally able to overcome the South's resistance to the ending of chattel slavery.

For centuries, our country has marked July 4, 1776, as the day that America was free. However, in 1776, close to one million African Americans were enslaved and specifically excluded from the promises of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. By 1865, over five million African Americans were enslaved in the United States.

The making of Juneteenth as a federal holiday is not just a celebration for one demographic of citizens—this celebration belongs to all of us! Just as the 4th of July marks America's freedom from the tyranny of British rule, Juneteenth marks Black America's freedom from the tyranny of American bondage. After centuries of chattel slavery, America took its first step toward extending the core principle of the Declaration of Independence — that "all men are created equal" — to every American.

Today, our office has observed this day as a celebration of freedom for African Americans born and sold into slavery. While we are reminded of the long journey still ahead to build a more just and equal union, we must stop to pay tribute to the enslaved children, men and women who built our country, and dedicated themselves to the justice and equality we seek each day for the citizens of the Ninth Judicial Circuit and beyond. While there are many troubling and painful events that have occurred in our country's history, it is important that we study and learn from them, so that future generations don't repeat the same atrocities of history's past. As the great Dr. Maya Angelou once stated, "The more you know of your history, the more liberated you are."

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