

Celebrating Juneteenth



Clark College President Karin Edwards and Cuisine Management professor Earl Frederick get ready to greet students during the college's first Juneteenth barbecue.

Clark College celebrated the emancipation of Black enslaved people with its inaugural Juneteenth Drive-Through Cookout on Friday, June 11. The event was organized by the college's Office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion and culinary programs. Clark College's McClaskey Culinary Institute and ODEI provided 100 boxed lunches for students.

In an email to the college community, Rashida Willard, Vice President of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, explained the significance of Juneteenth, which is also known as Emancipation Day and Freedom Day: "On June 19, 1865, Union soldiers arrived in Galveston, Texas with news that the Civil War had ended, and that Black slaves were now free, nearly two and a half years after President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863. Many celebrate this holiday honoring Black culture through social gatherings,

cookouts, and time with family.”



Clark College cuisine students pack lunch boxes for the college's first Juneteenth barbecue.

Cuisine instructor Earl Frederick said, “Barbecue is recognized as a Black contribution to American culture. It was slaves who passed through the Caribbean, cooking animals over pits on sticks. This style of cooking called *barbacoa* translates now into what we know as Southern barbecue. They also picked up seeds from hot peppers in the Caribbean, which became an important flavoring for the pork in the South.”

Cuisine students made smoked turkey, baked beans, collard greens and cornbread. Students in Professional Baking and Pastry Arts made individual hand pies for dessert. Clark's students made all the food except for barbecued pork, which was donated by Donnie Vercher, owner of Daddy D's Southern Style BBQ. (Vercher's daughter, Ramona Vercher, is a Clark College alumna and

recipient of the 2013-14 Community College President's Award.) On the morning of the event, cuisine students were busy in the kitchen packing 100 lunches in boxes highlighting significant people and events in Black history.

Students had signed up in advance to receive the lunches. During the event, students drove into the parking lot west of Tod and Maxine McClaskey Culinary Institute, rolled down their window and were handed a boxed lunch from a cuisine student.

Despite persistent rain, it was a party. DeeJay Mark Kernell played Earth, Wind and Fire's "September" as he spun what he called "good '70s and '80s R&B, backyard barbecue music."

Nearby, Clark College President Karin Edwards chatted with Frederick, who was busy stirring a pot of Caribbean-style paella at the wood-fired grill. A pot of gumbo simmered alongside it.

Frederick said his maternal grandmother, a sharecropper from North Carolina, told him stories about the significance of barbecue.



Each Juneteenth lunch was packed in a box printed with information on Black history.

“My grandmother told me that barbecue is something that Blacks and whites in the South share,” he said. “When tobacco was harvested in the fall, it was all-hands-on-deck with Blacks and whites working together doing the harvest.”

Workers hung tobacco leaves in tobacco barns that have slats to let air through. To prevent spoilage, this work had to happen quickly, so a big oak fire was built to cure, dry and smoke the tobacco. Throughout the night, workers stoked the fire, which accumulated hot coals.

Frederick explained, “The tradition developed to roast a pig using those hot coals. People dug a hole in the ground, put hot coals in the bottom of the pit, put a grate over the coals, and put a butchered pig on the grate to slowly cook the pig. Everybody—black and white—ate the pig together. Something that didn’t happen any other time.”

Next year when Clark College holds its second annual event, Juneteenth will be a state holiday, thanks to legislation passed in May. The law will go into effect in 2022.

Equity work in action: Work-It Wednesdays



Members of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion take a moment with the Office of Instruction's Karen Foster and Dr. Sachi Horback at a college event.

The Office of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (ODEI) is reaching out to programs and departments at Clark College to offer equity development support and training every Wednesday,

calling the program “**Work-It Wednesday.**” It’s open to all college employees, departments and groups that want help with ongoing equity work. The program is designed to be flexible to help employees infuse equity principles into a program, project, initiative, or effort at any stage in the process.

To better understand the program, we asked early adopters at Clark on their experience with Work-It Wednesday.

At the Library: Connor Cantrell, Interim Resource Sharing Supervisor

Clark College: *Can you provide information on the program, project, initiative, or effort that needed ODEI’s guidance/input?*

Connor: We met with ODEI multiple times during Summer and Fall 2019 to organize social equity training for our department in the library. All four of the FTEs in our department (Connor Cantrell, Amanda Brown, Tasha Robertson, and Connie Anderson) in the planning and the entire department (including FTEs, 1050s, and student employees) have participated in the training program. It consists of weekly reading and reflection activities and occasional presentations.

