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### Office of Equity and Inclusion Newsletter - June 2024

Office of Equity and Inclusion, East Tennessee State University

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# Office of Equity and Inclusion Newsletter

June 10, 2024



## A Message from Dr. Keith Johnson, Vice President for Equity and Inclusion

### “Foster a Supportive Environment”

Dear Friends,

The month of June is packed with a lot of noteworthy causes that are worthy of celebrations, including, but not limited to **Juneteenth** and **“Pride”**.

As we continue to foster an inclusive and supportive environment, we want to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to every member of our community. We stand together, embracing the rich diversity that makes our institution a vibrant place for learning, teaching, and collaboration.

To our LGBTQ+ students, faculty, and staff, we celebrate your identity and contributions. Your presence enriches our campus and broadens our perspectives. We are dedicated to ensuring that everyone feels safe, respected, and valued, free to express themselves without fear of discrimination or prejudice.

~ continued on page 2 ~



**“Make a career of humanity. Commit yourself to the noble struggle for equal rights. You will make a better person of yourself, a greater nation of your country, and a finer world to live in.”**

**~ Martin Luther King Jr. ~**

### Inside this issue

Message from Dr. Johnson.....	1-2
BFSA.....	2
Pride Month.....	3
Dr. Patricia Robertson Pride Center.....	3
ETSU Resources.....	4
Women & Gender Resource Center.....	4
Student Spotlight, Joshua Aggrey.....	5
Juneteenth.....	6
Upcoming Events.....	7-10
ETSU Alumni Spotlight.....	11
ETSU Alumni Mentoring Program.....	11

## Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

Our commitment extends beyond words. We are actively working to create an environment that uphold inclusivity and equity. We offer resources, support services, and programs designed to foster understanding, promote allyship, and build a community where all voices are heard and honored.

To our Black students, faculty and staff, and ally, as we celebrate Juneteenth, we honor the profound significance of **June 19th** in American history. Juneteenth commemorates the end of slavery in the United States and serves as a powerful reminder of the resilience, strength, and enduring contributions of the Black community.

Let us use these occasions to reflect on our shared history, celebrate our cultures and achievements, and renew our commitment to promoting equality and inclusion. Together, we can continue to build a community where diversity is celebrated and everyone is empowered to thrive.

Thank you for being an integral part of our community. As a university, we can create a place where everyone thrives, united by our shared values of respect and empathy where...

- PEOPLE come first, are treated with dignity and respect, and are encouraged to achieve their full potential;
- RELATIONSHIPS are built on honesty, integrity, and trust;
- DIVERSITY of people and thought is respected;
- EXCELLENCE is achieved through teamwork, leadership, creativity, and a strong work ethic;
- EFFICIENCY is achieved through wise use of human and financial resources; and
- COMMITMENT to intellectual achievement is embraced.

Sincerely,

Dr. Keith V. Johnson

## Black Faculty & Staff Association

It shall be the mission of the [Black Faculty and Staff Association](#) (BFSA) to provide an atmosphere of cultural and social networking among the black faculty and staff of ETSU. It shall be the mission of the organization to aid in the recruitment and welcoming of black faculty, staff, and students, to a supportive network for new and continuing black faculty, staff, and students, and to improve the retention and quality of life of African-Americans and others at ETSU through the development of a multicultural perspective.



## Pride Month

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June is recognized as LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer) Pride Month to commemorate a tipping point in history — the [Stonewall Uprising](#), which lasted 6 days in Manhattan in June 1969 as police clashed with LGBTQ protesters.

“Pride” itself does not stand for anything, but the word is an integral cultural concept within the LGBTQ+ community which comprises several identities related to sexual orientation and gender identity. It represents solidarity, collectivity, and identity as well as resistance to discrimination and violence.



## Dr. Patricia Robertson Pride Center

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The [Dr. Patricia Robertson Pride Center](#) provides programming, campus resources, and educational training for ETSU students, faculty, staff, and community members. Under the umbrella of the [Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center](#), the Center supports the university’s mission and dedication to social justice efforts through programming, trainings, community outreach, and advocacy on ETSU’s main campus and across the region. Attention to gender and sexual minority related inequities also requires addressing all aspects of inequality, including heterosexism, cissexism, racism, misogyny, xenophobia, ableism, and more.

On the website you will find resources and FAQ for gender and sexual minorities or anyone wishing to expand their knowledge and understanding in this topic area. The '+' serves to include all other gender and sexually diverse identities. The purpose of these resources and [FAQ](#) are to provide access to campus, regional, and national resources as well as to serve as an educational access point for [allies](#).

