

October 5, 2020

Our organization was born out of the need for a response to hateful rhetoric emanating from a political campaign in 1927. Out of that small group of faith leaders coming together, a national group was formed – The National Conference of Christians and Jews which eventually became the National Federation of Just Communities. Inclusive Communities is the Midlands affiliate of this organization. Eighty plus years later we are still confronting prejudice and bigotry across our nation.

We write to express our profound disappointment in the decision of the current Administration to end training programs for diversity, equity, and inclusion as well as the recent failure to decisively denounce white supremacy. Quite contrary to the Executive Memorandum from the Office Management and Budget that these programs are “efforts to indoctrinate government employees with divisive and harmful sex and race-based ideologies,” they are, in fact, meant to create safe workspaces for all. Work environments that acknowledge and welcome diversity statistically experience higher productivity and more creative problem-solving. These are qualities that are admirable and should be upheld by our government and within our public service for the advancement of our nation.

The Administration has called these trainings propaganda by creating messaging that the recognition and promotion of equity is “un-American.” This is dangerous and divisive, and stands in stark contrast to the tenets of our Constitution. Being patriotic not only means pride in our nation, it is pride in our history, pride in our journey, and the acknowledgment that we can and must continue to do better. Until all 328.2 million Americans can feel safe while they are on a morning run, while lost in a strange city, while they are walking home and dancing awkwardly to the music in their headphones, while getting ready to go to work, we cannot fully realize liberty and justice for all. We are of course referring to the Ahmaud Aberys, the Zachary Bearheels, the Elijah McClains and the Alberta Spruills of this great nation, who deserved justice, and whose deaths could have been prevented if there was a concerted effort to eliminate the elements of bias – systemic or individual – throughout our governing agencies. This is the responsibility of our nation’s leaders.

We cannot purposefully ignore the problem of racism in this country. The protests surrounding the murder of George Floyd at the hands of police officers in May was a catalyst, shining a light on the ugliness that is systemic racism in our great nation, with the sole intent to bring an end to this injustice. Consider some basic statistics demonstrating inequity between Black and White people. Unemployment rates for Black people currently stand at 16.8%, for White people this percentage is considerably lower, 12.4 %. The Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that Black and Hispanic people are less likely to occupy higher paying managerial positions. People of color are underrepresented in the

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Maggie Wood
Executive Director

hierarchy of our corporate structures. The overall income for Black Americans is 42% lower than White Americans, which means that the poverty rate for Black families is roughly twice that of White families. The wage gap is split not only by race, but also by gender. Educational opportunities again are another area where there is disparity based on race. If these statistics do not present sufficient evidence that there is a systemic problem we can also look at the overrepresentation of Black people in the prison system, the ethnic disparity in sentencing for the same types of crime that is outwardly more punitive towards Black people, people of color, and people who suffer from mental health issues.

The acknowledgement of how racism shows up in our systems is the most patriotic piece of American culture by being a mechanism through which to identify, be accountable to, and learn from negative aspects of our country, with the express intent of improving the lives of our fellow people. Education is the easiest corrective measure for these problems. Education has the power to build equity and unity. Reversing this ban on DEI training is an opportunity to authentically address the issue of race and its ties to our institutions.

At Inclusive Communities we understand how hurtful this past is, but we recognize that silence and capitulation is not the answer. We spoke up 80 years ago in the face of hate and discrimination. We are compelled to do the same now, and we will continue to fight for liberty and justice for all.

Sincerely,

Inclusive Communities – Omaha, Nebraska

Garden State Equality – Asbury Park, New Jersey

Oklahoma Center for Community and Justice – Tulsa, Oklahoma

Miami Conference for Community & Justice – Miami, Florida

Just Communities of Arkansas – Little Rock, Arkansas

National Conference for Community & Justice of the Piedmont Triad – Greensboro, North Carolina

Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion – Detroit, Michigan

National Conference for Community & Justice – Windsor, Connecticut