Clark College: *What was the process? How did it impact your project? What did you learn?*

Connor: We originally had planned on a one-time presentation, but quickly realized the program needed to be integrated more closely into our department’s operations. By our second meeting, we had drafted an outline of a presentation designed to set up a weekly reading and reflection activity. Rosalba [Pitkin] attended our October 2019 presentation and provided feedback that informed our future training. Since then, we have met with ODEI several times as we encountered

roadblocks. We always left with an equitable solution. As a result, we were empowered to implement a program that fits our department's needs and connects to the college's equity initiatives.

Clark College: *Did your time with ODEI staff impact your outlook or decision-making for future work?*

Connor: Our WiW sessions equipped us with the tools to begin making changes in our workplace. Although we are classified staff, we realized we essentially would be "teaching" our department coworkers and student employees we supervise about equitable practices. We did not feel qualified to take on this teaching role. However, ODEI taught us how to prepare our department for these sometimes-difficult conversations by creating shared norms and how to incorporate active learning principles with our student employees by creating feedback channels during our activities. We have utilized the strategies ODEI gave us to help us engage coworkers in conversations about equitable practices.

Clark College: *Would you like to add anything else about Work-It Wednesday?*

Connor: We are grateful to ODEI for all their assistance and guidance. Everyone in our department (and many other employees and library patrons) have benefited directly from ODEI's guidance. Since we started discussing this project in August 2019, both the college and the library have experienced significant and often stressful changes. Leading our discussions and decision-making processes with racial equity has provided clarity and has minimized harm as we navigate these changes and everyday systemic barriers. Additionally, we feel that explicitly affirming our commitment to racial equity and to serving systemically non-dominant folks significantly has improved our workplace, and especially for our student employees.

At Child and Family Studies: Michele Volk, Director

Clark College: *Can you provide info on the program, project, initiative, or effort that needed ODEI's guidance/input?*

Michele: We are revising our department's communication and conflict resolution policy and process for our staff and family handbooks at Child and Family Studies, for accreditation and practical application. Of course, we encourage direct, open and respectful communication. However, like all departments, we often work with people who have many perspectives, a range of experiences, different views and even conflicts. It is important to have a model that encourages a safe space where all voices are heard, valued and respected during a potentially emotional situation.

We started asking for interest and input within our department. Using that input, I reviewed mission and values, researching about conflict resolution and social justice, and began developing our model. Our goal is a conflict resolution modeled that honors all parties and has the potential to repair relationships. I hoped that working with WiW would reduce communication barriers, examine whose voices are heard, and to consider other views and lived experiences. We realized the value in having another lens examine our language. Words matter.

Clark College: *What was the process? How did it impact your project? What did you learn?*

Michele: ODEI staff are excellent at helping you tease out your goals, the intent, how the policy, procedure or process may be perceived, to consider how it impacts others and possible ways to make it equitable and accessible for all employees. The team asked insightful, reflective

questions that spurred us to think more deeply, both individually and collectively. It made me look for systemic barriers within this model and process. And also, to reflect on other policies to consider revisiting, and to seek input from stakeholders. To have three to four people, very knowledgeable, with rich collective experience helped me slow down and work toward a meaningful and equitable policy and process. I look forward to our department's next step in Fall: rolling out our new communication and conflict resolution policy that supports the values of being in relationship in the early care education setting.

Clark College: *Did your time with ODEI staff impact your outlook or decision-making for future work?*

Michele: Yes. WiW and the BUILD program have helped me to reflect and to consider how and when my own bias and systemic roots might come into play. This intentional planning helped me put aside the sense of urgency and to focus on being intentional and to consider many more layers than I would have previously. After meeting with ODEI, I also found myself examining language with more curiosity and intent. Going forward, I will use Clark's equitable decision-making tool as a routine part of my work and decision making at CFS.

Clark College: *Anything else you'd like to add about Work-It Wednesday?*

Michele: ODEI is a place of learning. They meet you where you are with warmth and genuine care for our work and our impact on students and employees. WiW is a comfortable place to dig into uncomfortable conversations—and to grow our skills and knowledge as staff, instructors, and leaders. Many thanks to **Alyssa, Rosalba, D, Melissa, and Rashida** for bringing this vital program to campus!