Watch a video: [ETSU Pride Center: Belonging For All](#)

## ETSU Resources

The **ETSU Faculty/Staff LGBTQ+ Association** was founded in 2020 to contribute and support a welcoming and inclusive university community for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer employees through visibility, networking, and advocacy.



The organization promotes inclusion, equality, and empathy for all members of the campus and greater community. The association believes that we should exist in a world free of discrimination, where all persons are empowered to live their authentic lives without fear of employment discrimination or any other form of harm.

[Learn more](#)

Women's, Gender, And Sexuality Studies at ETSU educates students to critically engage issues of gender and sexual equity in the Appalachian South, nationally, and globally.

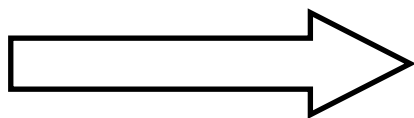
[Learn more](#)

ETSU Safe Zone is a community of LGBTQ+ allies on ETSU campus who have all undergone an orientation to being an LGBTQ+ ally and signed the ETSU Safe Zone pledge. [Learn more](#)



## Women and Gender Resource Center

Do you know a student who was awarded an [Academic Performance Scholarship](#) and is looking for a position to complete their service hours?



WE ARE HIRING!

**WOMEN & GENDER RESOURCE CENTER**

2 POSITIONS (APS)

- ✓ ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT
- ✓ OFFICE ASSISTANT
- ✓ CONTENT CREATOR
- ✓ 5-6 HOURS PER WEEK

FOR APPLICATION LINK  
WRCETSU@ETSU.EDU

### Did you know....

July is National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month and Disability Pride Month.

August is Intersectionality Awareness Month.

## Student Spotlight - Joshua Aggrey



Meet Joshua Aggrey, Graduate Student, Standaert Lab, Department of Chemistry. Below Joshua shares the impact his experience at ETSU has had on his education and research.

*The Office of Equity and Inclusion at East Tennessee State University (ETSU) has played a pivotal role in shaping my academic and professional journey. Their support has been invaluable, consistently assisting with the payment of my program fees, which has significantly eased my financial burden. Recently, their commitment was further demonstrated when they fully sponsored my trip to New Orleans, where I had the opportunity to present my research at the prestigious American Chemical Society meeting.*

*This kind of support not only facilitated my direct engagement with the broader scientific community but also enhanced my educational experiences by providing opportunities that may have otherwise been inaccessible. The office's dedication to fostering an inclusive and supportive environment has profoundly impacted my time at ETSU, enabling me to pursue my academic goals with greater confidence and fewer barriers.*

*My research project is centered on developing innovative methods to enhance the resilience of microbial membranes to solvent stress, a crucial factor in biofuel production. I received an award for my presentation at the spring 2024 Appalachian Student Research Forum. My presentation detailed my efforts to devise strategies that bolster microbial membrane robustness against these solvents. The ultimate goal of my work is to enable more efficient production of biofuels from plant materials. This research aligns with global needs for sustainable and renewable energy sources, addressing both technological and environmental challenges in the field.*

*Embracing the role of a graduate teaching assistant here at ETSU has profoundly influenced my academic and professional perspective. Many of my students suffered from learning and attention deficits, something I also had trouble with when I was younger. This role provided a unique opportunity to develop and refine teaching strategies that addressed diverse learning needs, enhancing student engagement and comprehension. The joy of transforming students' apprehension into confidence reaffirmed my commitment to education.*

*Teaching at ETSU has been a chance to empathize with students from varied backgrounds and tailor educational approaches to individual learning styles. This experience has cemented my desire to pursue a career in academia, where I could foster an appreciation of chemistry among future generations. I received the Outstanding Teaching Assistant award for my outstanding performance as a teaching assistant.*

*If I were to give any advice to other students who aspire to excel in research or academic endeavors I would say choose a research area that truly interests you. Passion is a significant motivator and can sustain one's enthusiasm and commitment even during challenging times. When you are genuinely interested in your work, it can lead to more innovative and impactful research. Also, being persistent and resilient is key. Research can be filled with setbacks and challenges. Persistence is key to overcoming these obstacles. Learn from failures and view them as steps towards your ultimate goal. Resilience will allow you to navigate the ups and downs of academic and research careers. Finally, seeking help when you're unsure about something. It's often tempting to rely solely on instinct, but this can sometimes lead to preventable mistakes. By asking for assistance or clarification, you access valuable insights and experiences from others who might have faced similar challenges or who possess expertise that complements your own.*

