FROM THE PRESIDENT

Celebrating Freedom and Equality

Dear Friends,

Here at Monticello, there’s a true sense of excitement as the bustle of activity returns to the mountain after the prolonged separation of the pandemic. We are planning many special events this summer, with the most notable being our celebrations of Juneteenth and Independence Day. These two days bookend the Civic Season, a new kind of commemoration that encourages us to reflect on ways that events and moments in our past help guide us in shaping a better future for generations to come.

Often called our nation’s second Independence Day, Juneteenth is observed as a federal holiday on June 20; it commemorates the freedom of enslaved people at the end of the Civil War. On Juneteenth weekend, Monticello will host a gathering entitled “Ascendant: The Power of Descendant Communities to Shape Our Stories, Places and Future.” Descendants of those who were enslaved at Monticello will gather on-site to attend presentations, participate in discussions, and share in a private rededication ceremony for the recently restored Burial Ground for Enslaved People.

On July 4th, we will celebrate America’s 246th birthday and Monticello’s 60th annual Independence Day Celebration and Naturalization Ceremony — the nation’s longest-running naturalization ceremony outside of a courtroom. We are honored and delighted to welcome guests to the mountaintop in person to share this joyous and inspiring day with our community’s newest American citizens.

While Juneteenth and July 4th provide us with opportunities to further explore the promises of our country’s Declaration of Independence, recent events in Ukraine demonstrate that people around the world still struggle to achieve and maintain the same right to self-government that the Continental Congress declared for the United States in 1776. Less than 20 years after that momentous occasion, Thomas Jefferson wrote that he believed “this ball of liberty … is now so well in motion that it will roll round the globe.” We are reminded that this process is still underway and we all have a role to play in sustaining and sharing these promises.

Our nation’s founding ideals of equality, self-governance and freedom still serve as models around the world. In this edition of Monticello magazine, we invite you to learn about how we teach these ideals to students and share them with all guests on-site and online. We also invite you to join us this summer in the celebration of these ideals and in the work of making them relevant throughout our country, the world and in your own community.

Wishing you well,

Leslie Greene Bowman
President

P.S. Learn more about how the words and ideas in the Declaration of Independence have impacted human rights around the world on our web page titled “The Declaration of Independence Around the World,” found at monticello.org/declaration.