*This approach not only enhances one's understanding but also strengthens one's decision-making process, helping to avoid pitfalls that could be otherwise missed. Moreover, acknowledging that you don't have all the answers—and are willing to learn from others—demonstrates humility and openness, qualities that are highly respected in any field. ~ Joshua Aggrey*

## Juneteenth - Dr. Elwood Watson

Black Americans are a community of people that have endured abominable levels of trials, abuse and tribulations. The experience of Black America has been one that includes rivers of blood, mountains of sweat and countless number of anguished tears. A community that has suffered indescribable degrees of mistreatment. As a Black American, I am descended from a people for whom the history of slavery, lynching, segregation, black codes, poll taxes, oppressive sharecropping systems and Jim Crow laws are historical facts deeply etched in the fabric of history.

As a scholar who is a historian by training, I am deeply and deftly acquainted with historical literature relating to Black American history and have intensely researched the harrowing accounts of the middle passage and other inhumane incidents, as they related to the rapacious institution of slavery. My ancestors were brought to America as slaves. I can only begin to imagine the sadistic and inhumane treatment they endured.

Thus, Juneteenth is a celebration acknowledging the ending of slavery in the United States. On June 19, 1865, Major General Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston, Texas, and announced that all slaves were free. Later that year, on Dec. 6, the 13th Amendment <https://constitution.congress.gov/constitution/amendment-13/> was ratified by Congress, legally and officially ending slavery in the United States.

President Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation on Jan. 1, 1863, and many slaves had been freed for more than two years, even though in the cradle of the slave-holding confederacy such a truth refused to be recognized. Contrary to the newly freed slaves, many slave owners and other proponents of the slave system were likely shedding more than a few tears.

The purpose of Juneteenth is to acknowledge the atrocities of the past, and to educate

current and future generations of people from African descent about the struggles of Black Americans to ensure it will never be forgotten that we as Black Americans were once considered human property, and to celebrate our liberation from bondage. Juneteenth also serves as a holiday to raise the level of consciousness and to educate Americans of all racial and ethnic groups about slavery in the United States.

Black Americans have long been on the frontline for freedom from racial tyranny. We have been the victims of centuries of discrimination, racial hatred, state-sanctioned violence, a fiercely hostile criminal justice system and numerous other indignities, impositions, and injustices. It is due to this confluence of scurrilous factors that we recognize the necessity of acknowledging a holiday that pays homage to one of the most pivotal moments in the history of Black America, as well as American history in general. Its roots in the reflection of the past offer valuable learning experiences and the opportunity for racial healing.

Today, in 2024 Black America, an America in general has witnessed increasingly accelerated and acute attacks on racial diversity, reproductive rights, marginalized populations and voting rights. The increasing rise of White Supremacy. Black history is being erased from our textbooks. Public schools have become more segregated than they were in the late 1960s. Numerous other inequalities threaten to erode, if not outright erase the gains that were achieved over the past half century.

As we celebrate Juneteenth on June 19th, we must keep in mind that the ideas and promises of freedom alone are not enough to either sustain or propel us. We must celebrate the holiday in the years to come with the unrelenting intent to overturn the pervasive inequality that remains with us long after that liberating day in June 1865.

## Upcoming Events



Save the date! It's time to register for ETSU's sixth annual [Equity and Inclusion Conference](#) taking place September 26-27, 2024 in the D.P. Culp Student Center. [Call for proposals](#) will be accepted through July 12, 2024.

**ETSU Employees: \$85**

\$100 After September 19

ETSU employees may utilize their education benefits to cover the cost of registration. If you elect to use this option, please be sure to select the appropriate ticket type when registering.

**Higher Ed Faculty/Staff: \$100**

\$125 After September 19

**Community Partner/Member: \$100**

\$125 After September 19

**Students: Free**

[Register](#)





# Remembering Stonewall

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An open discussion and community support event for the LGBTQIA+ community and allies to look at where we came from, where we're going, and what it means to be us.

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***Tuesday, June 25, 2024***

***3pm-4:30pm***

***Multicultural Center Lobby***

  
 EAST TENNESSEE STATE  
 UNIVERSITY  
 Dr. Patricia Robertson  
 Pride Center



***ETSU LGBT  
 Faculty Staff  
 Association***

  
 EAST TENNESSEE STATE  
 UNIVERSITY  
 Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center



## Upcoming Events ~ continued

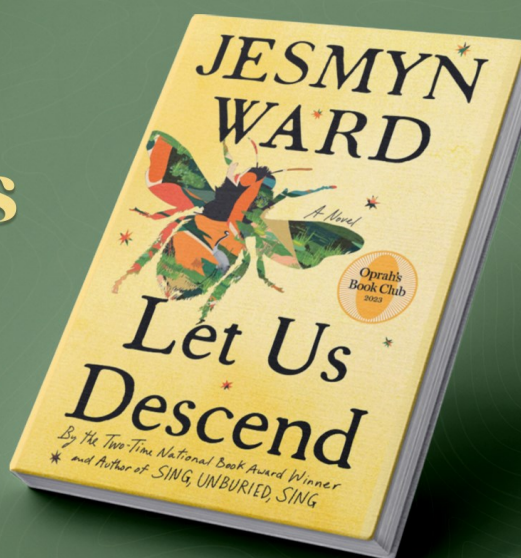
June 2024				
Wednes- day	June 19th	Juneteenth University Closed		
Tuesday	June 25th	Remembering Stonewall	3:00-4:30pm	Multicultural Center Lobby
July 2024				
Thurs- day	July 4th	Independence Day University Closed		
Friday	July 5th	University Closed		
September 2024				
Wednes- day	Sept. 11th	Sherrod Library Diverse Characters Book Club  First 30 to register receive a FREE copy of the book. <a href="#">Register here</a>	Sherrod Library Room 309	5:00-6:00pm
Thurs- day and Friday	Sept. 26-27	6th Annual Equity and Inclusion Conference	All Day	D.P. Culp Student Center



## Diverse Characters Book Club

“Let Us Descend”  
by Jesmyn Ward

Sept 11 & Nov 13 **5pm**  
Sherrod Library, Room 309



Register here  
First 30 registered  
receive FREE copy

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**APPLY HERE**

 **EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY**  
Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center

## Purpose and Mission

- To give students the confidence and skills to successfully transition from high school to college.
- To familiarize students with East Tennessee State University and its support services and resources.
- To teach classroom skills that will prepare students for college level courses.
- To foster positive relationships with peers, faculty, and staff at ETSU.
- To enhance critical thinking skills through self and career exploration and class experiences.
- To gain leadership skills through classroom activities, discussions, and cultural experiences.
- To develop strategies and resources for students to balance school, employment, and personal obligations.

## Benefits

- Students can earn up to three collegiate credit in three weeks for free.
- Exposure to college life in a structured and supportive learning community.
- Students will have the opportunity to participate in team building exercises and leadership activities.
- Academic boot camps to prepare students for college-level coursework.
- All summer cost for student will be covered by Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center for the entire program, including tuition and fees for 3-hours credit course, meals and housing.

## ETSU Alumni, Craig Charles - Tennessee's Small Business Person the Year



Left to Right: Caleb Tull, ETSU National Alumni Assoc.; Craig Charles, Owner, Crown Cutz Academy; Zach Thompson, Dir. of Develop, Clemmer College

Craig Charles, owner of Crown Cutz Academy of Barber and Style was honored last month as Tennessee's Small Business Person of the Year.

At the ceremony held at the recently opened new Crown Cutz location in Johnson City, Charles reflected on the journey to his present achievements and shared with the crowd three key moments that forever impacted his trajectory. At 6 years old, he started practicing persistence after a teacher's advice led him to eliminate the word "can't" from his vocabulary.

## ETSU Alumni Mentor Program

The ETSU National Alumni Association [Mentor Program](#) is looking for volunteers that can draw upon their knowledge, skills, personal experiences and perspective to share insight and feedback with students. They believe this learning partnership will facilitate personal growth and development of ETSU students. It is their hope that through this program, ETSU students will gain new strategies (that may not be available from their classroom or academic experience) which will enhance their academic and professional life.

Mentors can assist students with information and tips on topics such as:

- Guidance on study habits, time-management strategies and post-undergraduate school planning
- General career advice, job shadowing, résumé critiques, and interviewing skill development
- Encouragement to students with undeclared majors to stay in school
- Networking opportunities
- Professional etiquette
- Inspiring excellence

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Instagram and Twitter - [etsu\\_equity](#)

**We would like to  
hear from you.**

If you have an announcement, event, accomplishment, etc. you would like to have published in the newsletter send them to Kim Maturo at [maturo@etsu.edu](mailto:maturo@etsu.edu).

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